The Increasing Role Played by the Females in the Chinese Economic Development

-An investigation of the challenges facing the upward mobile female in the leadership ladders

Author: Jing Tan
Examiner: Tomi Kallio
Supervisor: Anders Hytter
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“Being a woman is a terribly difficult task, since it consists principally in dealing with men.”

—— Joseph Conrad
Abstract

With the increasing role played by the females in Chinese economic development, females draw attention from the public promptly. Since Chinese female achieved legally equal rights with male recently, female are still underrepresented at higher organizational levels. The previous researches on female leadership are plentiful and covered various dimensions. In Chinese context, the female leadership is embodied with the empowerment of female entrepreneurs.

Hence, this research is concentrate the challenges facing Chinese female in their work, to meet the attention of why there are less top female leaders and why it is more difficult for female to approach higher leadership levels. The main research question of this thesis is: Why Chinese female facing more challenges/difficulties to move up in their leadership ladders compared to male? Following the qualitative research method, this thesis applies the theory of leadership, gender perspectives in leadership, and female leadership as the theoretical framework. Then, six Chinese female were interviewed for the investigation as the primary data collection.

From the dedicated perspectives of the interviewees, the answers are concluded about the research question:
◆ Transformational leadership style makes female fit into male-dominant context.
◆ The gender bias and stereotypes of female still exist and played negative effects.
◆ Balancing the needs between their families and their work is a challenge for female to overcome.

Key words: Leadership, Gender Perspectives in Leadership, Female leadership
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Kalmar, Sweden
Content

1. Introduction........................................................................................................................................... 8
   1.1 Background ........................................................................................................................................... 8
   1.2 Purpose ............................................................................................................................................... 11
   1.3 Problem discussion ............................................................................................................................. 12
   1.4 Research Question ............................................................................................................................ 13
   1.5 Thesis Outline .................................................................................................................................... 13

2. Literature Review ................................................................................................................................... 15
   2.1 Leadership .......................................................................................................................................... 18
   2.2 Gender Perspectives in Leadership .................................................................................................... 19
   2.3 Female Leadership ............................................................................................................................. 22
      2.3.1 Transformational Leadership ......................................................................................................... 22
      2.3.2 Legitimacy ................................................................................................................................... 24
      2.3.3 Gendered Talent ........................................................................................................................... 25

3. Methodology .......................................................................................................................................... 28
   3.1 Research Approach ........................................................................................................................... 28
   3.2 Research Design .................................................................................................................................. 30
   3.3 Sampling Method .............................................................................................................................. 30
   3.4 Data Method ...................................................................................................................................... 31
   3.5 Interview Guide ................................................................................................................................... 32
   3.6 Scientific Credibility .......................................................................................................................... 37
   3.7 Ethical Considerations ......................................................................................................................... 38
   3.8 Summary of Methodology Choices .................................................................................................. 39

4. Empirical Data and Analysis.............................................................................................................. 40
   4.1 Leadership .......................................................................................................................................... 44
   4.2 Gender perspectives in Leadership .................................................................................................... 47
   4.3 Female leadership ............................................................................................................................. 50
      4.3.1 Transformational leadership ........................................................................................................ 50
      4.3.2 Legitimacy ................................................................................................................................... 54
4.3.3 Gender Talent ........................................................................................................... 56

5. Conclusion ....................................................................................................................... 62

  5.1 Research Question ....................................................................................................... 62

  5.2 Research Contributions .............................................................................................. 64

  5.3 Research Limitations ................................................................................................. 65

  5.4 Further Research ....................................................................................................... 66

7. Reference list: ............................................................................................................... 67
**Table and Figure Contents**

Table 1 Gender Impacts on New Venture Organizations ........................................ 21
Table 2 The summary of Methodology Choices ...................................................... 39

Figure 1 The Linkage between Female Leadership .............................................. 16
Figure 2 MBA graduates current jobs ....................................................................... 27
Figure 3: Induction and Deduction ......................................................................... 29
1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Nowadays, more and more companies realized that women could solve today’s leadership shortage to a large extent as future leadership talent (Beeson & Valerio, 2012). Meeting the popular trend of gender equality in leadership and management, this research concentrate on the increased role played by the female and what challenges they confronted in their leadership ladders. This research locates the investigation in Chinese female who is/was in their work as the research context. Both the background knowledge of how Chinese economic development affects the Chinese gender traditional minds and the introduction of the current situation are as follows.

