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Finnish women's perceptions of being a part of a formal external women's network

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The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of women who have joined an external women's network to understand how they experienced joining this particular network in relations to their career. Differences between women's and men's networks and their benefits have been gaining increasing academic interest and at the same time, external women's networks have been gaining more members. It is essential to examine how women experience these networks because women remain underrepresented in high-level managerial positions around the world and networking is associated with positive career development outcomes.

The research was qualitative and there were three semi-structured interviews with Finnish women who are members of different networks in Finland and Hong Kong. The data was analysed using interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) because it allows for studying people's experiences and their perceptions.

Findings of this paper suggest that instead of trying to understand women's networks through men's equivalent it is crucial to examine them from women's perspective. Super-ordinate themes found were self, needing the network, perception of work identity, self as a member, and shared identity of being a career woman. Self as a member and shared identity of being a career woman connect to how the participants experienced their network. Self as a member emphasizes the objective aspects whereas the shared identity of being a career woman focuses on subjective experiences. All three participants were in different points of their career which affected what they sought from these networks, but the experience was beneficial and fulfilling.

Keywords	women's networks, networking, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, career development, equality

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1   Introduction

An increasing number of women are entering the workforce around the world and catching up to and even surpassing men in higher education (International Labour Organization, 2019: 25). For example, in most member states of the European Union (EU), women have on an average higher level of education, with 44 per cent of women aged between 30-34 having completed tertiary education compared to 34 per cent of men (European Commission, 2018). Even with the increase of education and women entering the workforce, women are still underrepresented in managerial and senior roles and accounting for only 34 per cent of global managers (World Economic Forum, 2018: 9) in addition to the lack of women as a board of directors or chief executive officer (CEO) positions. In S&P 500 companies, 5.4 per cent of the CEO positions are held by women (Catalyst, 2020). This indicates that obstacles still exist for women's career development.

Networks are seen to be positively connected to career success and development as they are channels for various positive career influences such as knowledge, advice, and emotional support (Greguletz, Diehl & Kreutzer, 2018: 2). While men still dominate the highest corporate ladders, informal networks with people in positions of power usually exclude women as members (Linehan, 2001: 823). Exclusion from organisational networks is reportedly one of the most significant barriers to women's career development (O'Neil, Hopkins & Sullivan, 2011: 737). Thus, women have formed their networks to counter the exclusion.

Research in this area concentrates primarily on informal networks which means less structure and less specified relationships between members than in formal networks (Ibarra, 1993: 58) or networks inside organizations (e.g. O'Neil et al., 2011; Linehan, 2001; Linehan & Scullion, 2008). Internal networks, however, are restricted to companies with enough resources and employees making women who tend to be excluded from networks even more limited with their networking choices. There is a lack of empirical research regarding external formal networks and how their members are affected by that type of networks. This thesis investigates these external formal networks through three participants' perceptions of being a member of such a network. For this purpose, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) is applied, as this methodology suits

such an approach. The key focuses in IPA research is people's experiences or understanding of particular phenomena (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009: 40).

This topic is significant from an economic viewpoint as women have skills and talents that should be utilised (European Commission, 2014) and yet, they are not rising equally in organizations, which is an important issue to address. There is a link between the growth of gross domestic product (GDP) and women's participation in the labour market (International Labour Organization, 2019: 17). No to mention, the disproportion between the declining birth rate and elderly people in many developed countries creating shortages for the workforce in the future (Artwater & Jones, 2004 cited in Reeves, 2010: 3). Gender parity in organizations is also a good business strategy, with 60.2 per cent increase in profits and productivity stated by companies who participated in an International Labour Organization (ILO) (2019: 15) report. It is also important to note that women represented 64 per cent of household spending and $29 trillion of consumer spending globally in 2013 (Catalyst, 2018), a trend that will continue to rise. There is a clear gap between the structure of the global consumer market and the homogeneous structure of companies, with one large segment of the workforce underrepresented in the strategic and decision-making areas. Personally, researching networks is also interesting as business students are encouraged to network to be successful in the future. However, the students' understanding of networks is quite shallow and does not take into account networking differences between the genders which have been for a long time been a topic of interest in the relevant literature.

Overall, it is important to understand how women experience their external formal networks to allow for a holistic understanding. Networking has been associated with positive career outcomes, and these networks have been growing in popularity, but women remain underrepresented in organizations. Before analysing the results of three interviews this thesis covers the relevant theory on career development and networks. Following, the theoretical framework chapter on methodology explains the research method and data collection strategy. This research aims to explore the perceptions of women who have joined a formal network to understand how they have experienced joining this particular network in relation to their career. Thus, the research question is 'how members perceive being part of external formal women's network in relations to their career'.

2   History

This chapter discusses the history of women's rights, and it addresses the global and local history and current situation to shed light on the background of women's networks and their current relevance. All participants in this research are Finnish ethnicity, with two of them currently living in Finland and one in Hong Kong. Even with the shared ethnicity of the participants, understanding Hong Kong's development is essential as one of them has her network experience solely from there. However, it was challenging to find information on the history of Hong Kong's equality development as much of this information is in the native language, Chinese.

2.1   Global history

Most societies have been and still are dominated by men to the detriment of women. This gender inequality is reflected in the Global Gender Gap Index established in 2006 by the World Economic Forum to capture gender-based disparities and their progress across four thematic dimensions varying from economic participation to health and survival. In 2018, the report, which surveys 149 countries from eight geographical regions, did not find a single country with gender parity, and only seven of the 149 countries have reached the 80 per cent of the gap. Naturally, there are differences between countries. However, as one could assume, not all of the countries that are at the gender-equal side of the spectrum are located in the West, including Rwanda, Namibia, Philippines, and New Zealand.

Before discussing women's rights, it is essential to address the inherent rights of all human beings, according to the United Nations. Human rights, as currently known, are a Western construction. However, respect for human life is a universal value. The Western construction of human rights has its roots in 1600-1700, influenced by liberalism and the age of enlightenment. At that time, they were referred to as the rights of man and described the rights of white males. The United Nations established the term human rights after the Second World War. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was

created in 1948 and acts as the base for equal treatment for all humans (Puhakainen-Mattila, 2012: 6-7).

Accordingly, the literature on women's rights history focuses mainly on Western countries. In the early 1900s, women in Western countries started to demand legal and political rights; a movement later called first-wave feminism. Women were demanding equal political rights such as the right to vote and stand for office in addition to the right to hold property (Reeves, 2010: 4). The Second World War increased the participation of women in diverse professions dramatically because men needed to serve in the war, but women returned home after men came back. Consequently, most women in western countries did not work, and the first-wave feminism did not focus on equal access to work (Reeves, 2010: 5).

While the first-wave feminism focused on political and legal rights for women, the second-wave feminism demanded equal access to different professions and positions in the workplace. Western women were mainly staying at home while their husbands supported the family financially. During the 1960s and the 1970s, stagflation and inflation combined hit the U.S with a lack of economic growth, which affected many families and compelled women to work to help support their families (Reeves, 2010: 5). With the concentration of women's rights movement in the Western world, it can be assumed that the roots of women's networks are within the same movement, especially with the second-wave feminism concentrating on women's access to work. However, hardly any literature exists exploring the history of women's networks, which makes finding relevant information very difficult. In the U.S. and the UK, businesswomen started to organize female-only networks during the 1970s (McCarthy, 2004: 9).

Interestingly, in Finland, the association of female architects, called Architecta, was established in 1942 and the association of female agronomists in 1935 (The National Council of Women of Finland, 2011). Despite the different geographical locations, it seems that the purpose of these networks and associations remains the same, that is, to counter the exclusion from male networks. It is supported by Vinnicombe and Colwill (1995), who describe women's networks as links through which women can obtain similar benefits to men's, acquired through their informal same-sex groupings (Vinnicombe & Colwill, 1995 cited in Vinnicombe, Kumra & Singh, 2006: 1). In the U.S., the women's

activist movement was also inspired by the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s and establishment of the National Organization of Women (NOW). During the second-wave feminism, women also became more aware of reproductive rights as birth control pills gave then the freedom to choose their pregnancies (Reeves, 2010: 6), which allowed women to control, for example, their career better than before.

As mentioned above, the history of women's progress concentrated on Western countries, and especially among white women in the U.S. The third-wave feminism took a more holistic approach and included issues of race, social class, ethnicity, and sexual orientation. The first United Nations Women's Conference was held in Mexico City in 1975 and was trying to broaden the understanding of the problems faced not only by Western women emphasizing empowerment for all women around the world (Reeves, 2010: 9). However, this new approach, called "global sisterhood" and criticized for not questioning the Western model of feminism and thus ignoring the fact that women are not a homogenous group but have diverse histories, experiences, and identities that do not fit the Western model of feminism. In response, transnational feminism has risen in recent years, acknowledging that women face different struggles around the world and, at the same time creating solidarity among each other (Lim, 2015; Nadkarni, 2017).

The fourth-wave feminism can be said to have begun in 2012, concentrating on sexual harassment, body shaming, and the rape culture. These issues were widely broadcasted in the social media, especially the MeToo movement which gained recognition after film mogul Harvey Weinstein was publicly accused of years of sexual harassment. This event sparked a worldwide movement of victims of sexual harassment who shared their stories online with the hashtag #MeToo (Britannica, 2019).

However, the rise of populism (far-right) and fundamentalism, especially in Western countries, can be seen to threaten women's rights today (United Nations, 2016). What makes populism so troubling is that it is often connected with sexism, racism, and homophobia among others. Far-right elected leaders around the world have concerning and aggressive narratives against women that make it seem acceptable to attack and question women's rights. These leaders include Donald Trump and Viktor Bolsonaro who have stated disturbing ideas on that some women are too ugly to be sexually assaulted, which undermines all progress that has been achieved thus far. If this type of aggressive

misogyny is acceptable at this level, there is a risk of it becoming a new normal for people (Oppenheim, 2019). Furthermore, women's political representation has declined in Western parliaments when compared to the progress in previous years, according to the Global gender gap report in 2018.

2.2 Finland

According to the World Economic Forum, Finland was among the top four countries in gender parity in 2018 (World Economic Forum, 2018: 7), and in 2019 women's board representation was 29 per cent in listed companies (Keskuskauppakamari, 2019). Historically, Finnish women were the first in the world to get the right to vote and stand for election in 1906 (Puhakainen-Mattila, 2012: 109). It could be partly caused by the early establishment of professional networks in the 1940s when in other countries, women were still fighting for their right to vote (The National Council of Women of Finland, 2011). Interestingly, the umbrella organization for all women's networks that still exist, the National Council of Women of Finland, was established in 1911 to pursue equality between genders. Another factor creating a favourable atmosphere for women's networks to succeed in Finland was perhaps the positive attitude towards trade unions seeking better working conditions for labourers. The first trade union confederation was established in the same year as universal suffrage and reached a high membership count; the employers accepted the confederation in 1944 (Jokinen, 2017). The national Women Workers' Union was established in 1900 and was later known as the Federation of Social Democratic Women (Lähteenmäki, 2007). This association can be seen as a predecessor to today's professional women's networks. To a certain extent, Finnish trade unions laid a strong foundation for professional networks that exist today.