China is becoming one of the most powerful and crucial countries in the world rapidly and the world’s second-largest economy (Ding & Qi, 2008). While it is one of the world’s oldest civilizations in the past 5000 years in general (Jia, 2015), the traditional cultural played an important role in the development of China, including the traditional gender perspectives indeed. In ancient and imperial China, women were required indoors by foot binding and forbidden to participate in a variety of social and political activities, outside business and farming should be conducted by men (Ding & Qi, 2008). From this situation, women had no rights to acquire the education (Liu, 1995). Therefore, women had not played any role in business and they were obviously subordinate to men and had a lower social status compared with men. This traditional gender gap had kept a long time through the history of China and affected the people’s consciousness of inequality of women in the social life.

Nevertheless, the appealing of gender equality and raising the social status of women firstly happened at the beginning of 20th century as a modernized consciousness (Ding
& Qi, 2008). Especially when Chinese population policy of single-children came out in the recent case of *People's Republic of China Population and Family Planning Law* (2001), the Chinese government gave a large attention to advocate the gender equality that both male and female are all important.

During the period of the socialist planned economy which is under the bureaucracy, the government involved in planning and guiding production and distribution for the social product that people need for their life (Luo, 1997). The demand of economic development required women allocated by government and participant in work and production respond to market demand (Luo, 1997). As a large of women played an important role in production based on a good foundation of agriculture abilities and brought a large economic improvement, some words like “Women can hold up half the sky” has become popular at that time (Ding & Qi, 2008). On the other hand, due to the new China government realized women’s contribution and importance to society, women are given legally equal status to men, including equal rights of education and political power and equal access to employment (Guo, 1997).

However, the gender inequality phenomenon still exists in people’s daily life. There are two reasons for this situation: first of all, the traditional gender role of subordinated female status rooted in people’s mind for a long time that it is hard for people to change the deep opinion in a short time although women started to appealing for their equal rights and the traditional culture like foot binding had already abolished (Ding & Qi, 2008); Secondly, the socialist planned economy had not provided a free competitive market for people to develop their career by their ability because of people get their job by the command and arrangement of government (Guo, 1997).

With the market-oriented reform, which is happened in 1978, the purpose is to increase the conditions for achieving the goal of economic efficiency and social equality (Luo, 1997). The reform and opening-up policy brought a large improvement
in the economic performance of China: the increasing work opportunities for employees and lack of well-educated workforce for expertise occurred at the same time, the people who have a better educational background and higher workability could earn the job by competing with other candidates (Luo, 1997). The new recruitment system of enterprise replaced the fossil government allocation which is introduced above and increased female’s competiveness.

It is an extremely obvious change that women had the equal rights in education and employment compared to every status of Chinese history. In 2014, over half (51.1%) of enrolled students in tertiary (post-secondary) education were women (Catalyst, 2017). Chinese women are becoming more visible in business instead of having always been inside the home in a traditional way (Ding & Qi, 2008). However, women confronted some new challenges in their position after the market-orient reform:

The efficiency oriented SOEs after reform, have been trying to reduce costs to survive in a competitive market. Social responsibilities such as health care and maternity leave are regarded as financial burdens to enterprises. The law entitles women to such rights, but the cost is carried by individual enterprises who are striving to reduce their costs. Therefore enterprises avoid hiring women as much as possible.

(Guo, 1997)

Furthermore, from the data based on the statics among these years in China, a 2017 study revealed that 40.1% of working women in China were hesitant to have children, and over half (63.4%) of women worried that having children would significantly impact their career development(Zhaopin Report, 2017). In 2010, women earned just over two-thirds (67.3%) of men’s income in urban areas, and just over half (56%) of men’s income in rural areas (ACWF, 2011). From a United Nations Human Rights Council’s report, the Chinese employees take the long maternity leave as a reason to deny female employees sometimes: the employers choosing to hire only women who
already have children, denying pregnant women statutory leave, or dismissing women
during pregnancy (United Nations Human Rights Council, 2014). In a 2010
survey, more than 72% of women stated they were not hired or promoted due to
gender discrimination (Yang, 2012).

On the other hand, from the leadership aspect: In 2016, women were just 17% of all
legislators, senior officials, and managers in China (The World Economic Forum,
2016). Only 17.5% of firms in China have women as top managers (The World
Economic Forum, 2016). In 2013, only 3.2% of CEOs of Chinese companies were
women (Credit Suisse Research Institute, 2014). Refer to the women's performance in
politics, less than one-quarter (24.2%) of all positions in China’s single-house
parliament are held by women (Inter – Parliamentary Union, 2017). And 12% of
ministerial positions in China’s government were held by women in 2016 (The World
Economic Forum, 2016). No woman has ever been among the nine members of
China’s top level of decision-making, the Politburo Standing Committee of the
Communist Party (Jude, 2014).

Above all, during the long period of both economic and political reform and with the
improvement of Chinese economic, women have already acquired the equal rights
legally. Although women played an increasing role in the economic improvement,
there are still some challenges and difficulties in their work in the leadership context.

1.2 Purpose

From the data mentioned above, there are still some challenges/difficulties for
Chinese female to face in their work. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to
figure out what the challenges/difficulties are, and why female confront more
challenges/difficulties in their work. Based on the consequence from this research, the
challenges/difficulties facing the interviewed female in their work could be realized
partly. The organizations with effective leaders tend to reflect to changes in markets and environments, creatively address challenges, and sustain high performance (Amagoh, 2009). The literature of this thesis is based on and combined the theories of leadership, female leadership, and gender perspectives.

1.3 Problem discussion

With the raising of feminism in the society, females become a significant research object in various fields. The previous plentiful theoretical studies on female leadership provide a strengthened foundation for this research. It is including the traits of female leadership, the advantages and disadvantages of female leadership, and also the barriers and difficulties of female leadership, which are significant to this research. However, for the research context for this study, it is focusing the challenges and difficulties facing females in Chinese private companies within the service industry, which have not gained the insight into. Therefore, this study meets the knowledge gap of investigation in the females who is/was in the Chinese private companies within the service sector, and what challenges and difficulties confronting them in their work.

The reasons why I am interested in researching the service sector of Chinese private companies are as follows: 1) the service industry has played an increasing effect on the national economy with the rise of the service status in the whole industry (Zhang, 2011). The change of manufacturing economy to service economy is an inevitable process from the experiences of developed countries (Zhang, 2011). Therefore, China’s service industry has a promptly development with the continuous development of market economy and deepening reform of the economic system (Zhang, 2011). 2) With China’s rapid economic growth, people start to seek for high quality life (Ye & Xiao & Liu, 2012). The increase of the consumer demand brought a higher demand of the level of service (Zhang, 2011). Yet, the development of service industry will promote the process of urbanization of China with speeding up the
urbanization process is a vital policy in the present and future (Zhang, 2011). Hence, the service industry is a significance sector in China’s economics.

1.4 Research Question

Rely on the background introduced above, the Chinese females have already acquired legally equal rights during the longtime struggling in the history. Moreover, from the data showed, women are better educated overall (Quiroga Fernandez & Wang, 2011). However, the female top leaders are still rare. Hence, for wondering about the phenomenon that there are less female leaders compare to male in China, the research question is formulated here:

◆ Why do Chinese females face more challenges and difficulties to move up in leadership ladders compared to males?