Before becoming advocates for gender equality, women were seen as inferior to men also in Finland. However, industrialization and urbanization raised the standard of living. This change replaced the status-based society with a class-based society. This change affected the whole of Europe as well. Political movements emerged at this time, in Finland these movements were represented by the Finnish nationalist movement and socialism, in contrast to liberalism which had a significant influence in many Western countries. However, liberalism also influenced the women's rights movement in Finland. Access to education changed women's position in the Finnish society, gradual changes

taking place throughout the late 19th and early 20th century slowly allowed women equal opportunities in education at all levels (Tuomaala, 2007). Interestingly, Finland was the last of Nordic countries to enact the Act on Equality between Women and Men in 1987, even when Finland is celebrated as being the first country to give women the right to vote and has an image of a fairly equal society (Puhakainen-Mattila, 2012: 12).

In the present-day, Finland being part of the European Union (EU), follows the legislation and action plans set by the EU, where gender equality is one of the fundamental rights, also included in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. However, at first, economic reasons were the drivers for gender equality and the principle of equal pay for equal work in the Treaty of Rome in 1957, which was set up to prevent distortions in competition. A directive in 1976 forbade all discrimination in education and work, which changed the view from an economic perspective to include the social aspect as well. This directive was the foundation for modern European gender equality law (Puhakainen-Mattila, 2012: 10; European Commission, 2014).

Even when the EU is one of the leaders in gender equality, progress has been slow. Still, in many member states, women's most crucial role is taking care of the household and children, representing 44 per cent of women in the EU and 40 per cent in Finland (European Commission, 2018) which affects women's career development. A study conducted in Sweden on female executives' career progression found that having children creates the most significant gender gap. Before childbirth women and men were on similar career paths, countering the belief of differences in aspiration and skills between the genders (Keloharju, Knüpfer & Tåg, 2019). Even when the study was conducted in Sweden, the findings explain one aspect of why women are not advancing to high-level jobs in most cultures; that is, women have most of the responsibility in domestic duties and taking care of children. At the same time, men work and take care of the family financially. This disproportionate distribution of domestic work and responsibility of taking care of the children takes up women's time that they could spend working or investing in themselves that in turn re-enforces inequality between genders (Ferrant, Pesando & Nowacka, 2014). This phenomenon can be called a double-burden syndrome. In Finland, however, socio-political decisions such as affordable childcare, free school meal, and opportunity for paternity leave have decreased women's domestic responsibilities (Puhakainen-Mattila, 2012: 12). Still, the numbers above show that socio-

political decisions are not working on their own, but the attitudes, stereotypes, and biases tend to affect women's rights as well.

2.3   Hong Kong

Women's rights history is affected by the fact that Hong Kong was a British colony from 1843 till 1997 and subsequently became a Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China. History has shaped the identity of Hong Kong, usually described as a place where west meets east. The majority of the population is of Chinese ethnicity. Also, the region experienced a considerable migration from mainland China. Especially between 1911 and 1970, immigrants from rural parts of China moved to Hong Kong with hopes of work or fleeing political turbulence (Hong Kong Tourism Board, 2020). Hence, Chinese values shape the identity of Hong Kongese. However, as Lim (2015) points out, there is also a shared Hong Kong Chinese identity, which resonates, especially with individuals born in Hong Kong. This identity is supported by shared anti-colonial thoughts and rejection of the violence of the Mainland Chinese party (e.g., Tiananmen Square).

There were significant changes in women's position when Hong Kong was a British colony where expatriate women played a big part (Lim, 2015). As mentioned, how we view women's rights today is a Western construction. Thus, Western people in Hong Kong during the colonial times had their view of saving Chinese women from Chinese patriarchalism and old traditions such as mui tsai (妹仔: younger sisters). Practices like being servants to wealthy families, foot binding, and concubinage were considered barbaric from the Western point of view. Besides, westerners were motivated to convert the local population to Christianity. In the Chinese patriarchal system, women belonged to either their husbands or grown-up son and were expected to show complete obedience. Furthermore, women were seen as currency in financial transactions; for example, if a woman was seen as a liability, she could be sold as a mui tsai or into prostitution by low-income families (Chin, 2012). Chin (2012) argues that women's rights in colonial Hong Kong were never about the local women themselves but a way for the British to maintain control and to prove their moral and cultural superiority.

As expected, the discussion during that time revolved around banning the mui tsai system and abolishing prostitution as they reflected poorly on the British Empire. Slaves were at that point in time illegal in many countries, and much attention was paid to the impact of prostitution on sexually transmitted diseases. Chinese elite in Hong Kong resisted this, who, at that time, had a lot of political power and influence. They resisted because of the financial benefits from the mui tsai system. Consequently, Po Leung Kuk (Society for the Protection of Women and Children) was established in 1880 by the Chinese elite. The ostensible reason was to protect women and girls, but it also allowed the practice of mui tsai to continue under restrictions (Chin, 2012).

Interestingly, China declared mui tsai system illegal before Hong Kong, which made it even more shameful for the British Empire and questioned the argument that the mui tsai system was part of Chinese traditions. The Anti-Mui Tsai Society was formed in response by the Young Men's Christian Association, the Young Women's Christian Association, and the labour unions. Consequently, expatriate activists created an ethnocentric narrative for women's oppression. Ethnocentric ideas are based on the thinking that one's group is superior (Merriam-Webster, 2020). Legislations were trying to eradicate the mui tsai system in the 1930s, such as Female Domestic Service Ordinance (1923), which prohibited further transfer of mui tsai, and existing ones had to be registered and paid wages. Depending on the source, the legislation was either ineffective, and the system died out by growth in the standard of living in the 1950s or just gradually ceased to exist (Lim, 2015; Chin, 2012). Founded by the Chinese and expatriate elite, the Hong Kong Council of Women was established in 1947. Industrialization increased the standard of living in Hong Kong as it did in Finland. Consequently, more women entered paid work, which increased equality (Lim, 2015).

According to Lim (2015), women's political participation was non-existent until the 1960s, one of the reasons being that the political environment favoured old-boy networks. However, in 1966 Ellen Li became the first female legislator and was also portrayed as an advocate for women's rights. At the same time, Mainland China was already ahead in women's rights (Lim, 2015). Hong Kong's unique situation under Western and Eastern influences could be one of the reasons why it was behind in women's matters as there was a constant pull between preserving local culture and Western influence from the

colonials. However, Mainland China agreeing to direct elections to the legislative council in 1991, further increased women's political rights and chances to participate.

Currently, Hong Kong identifies as an international financial centre (GovHK, 2020). However, women in high-level positions are still a rare occurrence, and according to Women on Boards report (2018), Hong Kong's progress in women's board representation in companies in the Hang Seng Index has been slow from 8.9 per cent in 2009 to 13.8 per cent in 2018. The report criticizes that only a few companies are the driving force and that other countries such as Singapore and India will surpass Hong Kong soon, which will affect its competitive edge if there are no major changes (Community Business, 2018).

3   Career

This chapter focuses on career and introduces fundamental theories of career development and career success in addition to new concepts because it critically connects to the research question.

3.1   Definition of career

Firstly, it is essential to understand what career and career development mean. Brown and Lent define career as a "sequence of collection of jobs one has held throughout one's work life." (2013: 8). Traditionally career has also been referred to as continuous upward movement inside the organization, which can also be referred to as climbing the ladder. This traditional understanding reflects the perception of a career as predictable and linear (Athanasou & Esbroeck, 2008; Surjani & Moily, 2008). Brown and Lent (2013) also discuss this continuous upward movement tied to the meaning of career when they define career development. According to the authors, career development describes one's career through the whole life from childhood to retirement defining it as a "continuous stream of career-relevant events that are not necessarily linear or positive in impact" (Brown & Lent, 2013: 10) reflecting better the reality of career and career development in today's world, thus making it more inclusive.

3.2   Career development theories

According to the relevant literature there are five theories that are considered the main theories. Athanasou and Esbroeck (2008: 134) states that the earliest theories concentrated on the content of career choice and are known as trait factor theories (e.g., Dawis, Lofquist, 1959; Holland, 1959). These trait factor theories are the theory of work adjustment and Holland's theory of vocational choice and adjustment. Both theories have their conceptual foundation in person-environment psychology, which assumes that people influence their environments and vice versa (Brown & Lent, 2013: 29), but also in differential psychology, where the emphasis is on individual differences (Gothard, Mignot, Offer & Ruff, 2001: 11). Later there was more emphasis on theories based on stages and processes of career development or developmental theories (e.g. Super, 1957; Gottfredson, 1981). There are two major developmental theories, Donald Super's (1957) life-span, life-space theory, and Lynda Gottfredson's (1981) theory of circumscription and compromise and these developmental theories are interested in how individual careers develop over time (Gothard et al., 2001: 19; Brown & Lent, 2013: 83). In the 1980s and 1990s, the focus was on both content and process and their interaction. An example of such a theory is social cognitive career theory (SCCT) by Lent, Brown & Hackett (Athanasou & Esbroeck, 2008: 134). Robert Lent, Steven Brown, and Gail Hackett developed the social cognitive career theory (SCCT) in 1994. This theory shares some elements with trait factor theories and developmental theories, and according to Brown and Lent (2013, 115) offers a complementary framework.

Career development theories reflect the time they were proposed (Gothard et al., 2001: 10) and come from four theoretical disciplines. These disciplines are differential psychology (work and occupations), personality psychology, developmental psychology (life course), and sociology (occupational mobility) (Johnson, 2016). Usually, the theories are positivist in their philosophical standpoint (Ekonen, 2007) that is, reflecting the belief that only things that can be seen or proven exist (Collins, 2020) mirroring the dominant position of men at that time. Consequently, the focus was on studying male's career and on developing theories based on those studies. Most older career theories have been criticized for being too static and rigid, which do not reflect today's work environment. Some of these theories have, however, been revised to fit better the current work environment (Athanasou & Esbroeck, 2008: 133).

Later the change in women's status has affected research interest towards women and other minorities, and these topics have attracted academic attention. However, at first, some researchers thought that the theories for men's career development also applied to women, validating critics that sustain that the traditional career theories are ethnocentric and insensitive (Brown & Lent, 2013: 202). However, recent years have brought more awareness, and having more inclusive theories has become critical. From the five career theories introduced in this chapter, Gottfredson's (1981) theory and Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) are considered to be taking into account that career development is not identical for women and men (Walsh & Heppner, 2006: 24). Even when this increased awareness is a positive development, it is also problematic to view women as a homogenous group, which can lead to generalization and ignoring more complex issues. Researchers also suggest that women's work cycle is indeed more complex and less predictable, which can be seen to be the result of, for example, combining work and domestic responsibilities (Bielby & Perun, 1981). Another interesting observation by Ekonen (2007) is that women's career studies often focus on career barriers rather than on the factors that positively influence it, which often present women as victims. It is also essential to understand that the theories presented here have their foundation in the United States, usually with studies conducted with samples consisting of middle-class white males. So, we need to recognize that there could be issues applying the same theories to other cultures and minorities.

3.3   New career concepts

According to the Future of Jobs report (World Economic Forum, 2016), a Fourth Industrial Revolution is already a reality. Technology is advancing, and there are socioeconomic, geographical, and demographic changes and developments that affect organizations and consequently individuals working inside those organizations. A career that has long thought to be secure, predictable, and linear has changed, and this change reflects developments in career theory. However, as Athanasou and Esbroeck (2008: 57) mention, not every career before followed this model, but it was used as the normative frame of reference.