As the background mentioned above, women are definitely subordinate to men in Chinese history, and they had no opportunities to be educated, therefore they could not participate in work certainly. However, with the developing of China, both men and women have legally equal rights currently. Why a large number of female still could not play an outstanding role and move up to a top position in their work is the original interest of this research.

1.5 Thesis Outline

This thesis consists of five chapters: Introduction, Literature Review, Methodology, Empirical Data and Analysis and Conclusion.

The introductory chapter is to elaborate the reader about the social status of Chinese female, provides the relevant background of both from the history and currently data: Gradually Chinese female gain the legally equal social status from evolutions, and played a vital role to promote the Chinese economic development. But from the data
so far, there are still difficulties and challenges facing the female to move up in their leadership ladders. The first chapter is also including the problem discussion of existing studies of female leadership in China, the description of research question, and limitations.

The second chapter illustrates the conceptual framework of the thesis topic. It includes the literature review of leadership, gender perspectives in leadership, and the female leadership, which are three main fields of this study and provide the conceptual framework for the following research in order to presents a clearly and directly figure for the readers to see the main concepts and the relationship of this study.

The third chapter provides the choice of methodological approaches for this study and the rational reasons for the option. The research design takes the case study for this study. For the research approach, the deduction will be used in this study. The methodology chapter is also including the description of Qualitative-Semi structured interviews as the data method, and a snowball sampling method for the sampling method.

The fifth chapter contains the empirical data and analysis, which includes the data from interviews to see various perspectives for answering the research question. The connections between the literature review and empirical data are also formulated in this chapter. The research question will be analyzed and the answers will be provides based on the empirical findings. The final chapter concludes the discussion of the research question and the further research prospects.
2. Literature Review

Fink states that literature review was defined as a “systematic, explicit and reproducible method for identifying, evaluating, and synthesizing the existing body of completed and recorded work produced by researchers, scholars, and practitioners” (Booth, Sutton & Papaioannou, 2016). A good research synthesis usually focuses on the weakness in the evidence and argues for further research (Booth, Sutton & Papaioannou, 2016). Thus, highlights the literature review which is contributed by the scholars recently is crucial for the theoretical foundation of a thesis. The literature review is the best available evidence for decision-making (Booth, Sutton & Papaioannou, 2016).

For answering the research question: Why do Chinese females face more challenges and difficulties to move up in leadership ladders compared to males? The first theory which related to the “leadership ladders” is Leadership. The definition of leadership is significance to realize the leadership behavior, and also is a basic concept to answer this research question. Then, because of “females” is the main object of this study, the gender perspectives could not be ignored in this research. However, not all gender perspectives are related to the leadership context. Therefore the gender perspectives in leadership are taken as an important concept for this research. Based on the concept of leadership, the gender perspectives impact on people’s reflection and behavior in leadership will be the main content in this concept. Combined the concepts of Leadership and Gender perspectives in Leadership, the concept of Female Leadership comes out as the final concept in the literature review. Some negative gender perspectives keep a diminished impact on female leadership. They challenging female to play an increasing role in their leadership ladders. Hence, the theory of leadership, gender perspective, and female leadership will be considered as the literature review for this paper. The following figure is the conceptual framework for this research.
Rely on the research question, the conceptual framework is developed as Figure 1 explored above. It describes the necessary link between leadership and the challenges and difficulties in female leadership. And the concept of female leadership comes from two aspects—leadership and gender perspectives including the challenges and difficulties in female leadership.

Figure 1. The Linkage between Female Leadership
The concept which is on the top of left side represents the concept of leadership. The concept of leadership in society is an ability to motivate and direct the member of group or organization to achieve a shared goal (Gregoire & Arendt, 2004). It is an initiative behavior that comes from the original realize and desire to encourage others, and also, obtain the feeling of satisfied and achievement during the process at the same time (Gregoire & Arendt, 2004). Leadership can from some perspectives be seen as a performance, where leaders play certain roles in front of different audiences and the study of the theatrical metaphor in sociology and organization from an early time (Hatch, 2005). Everyone plays a role in the company with different positions and various tasks, the presentation of self in everyday life (Lundgren, 2018). Therefore, the desire of being a leader comes from the people’s minds instead of the gender. Both male and female all have the possibility to have the ambition to push him or herself to be a leader.

Nevertheless, in the concept box which is located at the bottom of the left side, it reveals the concept of gender perspectives. The gender perspectives exposed the two leadership styles of male-gendered (transactional leadership style) and female-gendered (transformational leadership style), that divided leadership style based on different genders. And then, from the dimension of the legitimacy of leadership, male occupied the advantages obviously that triggers a gender gap in leadership. Finally, from the aspects of gendered talents, the leadership talents could be found among both male and females.

Therefore, adding the left top concept box and left bottom concept box together, combined leadership and gendered perspectives together, the female leadership comes out on the right concept box. The gender gap and different styles of leadership bring some challenges/difficulties in female leadership that diminished the power of female in their leadership positions. More elaborations of Leadership, Gender perspectives in Leadership, and Female Leadership are as follows.
2.1 Leadership

Since the research question is in order to figure out the difficulties and challenges facing female in the leadership ladders, the concept of leadership is unable to be ignored here. Leadership is indeed a pervasive subject (Doh, 2003) that people argued for the various kinds of aspects for a long time. Leadership is a murky concept that everyone considers differently (Michelle & Linda, 2010). From the reflections of leadership over the past 100 years, leadership was defined in various kinds of concepts: Hemphill holds that leadership is a kind of behavior that command the group achieve a shared goal in 1957; Schein pointed that leadership is the ability to change the processed to be more adaptive in 1992; Garner holds that leadership is also a behavior to care about others and guides others to self-discovery in 1993; Houses and colleagues state leadership is an ability to influence, motivate and enable others to contribute toward the effective and achievement of the organization in 1999; Yukl holds that leadership is process of influencing others to figure out what they required to do and how to do it effectively in 2002; and Borra& Kunkel states that leadership is an ability to inspire and guide others toward building and achieving a shared vision (Gregoire & Arendt, 2004). After management and leadership were separated in two different concepts in the 1970s (Gregoire & Arendt, 2004), a large amount of the theories of leadership comes up and leadership has also become the subject that people could be taught and practice the leadership ability in their business school or career (Doh, 2003). Leadership requires balance, that means, leaders are challenged to align behaviors with values, weigh options, navigate boundaries, manage multiple relationships, be self-aware and understanding others opinions, and juggle professional responsibilities while attempting to hold a personal life in the leadership environment (Hertneky, 2010). Highly successful organizations concentrate on creating a comprehensive set of assessment and leadership development practices that support the wide range of talents across the organization (Amagoh, 2009). And the original goal of a good leader is to reinforce values and purpose, develop vision and strategy, build continuity, and initiate appropriate organizational change (Amagoh,
2009). However, the same leadership knowledge would be embodied in diverse phenomenon and behaviors within different contexts and background.

### 2.2 Gender Perspectives in Leadership

According to the purpose of this topic focus on the challenges/difficulties of the female in their leadership ladders, the gender perspectives could not be ignored in this paper. People are affected by gender differences in various aspects of life are common in our life. In some contexts gender is possible to not matter at all, in others may be highlighted or multiplied certain aspects of the gender identities (Piller, 2009). Gender perspectives play an important role not only in families but also in leadership contexts.