The philosophical position of career theory has been influenced by positivism (Athanasou & Esbroeck, 2008: 135). However, constructivism started to shape current career literature. Constructivism rejects absolute truth and assumes that "an individual's construction of reality is constructed "from the inside out" through the individual's own thinking and processing" (Athanasou & Esbroeck, 2008: 135). This approach combines objective and subjective career conceptualizations enabling a more holistic understanding. An objective career is defined by factors outside the individual, while the individual defines a subjective career themselves (Ekonen, 2007). Another new concept in career literature is the convergence of theories. Many researchers have emphasized that for theories to capture the complexity of career conceptualizations, it is crucial to apply an interdisciplinary approach and to connect previous theories (Athanasou & Esbroeck, 2008: 134).

In addition to constructivism and convergence, researchers have also introduced the idea of individuals taking more responsibility for their careers and being flexible in the changing work environment. Such concepts are boundaryless careers (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996), the protean career (Hall, 2002), and the post-industrial career (Peiperl and Baruch, 1997) (Shen, Demel, Unite, Briscoe, Hall, Chudzikowski, Mayrhofer, Abdul-Ghani, Bogicevic Milikic, Colorado, Fei, Las Heras, Ogliastri, Pazy, Poon, Shefer, Taniguchi & Zikic, 2015: 4). These concepts assume that people are almost like organizations themselves, expecting individuals to take care of their success and what they might need to achieve it (Athanasou & Esbroeck, 2008: 110).

3.4 Career success

The history of career success studies is very similar to early career development. If early career development considered career to be linear upward movement, early career success concentrated on objective markers of success such as salary and promotions.

Nowadays, generally, in the literature, career success is seen as both objective and subjective. Objective career success, as mentioned before, concentrates on factors that can be seen as external to the individual. Subjective career success is intrinsic and relates to individuals' perception of their career success, such as job satisfaction. According to Ng, Eby, Sorensen and Feldman (2005: 368), career success is defined by

positive work outcomes (objective) in addition to positive psychological effects that result from the work (subjective). However, international research on career success has presented more complex findings and criticizes the objective and subjective career success approach for ignoring dimensions that are especially applicable in other cultures (Shen et al., 2015: 26). According to Shen et al. (2015: 26), these dimensions are, for example, relational, which can mean a social working environment and self-versus other-referent factor meaning recognition. Again, it is essential to note that the majority of career success studies have been conducted in WEIRD-countries (Western, educated, industrialized, rich, and democratic).

In their meta-analysis of career success, Ng et al. (2005) used four variables to determine objective and subjective career success. These variables were human capital (e.g., hours worked, work centrality, job tenure, work experience, education level, social capital), organizational sponsorship (e.g., supervisor support, training and skill development opportunities, and organizational resources), socio-demographic indicators (e.g., gender, race, marital status, and age) and individual differences (e.g., Big Five personality factors: neuroticism, conscientiousness, extroversion, agreeableness, and openness to experience, proactivity, locus of control, cognitive ability). The authors found that organizational sponsorship and stable individual differences were more strongly related to subjective career success and, on the other hand, human capital and socio-demographic indicators were more strongly related to objective career success. However, the researchers called for more broad and heterogeneous variables in future research. Consequently, international research identified several categories of perceived meanings of career success. These categories were achievement, job task characteristics, satisfaction, learning, and development, making a difference, work-life context/balance, survival and security, social working environment, recognition, job performance, and self-actualization (Shen et al., 2015: 22).

Research has found differences between women's and men's career success but acknowledged the limitations of available data and called for further research in this area. However, gender still affected promotion, whereas salary difference had diminished over time, according to Ng et al. (2005: 395). The authors also discussed several factors that could explain the more considerable attention to salary equity inside firms, women self-

selecting out of promotional opportunities, and promotion decisions being influenced by political concerns.

Also, two models of upward mobility are referred to in the career success literature: contest mobility and sponsored mobility (Turner, 1960 cited by Ng et al. 2005: 369). Contest mobility assumes that individuals can get ahead based on their abilities and contributions, making the contest for advancement fair for all. Sponsored mobility refers to the idea that influential members choose potential individuals and help them to get ahead (Ng et al. 2005: 369). Interestingly, research found that network assistance positively affected white men's promotion chances whereas women were required to show performance credentials (Reeves, 2010: 52).

3.5   Career barriers

As mentioned in chapter 1 exclusion from informal networks is seen as one of the most significant barriers to women's career advancement (O'Neil, Hopkins & Sullivan, 2011: 737; Wellington, Kropf & Gerkovich, 2004: 18). However, there are many other barriers as well according to reports and surveys.

In multiple surveys, confidence has played a vital role in women's career development. McKinsey's report (2017) discovered a difference in the confidence levels of women and men, which was defined as "a perception of one's chances of success in the current environment, rather than confidence in one's qualifications" (Desvaux, Devillard, Labaye, Sancier-Sultan, Kossof & de Zelicourt, 2017: 31). In this report, women were less confident than men in succeeding to reach a top management position by 15 per cent. Similar results were found in McKinsey's report in 2016 where only 25 per cent of women who wanted to be a top executive believed that they would be one compared to the 42 per cent of men (Devillard, Sancier-Sultan, de Zelicourt & Kossof, 2016: 21). In consulting company KPMG's Women's Leadership study (2015: 5), confidence was identified as a critical attribute to leadership success, and the lack of it among women was the most significant barrier to career development. Interestingly, McKinsey's survey (Desvaux et al., 2017: 39) also found that women often get less praise for their success and criticized more for failures, which can also affect their confidence levels. A robust professional network was found to be a critical aspect of the increase in confidence and

career advancement (KPMG, 2015: 6). Besides, 82 per cent of the women KPMG surveyed answered that "access to and networking with female leaders will help them advance their career." (2015: 6) Thus, female-only professional networks are both an opportunity and a responsibility. These networks and associations can be a part of the multi-faceted approach to ensure greater gender equality in the global labour market.

Gender roles and stereotypes are also seen as barriers to women's career advancement (Wellington et al., 2004: 18). One definition of gender roles is "socially and culturally defined prescriptions and beliefs about the behaviour and emotions of men and women" (Anselmi & Law, 1998: 195 cited in Brown & Lent, 2013: 189). Gender is distinct from biological sex as it is socially constructed, as it mirrors the meanings that people give to it. It is problematic when the emphasis is on differences rather than similarities because it creates limitations for individuals. Stereotypes are, according to Wilson (2001: 39), "particular form of perceptual short cut and involves making assumptions and judgements about other people on the basis of limited information". Stereotypes and gender roles enhance bias and discrimination against women (AAUW, 2016: 16). Stereotypically management and leadership tend to be associated with masculine traits (Reeves, 2010: 28). From male senior managers, only 43 per cent agreed that women are as good leaders as men, and 42 per cent of women believed their leadership styles do not match the prevailing models (Desvaux et al., 2017), and other studies have found similar results (International Labour Organization 2019; Reeves, 2010: 29). Women often find themselves in the paradox of being too weak for management roles or too overbearing (Reeves, 2010: 56) suggesting male-centric model of work (Reeves, 2010: 34). The male-centric model assumes an anytime anywhere model where constant availability is expected. The anywhere anytime attitude is also closely connected to high-level positions (International Labour Organization, 2019: 66). Men are also often still seen as financial contributors in the family, referred to as breadwinners. Even when this is not true anymore in many countries, this stereotype and many others are part of people's cognitive schemas, either consciously or subconsciously (Reeves, 2010: 209).

Women's intangible barrier to high-level positions is called the glass ceiling and is often reported by women (Linehan, 2001). According to ILO (2019: 29), the management positions women have, are usually supporting functions which do not have profit and loss responsibility; whereas males are in management functions considered to be more

strategic. Positions in management functions tend to lead to chief executive positions and board memberships. A survey suggests that the most significant perceived barrier for women was lack of general management or line experience (Wellington et al, 2003: 18). The support functions that women often occupy include, for example, human resource management (HR), communications and public relations, and marketing and sales. This phenomenon is called vertical segregation, which "is the imbalance between women and men in leadership and management jobs with one gender having a disproportionate share." (ILO, 2019: 130). Vertical segregation is part of occupational segregation. Occupational segregation also includes horizontal segregation which means an imbalance of women and men in certain occupations or industries (ILO, 2019: 130), for example, traditional women's industries in non-profit, health care, and education (World Economic Forum, 2018: 32).

From the evidence presented above, one could conclude that there are still more barriers for women's career development that there tends to be for men. These multiple barriers also explain why only a few women have reached the top and suggest why women's networks still have a valid reason to exist.

4   Network

This chapter discusses the theoretical framework of networks. First, by defining what a network is and then concentrating on different theories related to networks.

4.1   Definition of network and benefits

There is no one general definition in the literature of women's networks, but the different definitions agree in the fundamental assumptions focusing on support, friendship, and career advancement. In McCarthy's (2004: 38) study of women's networks in the UK, the author defines networks as relationships that "exists primarily to support women's networking practices and to sustain and repeat those practices over time, and where women identify as members of a formal entity."

However, when thinking purely about the theory of a network, Perriton (2006: 104) defines it as "consisting of a set of nodes and the relations linking them. Nodes can be organizations but by far the most common analysis of networks are undertaken with individuals acting as nodes". As can be seen from above, network is an encompassing term that includes different interpretations. According to McCarthy (2004: 34), there is not a general conceptualization of women's networks in research.

There are as many ways to set up a formal women's network as there are networks. In Finland, the common arrangement appears to be registered associations. They function with annual membership fees and have board of directors who hold the highest decision power. The women's network from Hong Kong featured in this study represent another arrangement where the network functions with sponsorships and donations mainly from their partners, which are companies. There are diverse offering of networks and they emphasize different aspects that can be for example specific occupations, experience levels, and geographical locations. The imprecise nature of the term poses a challenge for researchers studying women's networks. Women's networks have also had negative associations viewed as "have-a-chat-clubs" (Pini, Brown & Ryan, 2004: 290 cited in O'Neil, Hopkins & Sullivan, 2011) or "recipe swapping male-bashers" (Bierema, 2005: 216 cited in O'Neil, Hopkins & Sullivan, 2011).

Overall, networks are associated with positive career outcomes and resources such as knowledge, career support, social support, and job opportunities (Vinnicombe, Kumra & Singh, 2006; Greguletz et al., 2018; McCarthy, 2004). Before, the meaning of a network has mostly been connected to a male club or "old boy" network (Linehan & Walsh, 2001: 93). Nowadays, as mentioned before, the meaning is broader, but it does not mean that informal "old boy" networks do not exist anymore. According to studies, women still feel the burden of these networks (Linehan, 2001; Greguletz et al., 2018). This kind of network is usually described as an informal network, which is also called emergent in the literature (Ibarra, 1993). The opposite type of network is formal or prescribed. However, these terms are usually related to organizational structure, and thus using them for networks outside organizations seems incoherent in many studies. Ibarra (1993: 58) defines a formal network as "formally specified relationships between superiors and subordinates and among representatives of functionally differentiated groups who must interact to accomplish an organizationally defined task". On the other hand, informal

networks as an opposite to those formally specified relationships, include work or social relationships, or a combination of both. This study focuses on networks outside the organization, which are often independent. Hence, networks in this thesis are considered formal, which is consistent with the same distinction made by researchers Villesèche and Josserand (2017) in their review on formal women's networks.

4.2   Social capital & Homophily

The value derived from networks is connected to the idea of social capital which includes all relationships. It is the benefit that comes from whom people know and the reciprocity between the people connected (Putnam, 2017). Factors such as race, religion, and culture have an impact on social capital (Reeves, 2010: 109). The impact can be restricting or assisting individuals when they form their networks or are excluded from them. Exclusion from the network ties into the idea that members can be considered to have high or low status. High-status members are the ones who have the most influence and power outside the network and hence have high status inside it. Consequently, low-status implies lesser power and influence, which in turn makes low-status members less attractive for others to network with (Reeves, 2010: 117).

People tend to network with people similar to themselves in gender, education, race, and religion (O'Neil et al., 2011) because of the universal preference for homophily (Ibarra, 1993), which means forming connections with people that share similar characteristics. Homophily makes communicating with others easier and enhances predictability (Greguletz et al., 2018). Homophily can be seen as one of the reasons behind gender-specific networks.

In a study by Linehan and Walsh (2001), the researchers interviewed several European senior managers with international careers. The authors reported that "findings also suggested that if female networks become stronger and begin to have more power, then perhaps more females will reach senior management positions and in turn partake in international management" (Linehan & Walsh, 2001: 93).

4.3 Instrumental and expressive ties

In network literature, the type of ties between people is an important concept as they have different benefits and disadvantages. There are two types of ties, instrumental and expressive. People in instrumental relationship work together to gain mutual benefits (Encyclopedia, 2019) such as information, advice, guidance and other work-related resources (Ibarra, 1993: 59). Expressive relationships involve friendship and social support, (Ibarra, 1993: 59), which requires a different kind of commitment to the other person than with instrumental ties (Encyclopedia, 2019). However, when thinking about, for example, a mentor-protégé relationship, it is both instrumental and expressive (Ibarra 1993: 59). So, relationships can be both instrumental and expressive, which is usually the case in women's networks offering social support in addition to advice in career advancement. Villesèche and Josserand (2017) also argue that especially for women's networks, both expressive and instrumental ties are important as they offer a variety of resources.

4.4 Strength of ties

Network literature also discusses the strength of ties. Granovetter (1973: 1361) defines the strength of ties as "combination of the amount of time, the emotional intensity, the intimacy (mutual confiding), and the reciprocal services which characterize the tie". Strong ties are more restricted because we can only have a limited amount of them; for example, Dunbar's number proposes that for individuals, the limit of stable social relationships is 150 (Morgan, 2014) as can be seen from the figure 1 below.
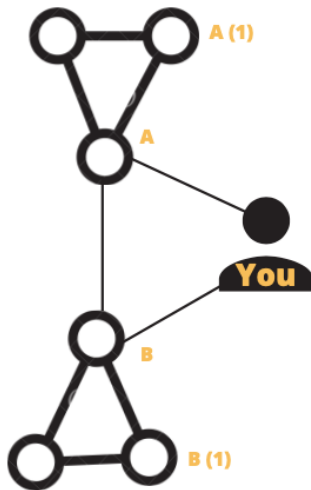
Figure 1. Strong ties versus weak ties. Source: Reeves, 2010: 111

Access to information refers to the assumption that individuals who have strong ties have a lot of the same associates (Morgan, 2014), which restricts their power over the information as it is shared with others as well. However, Ibarra (1993) also concludes that strong ties have advantages too. Especially in situations of uncertainty and change, strong ties can be considered more beneficial, indicating that both weak and strong ties are essential in networks and provide different benefits (Ibarra 1993: 63).

Men tend to have more weak ties which are often associated with the more significant benefits they have from their networks. This makes men's networks different from women's which, on the other hand, are argued to have stronger ties within more social networks (Greguletz et al., 2018). Interestingly, research has shown that an individual whose position is insecure benefits less from weak ties. Because women tend to be in lower positions, which lack the power and influence that men still have in organizations, the usefulness of weak ties can be questioned (Ibarra, 1993: 72). Moreover, according to Reeves (2010: 118), women need both weak and strong ties to be successful as strong ties offer support, and weak ties can affect women's influence by expanding it.

4.5   Density and structural hole

Network density is connected to the strength of ties as it refers to the scale of contact that the members have. High density equals close contact between all the network members, and thus they generally have strong ties with each other. Low density networks are the opposite and often have structural holes and weak ties between its members (Reeves, 2010: 111). Weak ties offer more connections, which also enables the formation of a bridge or a structural hole, that is, a connection between two points in a network where this connection is the only point linking these networks, as illustrated in figure 2 below.
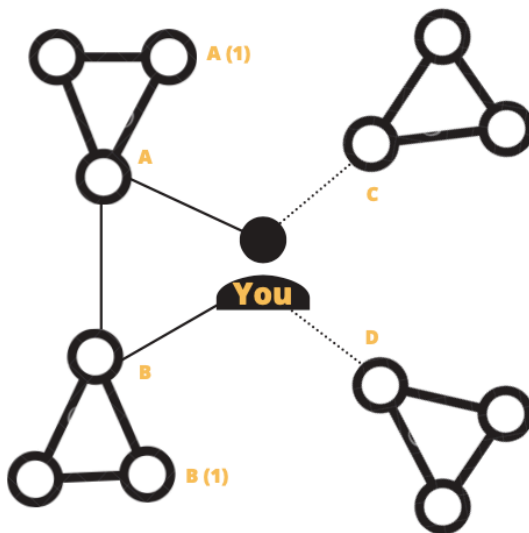
Figure 2.   Structural hole. Source: Reeves, 2010: 112

The benefit from these types of connections is associated with resources, such as information that would not otherwise be available but is transmitted through this connection (Granovetter, 1973: 1364; Reeves, 2010: 112).

4.6   Centrality

Centrality in a network refers to the number of ties that the individual has, as illustrated in figure 3. Generally, centrality is connected to having more resources which, according to studies, influence job performance and promotion (Reeves, 2010: 112).

Figure 3.   Centrality. Source: Reeves, 2010: 113

Centrality is also connected to the access to information about job markets. Interestingly, a study indicated that for men, network centrality was especially important for their job market performance whereas, for women, it was also important but only when it was coupled with a close inner circle of female contacts. This study proposed that it could have been due to the fact that women still have more barriers than men; hence, information and career support from a close inner circle could be beneficial. However, it was also noted that for the inner circle to have a beneficial effect needed to be low in density which is connected to structural holes and the assumption that in that case, the individual has access to diverse and exclusive information (Uzzi, 2019). This finding somewhat contradicts the research findings presented in section 4.4, where studies concluded that women did not benefit as much from weak ties.

5   Methodology

This chapter discusses the methods used in this research, including justification of the chosen research approach, data collection method, how data was analysed, and the trustworthiness of this research.

5.1   Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)

Smith, Flowers & Larkin (2009: 46) suggest that the epistemological position should be the basis of the chosen research approach. The research question introduced in chapter

1 is aligned with Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). This research aims to explore the perceptions of women who have joined a formal network to understand how they have experienced joining this particular network in relations to their career. According to Pietkiewicz and Smith (2014: 7) "studies based in IPA focus on examining how individuals make meaning of their life experiences."

IPA is a relatively recent qualitative research approach best known in psychology. IPA draws from phenomenology, hermeneutics, and idiography. Phenomenology lets the phenomena speak for themselves and examines how individuals perceive and talk about events. In hermeneutic aspect of IPA, the researcher attempts to understand what it is like to stand in the shoes of their subjects, emphasis on the word attempts. This can be described as double hermeneutics and as Smith and Osborn (2003: 51 cited in Smith, 2018: 6) put it "the participants are trying to make sense of their world; the researcher is trying to make sense of the participants trying to make sense of their world". With idiography IPA focuses on in-depth analysis of single cases before developing any general comments. IPA is interested in how individuals tell their stories and afterwards comparing and contrasting with other stories. Therefore, IPA does not require a large number of participants, even a sample of one person is adequate (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014: 8). According to Smith, Flowers & Larkin (2009: 40), with this particular research approach, "…we commit ourselves to exploring, describing, interpreting and situating the means by which our participants make sense of their experiences."

5.2 One-to-one, semi-structured interviews

One-to-one, semi-structured interviews are considered to be the best way to gain insights from the interviewees (later called participants), which would result in rich data fitting the chosen research method. According to Smith, Flowers & Larkin (2009: 57), "one-to-one interviews are easily managed, allowing a rapport to be developed and giving participants the space to think, speak and be heard."

The interview schedule is often used in semi-structured interviews to help narrow down on the agenda, questions, and sensitive issues. The interview schedule, however, does not dictate the direction of the interview but gives the interviewer an understanding of what they want to find out. Questions can be asked in a different order or discarded, and

new questions added as the interview goes on (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). The interview schedule for this research can be seen in Appendix 2.

5.3 Interviewees

A first inquiry email was sent out to six formal women's networks in Finland, to where I had no previous connections. These networks were discovered through the internet. I noted how difficult it was to get several interviewees, even when contacting numerous different networks. From some networks, there was no reply whereas, some others replied, but it was difficult to get participants from their members. One of the participants was already familiar beforehand from Hong Kong, which helped in getting the sample size discussed later. The type of sampling used thus, was self-selection sampling.

As part of the ethical considerations, participants were guaranteed anonymity, all names were changed, and the names of the organisations were not mentioned in the transcript. Thus Niina, Laura, and Emma are not the real names of the participants. The interview data was stored in a manner to ensure each participant's anonymity. Table 1 shows the participants and to which women's network they belong. Each participant was given an informed consent form which they filled, see appendix 1. In the consent form they were asked to confirm that they understood what the nature of the study is, they were informed of voluntary participation and a chance to withdraw from the study at any time.

Table 1.   Research participants

Niina, age 30, member of Aalto Women in Business, Finland, exact year unknown
Laura, age 48, member of Vaikuttajaverkosto WoMan ry, Finland since 2016
Emma, age 41, member of The Women's Foundation, Hong Kong since 2014

For the context of this study, it is essential to briefly introduce the networks as the participant's experience is studied concerning them joining these networks.

5.3.1 The Women's Foundation, Hong Kong

This Hong Kong-based non-profit organization was established in 2004 to promote women's status in society, focusing mainly on challenging gender stereotypes, empowering women in poverty, and advancing women leaders. The founders thought that women in Hong Kong needed a voice and modelled The Women's Foundation after organizations around the world (The Women's Foundation, 2019). They operate on four fundamental principles: action based on empirical research, dedicated and diverse supporters committed to change, and the support of the private sector for funding and institutional support to engineering change (The Women's Foundation, 2020a). The Women's Foundation differs from the two other women's networks in this thesis as they don't have similar membership structure. Instead of paying a yearly membership fee to be a member the association, The Women's Foundation offers variety of programs and events from where individual can choose the most suitable one for them such, the mentoring program and 30 per cent club which is a group of board chairs and business leaders (The Women's Foundation, 2020b). As they don't have members, they don't also collect membership fees and majority of their income comes from corporate donations which they use to cover their expenses which also include employing people full-time. (The Women's Foundation, 2019).

5.3.2 Aalto Women in Business, Finland

Aalto Women in Business (AWiB) was founded in 2012 by three ladies from the same study program who felt like they needed a channel to meet other like-minded businesswomen. It targets 25-35-year-old women who are already building their careers and ambitious to advance. Their impact shows through the organization of events, a peer-to-peer mentoring program, legal advice, and motivating girls in high schools to choose to study in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) fields. The work is voluntary, and currently, the network has over 3500 members (Aalto Women in Business, 2020).

5.3.3 Vaikuttajaverkosto WoMan Ry, Finland

WoMan ry date back to 1980, which makes it the oldest network in this research. WoMan ry focuses primarily on women's leadership and connecting and providing support for women in leadership positions. The history of this organization goes back to an institution that provided leadership education for women. Since then, the organization has changed multiple times to respond to the changes in the needs of its members and society in general. Nowadays, WoMan ry organizes monthly meetings, company visits, and other events alongside its mentoring program, which was the first in Finland in 1993. The network functions on voluntary bases (Yli-Mattila, 2004; Vaikuttajaverkosto WoMan ry, 2008).

5.4 Data collection

I acted as the interviewer although not having previous experience in gathering qualitative data through interviews. Several books (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009; Saunders & Lewis, 2012) and the help of the thesis supervisor were crucial in succeeding at the data collection.

Data was collected through one-to-one, semi-structured interviews, as explained above, with three participants where two of the interviews were through Skype and one face-to-face. Skype interview was deemed a suitable replacement for a face-to-face interview due to the fact that it allowed reading the participants' body language, which gives valuable insights. The interviews were conducted in Finnish and in a span of one month in 2019. The first interview was conducted on November 27th, the second on December 2nd and the third on December 17th. Finnish is the native language of all participants, thus viewed to be the best language for making the participants comfortable in talking about their experiences and ensuring in rich data. The interviews were based on an interview schedule (appendix 2) containing ten questions and lasted approximately 30-80 minutes. Each participant was given an informed consent form which they filled (appendix 1). All participants agreed on being audio recorded; thus, the interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed.

5.5 Data analysis

The data analysis of this research was conducted as suggested by Smith, Flowers & Larkin (2009), and thesis supervisor. The first step is re-reading the transcript in order to "begin the process of entering the participant's world" (Smith et al. 2009: 82); this can be done multiple times. Afterwards, initial notes are done on an exploratory level close to free textual analysis. From the exploratory comments, the analysis focuses on emergent themes and later searching for connections across emergent themes within one participant. The later analysis looks for patterns across different participants. See appendix 4 for example of the process.

5.6 Validity and reliability

Validity, according to Saunders and Lewis (2012: 127), has to do with how accurately the data collection methods measure what they were intended to measure, and if the findings relate to the research questions and the procedure. With the sample size of three, the findings from this research cannot be generalised. However, the size of the sample was deemed sufficient to fit the requirements of an undergraduate thesis, and the chosen research approach. In IPA, there is no required number of participants, and it can be done with just one person. If the study is conducted with just one participant, the quality of that interview needs to be very high. However, Smith, Flowers & Larkin (2009) recommend three participants for an undergraduate thesis; also, the number of participants was assessed as appropriate for this thesis considering the research question. More than just one interview can give us a perspective on different experiences. Quotations from the participants in the analysis ensure that readers understand how the interpretations are made from the data.

The sources for this thesis are academic journals, reports, books and e-books in addition to a few trustworthy newspaper articles that broaden the understanding beyond academic research. Some of the sources are old but act as a base for the theory in the relevant fields and are referred in current research about women's networks.

6   Analysis

This chapter deciphers the data collected from the interviews and analyses the results also in light of the theoretical background. As the participants were promised anonymity their names are changed in this analysis to Emma, Laura, and Niina.

There are four super-ordinate themes which then have varying number of themes. The super-ordinate themes discovered are *self, needing the network, perception of work identity, self as a member, and shared identity of being a career woman*. Self, needing the network encompasses each of the participants experiences before joining their network that affected their decision to join. Perception of work identity increases our understanding of these women and how their work identity can affect them being a member. Self as a member and shared identity of being a career woman focus on the aspects of how the participants experienced their networks. Self as a member emphasizes more objective parts of being a member while shared identity of being a career woman touches on subjective experiences.

The master table 2 below illustrates main findings from the interviews discovered during the analysing process that connects all three participants as explained above.

Table 2.   Master table of themes

Super-ordinate theme	Theme	Description	Illustration	Page/ Line
Self, needing the network	*Vicissitude*	Change in their life that affected their decision to join the network	**Emma**: "We decided to go, just like (…) you could say at that point in adventure mood" **Laura**: "My mom died at that time and there were a lot of this kind of things"	1/21 1/46
	Transition	Transformation from student to career woman encouraging professional development	**Niina**: "I was really active in our guild when I was studying and maybe from there, I got this that maybe there is some sense in this kind of networks"	3/39

Perception of work identity	*Self-awareness*	Deeper understanding on themselves as career women	**Niina**: "I think that, that my strength is being with customers"	2/22
			Laura: "I'm starting to have quite clear vision of what I, or let's say in what kind of world I would like to work and what kind of things"	2/23
			Emma: "I think that I am in a good spot right now"	4/8
	Work-life balance	Importance of not sacrificing their time with children for career	**Laura**: "I noticed that the thing is that always when something happened in my private life I was on an airplane or sitting in an airport lounge"	1/36
			Emma: "I can also control my time bit better, it's really important to me, in here it's not like, I'm not doing like slave work anymore that I did in advertising and it's really important that I also see my kids"	4/9
Self as a member	*Pay it forward*	Importance of contribution in their network	**Emma**: "and then there is that I have often been able to help others with my network, connecting people or helping in finding a job"	10/44
			Niina: "I wish that I could maybe give something back"	7/1
			Laura: "My type is more like if I'm part of this kind of group then I also want to contribute in a way or another"	8/24
	Career prospects	Concrete job opportunities and knowledge of job openings	**Niina**: "I became aware that there is this kind of position in which industrial engineering and management student, M.Sc. (Tech.) can go to work in a [company name], this I found out from there."	3/10
			Emma: "it has been wonderful to notice that	10/47

			there is always someone or actually there are almost too many people that when they hear that you are looking then you get a lot of messages"	
	Participation	Participating in events that are worth their while	**Laura**: "when you yourself aren't in politics for example, so then getting in, it was very, very fruitful and interesting"	5/40
			Emma: "if you would pay something it would probably be worth of several thousand"	6/44
			Niina: "the network generates quality content in form of these events"	4/15
	Expanded worldview	Gaining understanding that would not be possible through one's work	**Emma**: "So in a way bringing more diverse views and paradigms (…) to your work life"	11/19
			Laura: "pretty all-around (…) updating of views"	6/30
Shared identity of being a career woman	*Sense of community*	Choosing to be part of this particular women's network	**Emma**: "women have understood that they need each other for handling these, making them better (…) so we can (…) in a way depending on each other and giving examples and being an example, we can have an impact"	9/28
			Niina: "support or this kind of solidarity is important"	7/11
			Laura: "it is especially beneficial in that in there, people are much more open"	7/7
	Shared success	Fulfillment when other women succeed	**Niina**: "women in a way lift others up with whom they have been in the network together"	5/47
			Emma: "women can be (…) how to put it nicely, they traditionally haven't	10/20

			been the first ones to help each other out in their careers rather there has been more like rivalry and I think that because of these networks this rivalry has changed or is changing"	
	Emotional support	Need for empathetic support	**Laura**: "kind of mental support because that you get from there"	7/16
			Emma: "someone has a horrible situation with their line manager and now the situation is unpleasant and then they ask and right away get, you know, really valuable information and it is the kind of group you can completely trust"	7/22
			Niina: "peer support"	4/10

These findings are discussed in this chapter. Individual themes for each participant can be found in appendix 3. When looking at the extracts below (…) is used always when the participant paused during her interview.

6.1   Self, needing the network

Looking at the circumstances of each participant reveals interesting aspects that could have been encouraging them to join such networks. It appears that two of the participants, Emma and Laura both experienced significant turning points in their lives before joining their networks. They did not bring these up themselves concerning them joining the network. In Emma's case, she just moved from Finland to Hongkong with her boyfriend in 2008. This change of scenery could have made her more open to joining as she needed to build both her social and professional network in a new country. However, it is relevant to ask why she chose The Women's Foundation specifically. From all participants, Emma is the one who emphasizes the most the importance of making a difference.

> like overall employee experience, it is quite (…) a passion of mine and included in that, are these women's networks and advancing women's interests[1]

Furthermore, in her interview, she expressed interest in possibly joining a women's network as an employee. Also, she has been active in women's networks inside organizations as a member and also as a chairwoman. Being part of this kind of network seems to fulfil a different kind of need for her than for the other two participants. For Emma, advancing women's rights seems to be a motivation as well. This could have encouraged her to join The Women's Foundation as it would enable her to make a difference.

> if I would join this kind of organization as an employee that promotes these so then I would really be part of (…) making a difference, opportunities for having an impact would be different[2]

For Laura, the big change in her life was losing a family member. This appeared to be a push for her to make changes she had already contemplated. She resigned from her job where her values conflicted with the organization and she also started studying further while starting in a new job as CEO of a small start-up. These uncertain times and changes in her career seemed to make her re-evaluate what she wanted in life which in turn made her more open to joining WoMan ry even when she did not specifically look for a network.

> Motivation and interest to look at the world from a different point of view than the corporate world and airplane (…) point of view[3]

Laura already had a friend who was a member of WoMan ry. Thus, it was easy for her to join when the moment was right for her. She expresses that after resigning feeling that now she had time to look at the world from a different point of view. Interestingly, she, however, brings forward that it is a women's network was not necessarily a relevant factor for her emphasizing that she did not choose a women's network specifically. However, later in her interview, she says that her network being women's network

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[1] "semmoinen niin kuin overall employee experience, niin se on mulle aika semmoinen (…) intohimo ja siihen liittyy vahvasti just nää niin kuin naisjärjestöt ja niin kuin niiden naisten etujen ajaminen"
[2] "jos lähtisinkin niin kuin työntekijäksi tän tyyppiseen järjestöön, joka ajaa näitä et silloinhan siinä ois niin kuin tosissaan mukana ja tekemässä, tekemässä niin kuin (…) making a difference, et siinä ois erilaiset mahdollisuudet vaikuttaa"
[3] "Motivaatio ja intressiä kattoa maailmaa vähän niin kuin eri näkökulmasta kuin sieltä korporaatio ja lentokone (…) tuota niin näkökulmasta"

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probably affects how open people are there. This will be discussed further later in the analysis.

Niina describes her experience from the perspective of transitioning from a student who was active in her student guild to a career woman. For her, joining the network seems like a natural transition. It is a supporting network at the beginning of one's career. She describes understanding the benefits of networks already during her studies which motivated her to look for a suitable network for her which was Aalto Women in Business.

> I was really active in our guild when I was studying and maybe from there, I got this that maybe there is some sense in this kind of networks[4]

Niina is the youngest of all the participants. It could be that when she graduated in 2013 women's networks had gained more visibility as viable options for professional women and starting to be more popular. The studies in women's networks have been increasing since 2000. This also could have either been driven by the growing popularity or the other way around but nonetheless, she found it important from the beginning of her career.

6.2 Perception of work identity

It is also important to consider how the participant's perception of their work identity as it affects their networking. Interestingly, all participants expressed self-awareness, understanding of what their career goals are and why.

Niina, who is the youngest of the three still had aspirations that according to chapter 3.6 talking about career success can be referred as an objective success, such as promotion as can be seen from the extract below.

> a head of some department or CEO or something like this in a small or bigger firm, that could be the (…) career path[5]

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[4] "mä olin tosi aktiivinen opiskeluaikoina killassa ja, ja ehkä sitä kautta niin kuin tuli tällainen et hei näissähän on jotain järkeä näissä tällaisissa niin kuin yhdistyksissä"

[5] "jonkun yksikön päällikkö tai toimari tai jotain tällaista jossain niin kuin pienemmässä tai isommassa firmassa niin tuota se voisi olla se (…) polku

Her self-awareness could also stem from her experience in various jobs that she already had. She studied Industrial Engineering and Management and graduated in 2013. Niina still considers that her career started in 2010 when she was a trainee in an organization. She has progressed since from entry-level to a key account manager. For her to already have experience within different organizations also reflects the change in how a career is understood by people but also in literature, for example, a protean career that was discussed in section 3.3, p. 13. Nowadays, it is normal to have shorter periods within one organization and change jobs according to what is deemed the best for oneself, taking charge of one's career development like Niina has done.

Emma and Laura, on the other hand, have been working longer. Laura's background is in Business Information Technology and she started her career in IT around mid-1990. She worked for 16 years in one organization but changed roles a couple of times. Then as explained before, there were several factors which made her resign. She started studying further and at the same time managing a small start-up not related to IT. At the time of our interview, she was considering going back to IT where she thought she had the most to give. Emma, on the other hand, studied Economics and Business Administration graduating in 2003 and started her career in advertising companies. She has since worked for example in brand management as head of a brand but has her passion for employee experience where she could see herself working in the future. At the time of our interview, Emma was also looking for a new job as she had been laid off. Laura and Emma who both have built their career for a longer time emphasize aspects that can be referred more as subjective success. They describe the importance of work-life balance, having control of their time and importance of being present for their children as Emma says in her extract below.

> I can also control my time bit better, it's really important to me, in here it's not like, I'm not doing like slave work anymore that I did in advertising and it's really important that I also see my kids[6]

It seems that priorities for Emma and Laura have changed. Emma implies in the extract above that she has done, what she calls 'slave work' earlier in her career. Both of them seem to see high-level jobs as sacrificing on something that they are not willing to give up. In this case, it seems to be in control of their time. It could be that women and men

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[6] "pystyy myös hallitsemaan omaa ajankäyttöä vähän paremmin, se on mulle hirveän tärkeää, ei täällä olla silleen niin kuin, enää mä en tee semmoista orjatyötä kuin silloin mainostoimisto aikana ja se on tosi tärkeätä, että mä näen myös niin kuin lapsiani"

do not perceive this sacrifice the same way which in turn could partly affect why we see so few women at the high-level. It may be because men are more often perceived as financially taking care of their family, being breadwinners as was discussed in Chapter 3.5, p. 16. It could suggest that men more often than women find satisfaction from providing for their family which in turn makes sacrificing time with your family more bearable for men than the women who participated in this study.

6.3   Shared identity of being a career woman

Shared identity in women's networks seems to make them special. Which translates in being able to identify with others, which helps to understand each other's experiences, situation, and struggles (Greguletz et al., 2018). Understandably, it is much easier for women to identify with each other than it would be for men who do not identify with being a career woman. However, Emma brings forward an intriguing notion about how she was advised to associate with men who have daughters themselves. It could be that it is easier for men to identify with women through their daughters. In the network literature networking with people who share the same characteristics as you, is referred to as homophily which was discussed in Chapter 4.2, p. 19. The sense of community could also be boosted by the fact that the members of external networks choose to be part of the community voluntarily, consequently choosing a network that fits what they want in contrast to networks inside organizations.

This idea of shared identity, in turn, could be seen to affect how Emma, Laura, and Niina also emphasized emotional support as one of the benefits they experienced from their networks. Emma and Laura especially found this aspect important for themselves and as Emma describes it is a group, she can completely trust to give advice and support even in tricky situations where it would be, for example, hard to go and talk with colleagues.

> someone has a horrible situation with their line manager — and now the situation is unpleasant and then they ask and right away get, you know, really valuable information and it is the kind of group you can completely trust[7]

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[7] "joku kokee et hei nyt aivan järkyttävä tilanne heidän esimiehensä kanssa, (esimies on se line manager, niin, niin esimiehen kanssa) ja nyt sit se on niin kuin tilanne on tulehtunut ja sit siihen kysytään ja sit saa niin kuin saman tien tiedätkö sä niin kuin tosi arvokasta tietoa ja se on semmoinen ryhmä, johon voi sinänsä täysin luottaa"

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Laura also discussed that one of the reasons why a women's network is important is that it creates a safe environment for women to share their thoughts. For Laura, who did not choose women's network specifically this was one of the advantages that she found.

it is especially beneficial in that in there, people are much more open[8]

Interestingly, Niina emphasized this aspect less but also referred to the peer support that she experienced. It seems that for her the professional aspect outweighs this type of emotional support. It could be due to the fact that what she is looking for from the network is different from the other two. Niina, as introduced above, is younger than the others and has career aspirations to still go for higher levels in an organization. Laura and Emma, on the other hand, did not have similar aspirations. For Niina, it could be that her women's network represents a sort of tool that can help her in her career development which emphasizes other aspects of the network, such as professional events and training. Laura and Emma, on the other hand, could feel as they do not want to reach those high levels and have other priorities where emotional support is more valuable. Especially when both of them also have children, emotional support could be even more valuable when they have to combine the roles of a worker and parent which is still a struggle for many women as was learned in theoretical background.

Emma also brings forward an interesting notion that ties back to emotional support and sense of community in relation to your level of confidence. As was discussed in 3.5, p. 15 about career barriers, women experienced lower confidence levels, which in turn affected their career development. Emma says in the extract below that being a part of her external women's network has made her more confident.

kind of personal certainty, self-confidence and probably some kind of confidence in front of audience[9]

It seems that women's networks create an environment where it is safe for women to grow and develop themselves with the help of the community.

Women are often seen to be preferring strong ties which can be connected to increased emotional support (Greguletz et al., 2018). This preference could also be a result of role

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[8] "siitä on erityistä hyötyä siinä, että siellä ollaan paljon avoimempia."
[9] "semmoista niin kuin varmuutta, itseluottamusta ja varmaan jonkun näköistä esiintymisvarmuutta"

expectations that are stereotypical where women's role is more caring and supportive (Kidder, 2002 cited in Vinnicombe et al., 2006). This preference has also been criticized as hindering women from getting ahead and encouraging women to network with women instead of men (Tonts, 2020;) which seems to also affect women's networks credibility negatively as was discussed in section 4.1, p. 18. But when considering how many women are still underdogs in work-life it seems natural that emotionally supporting each other would be valued and as Villesèche and Josserand (2017) argued that mixing both instrumental and expressive ties are vital to women as it offers a variety of resources that are specifically tailored for women.

As presented above, there seems to be a general idea that women need to instead of networking with other women to network more with men. This argument is valid as men often have resources that are thought to be beneficial in career development. However, going back to Chapter 4.1, p. 17-19 it is not purely out of choice that women are not networking with men as much but that they are likely excluded from those informal networks. Understandably, women do not bring as much value to the high-status members who are most likely men. And as women represent low-status members, consequently networking options are then limited for them (Ibarra, 1993). Both Emma and Laura had concrete examples of "old boy" networks from their organizations, which had negatively affected them. Emma mentions that in her latest job, she felt like she did not know the right people and was thus laid off.

> And a bit like old boy-network looking after each other, that is where I basically at the first time experienced that you could clearly see that necessarily not the people who were qualified for some positions, that it did not matter that much but who you knew mattered more[10]

Afterwards, she rationalizes her dismissal by saying that she was the cheapest person to fire as she was the newest. It seems that being excluded from those networks and the feeling of injustice it brings is seen as bad or overreacting. She also validates her experience by saying that other employees who were laid off felt the same way. It is almost like women are not allowed to complain that some people, most often men, get ahead with the help of their network which can make women's networks even more appealing.

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[10] "Sitten vähän niin kuin silleen hyvä-veli meiningillä katsottiin toisten perään, että siellä mä oikeastaan ensimmäisen kerran koin semmoista, että selkeästi näki että välttämättä ne ihmiset, jotka olisi ollut ehkä pätevimpiä joihinkin tehtäviin, niin, niin, sillä ei ollutkaan enää niin kuin niin paljon merkitystä, lähinnä sillä että kenet tunsi"

Interestingly recent research discovered results that indicate that in reality, it is beneficial for women to form strong and tight connections with each other if they want to achieve leadership positions. In addition to the tightly knit connections, they need boundary-spanning relationships as well. This research describes boundary-spanning relationships for example as spanning expertise and functions, relationships with seniors and sponsors (Carboni, Cross, Page and Parker, 2019: 5). Women's formal networks offer these type of relationships for women. It is also important to note what each individual is looking for in their network. As discussed above, for someone it could be a career development strategy whereas for someone else it fulfils a need for emotional support.

Also, there seems to be a change towards the idea of shared success where lifting other women up is seen as beneficial to the whole network. This aspect was brought forward by Emma and Niina. Why Laura did not emphasize this could be because she did not choose women's network especially and that she works in the male-dominated industry. The mindset of shared success has mostly been associated with men's networks as men are more likely to have instrumental ties meaning working together to gain mutual benefits as was discussed in section 4.3, p. 20 (Encyclopedia, 2019). Emma describes this change in women that she has experienced in the extract below.

> women can be (…) how to put it nicely, they traditionally haven't been the first ones to help each other out in their careers rather there has been more like rivalry and I think that because of these networks this rivalry has changed or is changing[11]

This change to shared success could also be why women are more interested in joining these types of networks. It seems to be important to lift other women as well and it is seen as beneficial for all women, including oneself. This shared success is also linked to paying it forward, which was also important to all Laura, Emma, and Niina. It suggests that all of them feel that they have benefitted from their network and thus, want to contribute as well but also it describes them as members of such network and identifying with that.

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[11] "naiset osaa joskus olla aika (…) miten sen sanoisi nyt niin kuin kauniisti, että ei oo niin kuin perinteisesti ollut niin kuin ensimmäisenä jeesimässä toisiaan uralla eteenpäin vaan enemmänkin kilpailu asetelmassa ja mä luulen, et näiden verkostojen myötä, niin se on niin kuin muuttunut tai muuttumassa"

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6.4 Self as a member

It is also important to consider the network theory concerning women's networks the participants belonged to. As expressed in chapter 4 basic concepts in network theory are instrumental and expressive ties, strength of ties, density, and centrality. From the interviews and looking at the information available on websites it can be deduced that even when these networks are vastly different from each other they all offer low density, high centrality, and consequently weak and instrumental ties. However, it is also important to note that this is the basis of the network and each individual is free to form strong and expressive ties within the network as, for example, Laura described in her interview.

> From these it is easy to form kind of smaller groups[12]

This conclusion is made from the number of members in these networks which varied from 134 (in 2014, WoMan ry) to 3500 (Aalto Women in Business) members and in The Women's Foundation's case considerable number of participants in different programs. These numbers suggest low density, high centrality, and consecutively weak ties as it was stated in 4.4 number of strong ties that one can have is limited.

Emma and Niina had been members of their networks longer than Laura which also reflected how they experienced their networks. Emma and Niina expressed that they experienced concrete benefits which could be seen as instrumental benefits and strength of weak ties tied to their career and this could be tied to how long they have been members.

Emma was looking for a new job during our interview as she was laid off before. She expressed how valuable she found her network at that time since she brings up the importance of having contacts when looking for a job which is aligned with the idea that networks are also a source of job information.

> It has been really important in this situation that I have this network because nowadays most of the jobs you get through your contacts[13]

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[12] "Tämmöisistähän sitten helposti niin kuin tulee jotain semmoisia pienempiä ryhmiä"
[13] "sehän on ollut tässä tilanteessa hirveän tärkeätä, että mulla on tää verkosto, koska sitä kautta kyl nykyisin aika lailla työt saadaan kontaktien kautta"

Niina also talks about having multiple career prospects through her networks. One interesting case is how she learned of an open position through another women's network called Ompeluseura, that she did not think was applicable considering her educational background. This is aligned with another benefit of the network, which is access to information that you would not normally get.

> I became aware that there is this kind of position in which industrial engineering and management student, M.Sc. (Tech.) can go to work in a [company name], this I found out from there [14]

Interestingly, all of them also emphasized the importance of quality content in the form of diverse events and training. And as Emma expresses in the extraction below.

> if you would pay something it would probably be worth of several thousand[15]

It can be questioned whether women would participate in such network if they did not offer content for their members that they see as valuable. Looking at how Emma, Laura, and Niina talk about their networks suggests that it is a very important aspect for them to be able to invest in themselves as well. It does not necessarily need to be connected to career development as Laura brings forward a unique opportunity of visiting a Finnish minister that she found the interesting and valuable experience. This makes it different from informal men's networks that are often more social in nature such as going for drinks after work or going to sports events. Going to events could make it easier to justify being a part of this type of network for women. It could be that as women are not that used to the informal networking and still have the majority of domestic responsibilities that they find just socializing something that is done primarily with family and close friends. It is also good to note that our world is demanding for us to be more efficient than ever and the pressure is real to be and remain competitive in job markets. Another reason, why the content these networks produce is seen as important is that there is clearly a need for that. Emma, Laura, and Niina still experienced the content as valuable to them. Different kind of events can support women in ways that, for example, organizations are not able to and tailor their training, especially for women.

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[14] "havahduin, että on olemassa tällainen paikka mikä Tuta diplomi-insinööri voi mennä töihin kuin [yrityksen nimi], et, et se löyty sitä kautta."
[15] "jos niistä jotain maksaisi niin se olisi, se on varmaan rahan arvossa useiden tuhansien arvoinen"

7   Conclusion

Perception of career is different for everyone and at the beginning stages of this thesis I was more interested in the objective benefits of women's networks as networking and networks were emphasized as beneficial for one's future career during studies. Consequently, the deeper understanding remained quite shallow. However, as the thesis process went forward, it was easy to see how complex the concept of career is. Slowly, the understanding of how these networks affected the lives of each participant progressed from objective presumptions to noticing the importance of other aspects such as emotional support, sense of community, and a shared sense of success, which are arguably as important as the direct benefits that can be observed from outside. As can be seen from the analysis chapter, these aspects were important to the participants and affected their experience of their network. This work has highlighted the need for more understanding and inclusiveness when studying networks. When thinking back to how career development was studied before and how old theories were perceived as fitting for women and minorities, it seems that the same is assumed regarding women's networks, especially regarding their benefits, as they are not thoroughly understood because they cannot be directly compared with men's networks.

Important super-ordinate themes found were the shared identity of being a career woman and self as a member. Identity of being a career woman represents more of the subjective aspects such as sense of community, emotional support, and shared success whereas self as a member focuses more on objective aspects such as career prospects, participation, and paying it forward. Studies have shown that there are differences between men's and women's networks, and often men get more direct benefits from their networks. This research supports those results, as well as the idea that it is not as important for women's networks to affect their career positively. But more important is the fact that they are tailored to what women want and need. Especially, since it was important to be efficient and have maximum benefits from the time spent in their network. Thus, all participants highlighted the content their network produced as an important factor for them choosing to be a member. However, this does not mean that the participants were only looking out for themselves. Actually, Niina, Laura, and Emma experienced helping the members of their network important. However, given the small sample size and chosen research approach, caution must be applied. This research had

three participants, and it is based on their experiences and how these individuals perceived their networks.

From the analysis, and this sample, we can suggest that women tend to benefit more from networks which are outside organizations. As usually women represent a lower number of high-level employees, they can connect and gain benefits when it happens outside organizations. The goal is not to compete with men's informal networks but to create an environment where women also feel welcome. The benefits experienced were different such as being more open as Laura said, or gaining more confidence as Emma expressed. On the other hand, the findings in this thesis contradicts that women would prefer strong and expressive ties what had been found in previous studies (e.g. Greguletz et al., 2018). As mentioned above, it seems that women want to help others in their network out and not only their inner circle. Furthermore, even when the participants expressed the importance of such things as sense of community and emotional support, they needed to justify participating with professional reasons such as training and making new contacts. Contribution to their network needed to be worth their while emphasizing the professional attitude towards their networks.

As discussed in methodology, the results with the sample size of three cannot be generalised. In addition, it is important to note that I have not done this type of qualitative research before, which means that the level of analysis will not be on the level of experienced researchers. Furthermore, bachelor's thesis has its limitations on the time and depth of the research. However, this thesis has used reliable and valid sources in the literature review to build the theoretical framework, and the analysis process has been transparent for the readers to understand the interpretations made.

In qualitative research, the reflection of what has been done is also encouraged. The whole process has been long, which affected the level of motivation and made it harder to produce quality content and concentrate, especially towards the end. This prolongation taught me the importance of time management and the need for a comprehensive plan and structure for the whole process. It was also important to be careful and to make sure that the focus is precise enough and not too broad. Also, it was surprising how hard it was to get participants voluntarily. In the future, it would be easier to be prepared for the time that it takes to get participants and how much more effort it

requires. However, the participants in this thesis gave interesting insights and were diverse in their opinions and experiences.

This thesis contributes to the wider conversation on important aspects of women's career development. The research objective was to study how women perceived their networks, especially in relation to their career. The findings of this research shed more light on the experiences of women as members of networks that have been created to improve women's career advancement. Further studies on the current topic are recommended in order to understand women's experiences better. The results of this study are encouraging and should be validated by a larger sample size. There could also be further research into women's external networks using quantitative analysis now that there has been qualitative research to understand the issue better.

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Consent form

The consent form format is copied from Saunders and Lewis (2012: 155) and was originally developed by Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2009) in Research Methods for Business Students, 5th edn, Harlow: FT Prentice Hall. All of the participants signed the form before their interviews.

Consent form

Impact of women's networks to their career development

Ramona Suonio, Final year student at Metropolia University of Applied Sciences

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I understand what the research is about and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I can withdraw at any time without giving a reason.

3. I agree to take part in the research.

Please initial box

| | Yes | No |

4. I agree to my interview being audio recorded.

5. I agree to the use of anonymized quotations in publications.

Name of participant: _____   Signature: _____

Researcher's name: _____   Signature: _____

Date: _____

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Interview schedule

ENG

Build rapport

1. Could you tell me about your career?

Prompt:

2. What kind of career plans and dreams you have?

Prompt: How do you plan to achieve them?

3. Did you ever experience any kind of barriers in your career?

First reaction can be nooo… but then later they can start to tell stuff

Prompt: What do you think of them? How did you act/overcome them?

4. You are part of this network… (yes)… Why did you join?

Prompt: Why do you think these networks exist?

5. What kind of expectations did you have when you joined?

Prompt:

6. How have these expectations been met?

Prompt: Would you have an example?

7. What kind of impact you think the network has had on your career?

Prompt: How does it show? What about the barriers?

8. Do you think 'old boy' networks exist? Have you experienced 'old boy' networks?

Prompt: How has joining the network affected your view of 'old boy' networks?

9. How do you see yourself in the future as a member of this network?

FIN

1. Voisitko kertoa minulle urastasi?

Prompt:

2. Minkälaisia urasuunnitelmia ja haaveita sinulla on?

Prompt: Miten aiot saavuttaa ne?

3. Oletko koskaan kohdannut mitään esteitä urallasi?

Prompt: Minkälaisia ne ovat olleet? Mitä mieltä olet ollut niistä? Miten pääsit niiden yli?

4. Olet jäsen tässä verkostossa… (joo)… Miksi liityit?

Prompt: Miksi mielestäsi tälläisiä verkostoja on olemassa?

5. Minkälaisia odotuksia sinulla oli, kun liityit?

Prompt:

6. Miten nämä odotukset ovat toteutuneet?

Prompt: Olisiko sinulla antaa esimerkkiä?

7. Minkälainen vaikutus tällä verkostolla on mielestäsi ollut sinun uraasi?

Prompt: Miten se on näkynyt? Entä millaisia vaikutuksia sillä on ollut esteisiin urallasi?

8. Uskotko, että 'hyvä veli'-verkostoja on olemassa?

Prompt: Onko sinulla kokemusta niistä ennen verkostoon liittymistä/sen jälkeen? Miten verkosto on vaikuttanut näkemyksiisi?

9. Miten näet itsesi tulevaisuudessa tämän verkoston jäsenenä?

Individual themes

Niina Themes	Page/ Line	Original (FIN)	Translation (ENG)
Self, needing the network			
Transition	3/39	"mä olin tosi aktiivinen opiskeluaikoina killassa ja, ja ehkä sitä kautta niin kuin tuli tällainen et hei näissähän on jotain järkeä näissä tällaisissa niin kuin yhdistyksissä"	"I was really active in our guild when I was studying and maybe from there, I got this that maybe there is some sense in this kind of networks"
Low-threshold	4/13	"tosi helppo ja matala kynnys mennä mukaan"	"really easy and low-threshold to join"
Professional investment	3/38	"mä koin niin kuin nimenomaan tämmöiselle niin kuin ura ja tämmöiselle asiapitoiselle niin kuin, niin kuin sisällölle niin kuin tilausta"	"I felt a need for this kind of career and kind of tangible content, a need for that"
Perception of work identity			
Self-awareness	2/22	"koen, että, että mun vahvuus kuitenkin on olla asiakkaiden kanssa"	"I think that, that my strength is being with customers"
Objective success	5/8	"jonkun yksikön päällikkö tai toimari tai jotain tällaista jossain niin kuin pienemmässä tai isommassa firmassa niin tuota se voisi olla se (…) polku"	"head of some department or CEO or something like this in a small or bigger firm, that could be the (…) career path"
Self as a member			
Pay it forward	7/1	"No mä toivoisin et mä pystyisin ehkä niin kuin antaan jotain takaisin"	"I wish that I could maybe give something back"
Professional development	4/18	"mä koen ne ihan puhtaasti niin kuin investointina omaan	"I experience them purely as an investment to

		henkilökohtaiseen ja urakehitykseen"	personal and career development"
Career prospects	3/10	"havahduin, että on olemassa tällainen paikka mikä Tuta diplomi-insinööri voi mennä töihin kuin [yrityksen nimi], et, et se löyty sitä kautta."	"I became aware that there is this kind of position in which industrial engineering and management student, M.Sc. (Tech.) can go to work in a [company name], this I found out from there." (talking about another women's network called Ompeluseura)
Participation	4/15	"se verkosto tuottaa aika laadukasta sisältöä niin kuin tämmöisten tapahtumien muodossa"	"the network generates quality content in form of these events"
Shared identity of being a career woman			
Sense of community	7/11	"niin kuin tuki tai tällainen niin kuin solidaarisuus on tärkeätä"	"support or this kind of solidarity is important"
Shared success	7/14 7/47	"mä ainakin satsaan siihen, että mä itse tuen ja nostan naisia niin kuin organisaatioissa" "nää tavallaan naiset nostaa toisiaan niin kuin keiden kanssa on nyt oltu tässä verkostossa mukana"	"I'm gonna invest in that I will support and lift up women in organizations" "women in a way lift others up with whom they have been in the network together"
Emotional support	4/10	"vertaistukea"	"peer support"

Laura Themes	Page/ Line	Original (FIN)	Translation (ENG)
Self, needing the network			
Vicissitude	1/45	"mun itseasiassa äiti kuoli siinä ja siinä oli kaikenlaista tällaista"	"my mom died at that time and there were a lot of this kind of things"
Renewing yourself	2/9	"ja sitten tavallaan myös niin kuin motivaatio ja intressiä kattoa maailmaa vähän niin kuin eri näkökulmasta"	"and kind of motivation and interest to look at the world from different point of view"
Perception of work identity			
Self-awareness	2/23	"mulla on tullut aika selkeä niin kuin visio siitä, että mitä tai sanotaan, että missä maailmassa mä haluaisin tehdä ja minkälaisia asioita"	"I'm starting to have quite clear vision of what I, or let's say in what kind of world I would like to work and what kind of things"
Work-life balance	1/36	"huomasin, että nyt on vähän sellainen juttu, että aina kun tapahtui privaattimaailmassa jotain niin mä istuin lentokoneessa tai loungessa"	"I noticed that the thing is that always when something happened in my private life I was on an airplane or sitting in an airport lounge"
Subjective success	2/42	"tärkeämpiä nyt, että mä teen sellaisia asioita mihin, mihin mä niin kuin uskon, et mitkä innostaa mua, mitkä mä tiedän, että voi innostaa mua niin kuin seuraavatkin kymmenen vuotta"	"the most important right now is that I do the kind of things I believe in, things that excite me, things that I know will excite me the next ten years"
Self as a member			
Pay it forward	6/15	"jotenkin ihan luonnollista, että jos, jos pyydetään apua tästä, niin sit se on niin kuin se kuuluu niin kuin siihen musta se on	"it is somehow natural that if you ask for help it is part of the, I think it is part of the, kind of the (network) model"

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	8/24	niin kuin, se on niin kuin, se kuuluu siihen malliin" "mä oon ehkä tyypiltäni sellainen, että, et kun on tällaisessa ryhmässä niin sitten haluaa myös niin kuin kontribuoida tavalla tai toisella"	"My type is more like if I'm part of this kind of group then I also want to contribute in a way or another"
Career support	6/22 5/25	"avunantoa tavallaan yli sitten muuten niin kuin tämmöisten niin kuin normaalien organisaatio tai, tai, tai ala rajojen." "suomalaisen verkoston rakentaminen"	"helping in sense over the normal organizational or border" "building Finnish network"
Participation	5/40	"et kun ei pörrää itse niissä politiikassa esimerkiksi niin, tuota niin pääsisi sellaisiin, että siel on ollut hyvin, hyvin antoisia ja mielenkiintoisia"	"when you yourself aren't in politics for example, so then getting in, it was very, very fruitful and interesting" (talking about event when they got to visit a minister)
Expanding worldview	6/8 6/30	"onko se vaikuttanut mun, mun tuota niin ajattelumaailmaan näillä eri kontenteilla, on ihan varmasti" "aika laaja-alainen (…) näkemysten päivittäminen"	"if it has affected my worldview with these different contents, surely" "pretty all-around (…) updating of views"
Shared identity of being a career woman			
Sense of community	7/7	"siitä on erityistä hyötyä siinä, että siellä ollaan paljon avoimempia."	"it is especially beneficial in that in there, people are much more open"
Emotional support	7/16	"semmoista niin kuin mentaalitukea koska sitähän siellä niin kuin tulee"	"kind of mental support because that you get from there"

Relationships	9/11	"myöskin niin kuin syntyy semmoisia uusia ystävä- tai keskusteluryhmiä"	"also new friendship and discussion groups arise"

Emma Themes	Page/ Line	Original (FIN)	Translation (ENG)
Self, needing the network			
Vicissitude	1/21	"päätettiin lähteä, ihan niin kuin (…) voisi kai sanoa siinä vaiheessa niin kuin seikkailumielellä koska oltiin, hän oli kolmekymmentä ja mä olin kaksikymmentäyhdeksän eikä vielä niin kuin perhettä tai lapsia tai oltu kihloissakaan, että se oli aika lailla semmoinen et niin kuin lähdetään katsomaan"	"we decided to go, just like (…) you could say at that point in adventure mood because, we were, he was thirty and I was twenty-nine and we didn't yet have a family or kids or we weren't engaged so it was more like let's go and see"
Making a difference	13/17	"semmoinen niin kuin overall employee experience, niin se on mulle aika semmoinen (…) intohimo ja siihen liittyy vahvasti just nää niin kuin naisjärjestöt ja niin kuin niiden naisten etujen ajaminen"	"like overall employee experience, it is quite (…) a passion of mine and included in that, are these women's networks and advancing women's interests"
Perception of work identity			
Self-awareness	4/8	"musta mä olen semmoisessa kohtaa missä on aika lailla hyvä niin kuin keskitie ja hyvä olla"	"I think that I am in a good spot right now"
Work-life balance	4/9	"pystyy myös hallitsemaan omaa ajankäyttöä vähän paremmin, se on mulle	"I can also control my time bit better, it's really important to me, in here

		hirveän tärkeää, ei täällä olla silleen niin kuin, enää mä en tee semmoista orjatyötä kuin silloin mainostoimisto aikana ja se on tosi tärkeätä, että mä näen myös niin kuin lapsiani"	it's not like, I'm not doing like slave work anymore that I did in advertising and it's really important that I also see my kids"
Self-worth	8/41	"alkuun mulla oli vähän semmoinen tyypillinen semmoisen naisen asenne, et onks mulla nyt mitään sanottavaa ja en tiedä mut sit sitä huomaa ei et kyllä sitä tässä vaiheessa uraa on aika paljon jo niin kuin kokemusta ja tietoa ja mielipidettä"	"at the beginning I had a typical "women's attitude", like I don't have anything to say and I don't know anything but then you notice that actually at this point in your career you have quite a lot of experience, knowledge, and views"
Self as a member			
Pay it forward	10/43	"ja sitten se, et mä oon oikeastaan päässyt hirveän usein auttamaan muita niin kuin omalla verkostollani et yhdistämään eri kontakteja tai auttamaan ihmisiä työnhaussa"	"and then there is that I have often been able to help others with my network, connecting people or helping in finding a job"
Visibility	8/37	"sitten näitten verkostojen kautta sit on pyydetty niin kuin alan tilaisuuksiin puhumaan"	"to some extent I have been asked through these networks to speak in events for my field"
Mutual growth	7/31	"vaikka olin itse siis mentoroijan roolissa niin, niin se niin kuin oppimisen määrä ja se mikä siitä saa kaikilta muilta niin se on ihan valtava ja myös niiltä mentoroitaviltaan"	"even when I was a mentor myself the amount of learning and what you receive from there from others is huge and also from your mentee"
Expanding worldview	11/19	"Et se semmoinen niin kuin monipuolisempien näkemysten ja ajatusmallien (…) tuonti omaan työntekoon"	"So, in a way bringing more diverse views and paradigms (…) to your work life"

Career prospects	10/46	"se on ollut kyllä ihan valtavan hienoa huomata, että, et aina löytyy niin kuin joku, joka on tai oikeastaan löytyy lähes liikaakin niitä ihmisiä, et kun ne kuulee, että hakee niin sulla ois niin kuin posti laulaa"	"it has been wonderful to notice that there is always someone or actually there are almost too many people that when they hear that you are looking then you get a lot of messages" (She was looking for a job at our time of interview)
Participation	6/43 6/45	"tää ohjelma on ihan valtavan (…) monipuolinen" "jos niistä jotain maksaisi niin se olisi, se on varmaan rahan arvossa useiden tuhansien arvoinen"	"this program is really (…) diverse" "if you would pay something it would probably be worth of several thousand"
Growth	11/14	"semmoista niin kuin varmuutta, itseluottamusta ja varmaan jonkun näköistä esiintymisvarmuutta"	"kind of personal certainty, self-confidence and probably some kind of confidence in front of audience"
Shared identity of being a career woman			
Sense of community	9/28	"naiset on ymmärtänyt, että tarvii toisiaan näiden asioiden käsittelyyn, parantamiseen (…) siihen et pystytään (…) tavallaan toisiinsa tukeutumalla ja, ja esimerkkejä antamalla ja esimerkkeinä olemalla, pystytään niin kuin vaikuttamaan"	"women have understood that they need each other for handling these, making them better (…) so we can (…) in a way depending on each other and giving examples and being an example, we can have an impact"
Shared success	10/20	"naiset osaa joskus olla aika (…) miten sen sanoisi nyt niin kuin kauniisti, että ei oo niin kuin perinteisesti ollut niin kuin ensimmäisenä jeesimässä toisiaan uralla eteenpäin vaan enemmänkin kilpailu asetelmassa ja mä luulen,	"women can be (…) how to put it nicely, they traditionally haven't been the first ones to help each other out in their careers rather there has been more like rivalry and I think that because of these networks this

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		et näiden verkostojen myötä, niin se on niin kuin muuttunut tai muuttumassa"	rivalry has changed or is changing"
Emotional support	7/22	"joku kokee et hei nyt aivan järkyttävä tilanne heidän esimiehensä kanssa, (esimies on se line manager, niin, niin esimiehen kanssa) ja nyt sit se on niin kuin tilanne on tulehtunut ja sit siihen kysytään ja sit saa niin kuin saman tien tiedätkö sä niin kuin tosi arvokasta tietoa ja se on semmoinen ryhmä, johon voi sinänsä täysin luottaa"	"someone has a horrible situation with their line manager and now the situation is unpleasant and then they ask and right away get, you know, really valuable information and it is the kind of group you can completely trust"

Example of analysis process

The transcript is on the left side to allow space for the initial notes which are on the middle and emergent themes which are on the right side.