The stereotype of leaders first came in the 1970s, as the proportion of female managers increased (Powell, 2011). Many explanations have been provided for why women have difficulties in reaching top leadership positions and chief among them is the stereotype-based lack of fit between women’s personalities, skills, and aspirations and those seem required for effective leadership (Hoyt & Murphy, 2016). Gender stereotype-based expectations not only influence who people see as “fitting” the preconceived notion of a leader, but they also have impacts on women themselves (Hoyt & Murphy, 2016). The belief that women are more emotional than men is one of the strongest gender stereotypes held in Western cultures (Brescoll, 2016). From the opinions of Eagly & Karau & Heilman, the gender stereotypes influence people’s reflection and perceptions of appropriate male and female behaviors (Wang & Chiang & Tsai & Lin, 2013). Women and men perform with diversity characteristics in their career. For instance, men are expected to display “agentic” personalities such as statement, control, competitiveness, and struggling for achievement (Wang & Chiang & Tsai & Lin, 2013). Nevertheless, women are expected to perform as “communal” characteristics, in cluding concerning about individuals and emerge the sympathy to
the organization (Wang & Chiang & Tsai & Lin, 2013). It can be concluded that “women take care” and “men take charge” (Hoyt & Murphy, 2016). These gender stereotypes are obvious in business, and the perspectives of inconformity between gender and leadership roles could have the negative influence on leaders, especially on female leaders (Wang & Chiang & Tsai & Lin, 2013).

On the other hand, there are two most prevalent leadership styles in the Chinese context: authoritarian leadership and benevolent leadership (Wang & Chiang & Tsai & Lin, 2013). Authoritarian leadership style is mainly consistent with male gender-stereotyped personalities, it takes asserting strong discipline and authority, both high ambitions and expectations as the leadership behaviors (Wang & Chiang & Tsai & Lin, 2013). Authentic leaders pursue with passion, practice values, lead with heart and head, build long-lasting meaningful relationships, and demonstrate self-discipline (Margaret & Deborah, 2015). And authentic leadership has been defined more recently as “a pattern of leader behavior that draws upon and promotes both positive psychological capacities and a positive ethical climate, to foster greater self-awareness for leaders and self-development for followers” (Margaret & Deborah, 2015). While benevolent leadership is more adaptive with the person who is female gender-stereotyped characteristics, and the leadership behavior is like caring about the subordinate’s personal feeling more than their ambition goals (Wang & Chiang & Tsai & Lin, 2013). Setting this gender-stereotyped in the leadership context, the followers are affected by the expectation of male or female leaders because of gender role expectations are strong in Chinese culture (Wang & Chiang & Tsai & Lin, 2013). That means, when the subordinates facing the male leaders, they would like to re-shape the personalities and change the behavior of themselves during the work time, like to be ambitioned and initiative, to meet the expectations of male leaders and make them feel comfortable to work with. In the contrast, when the followers confronting the female leaders, they prefer to be more elaborative, patience accommodating in order to obtain a better cooperate feeling with their female supervisors.
## Gender Impacts on New Venture Organizations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organizational Dimensions</th>
<th>Traditional (Masculine)</th>
<th>Personal (Feminine)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Use of Resources</td>
<td>“Lease” people</td>
<td>Commit to people</td>
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<td>Low commitment</td>
<td>High commitment</td>
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<td>Decision centralized</td>
<td>Participative decisions</td>
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<td>Boundaries between people, jobs clear</td>
<td>Boundaries between people and job are blur</td>
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<td>Growth leads to hierarchy</td>
<td>Resists growth; growth leads to struggles to stay flat</td>
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<td>Controlling</td>
<td>Personal control</td>
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<td>Financial control</td>
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<td>Dominant coalition of similar</td>
<td>No dominant coalition or coalition of diverse others</td>
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<tr>
<td>Integration Through Systems, Culture and Policies</td>
<td>Value is success for self &amp; firm</td>
<td>Value is well being for self &amp; others</td>
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<td>Policies instrumental toward goal</td>
<td>Policies relational</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Transactional</td>
<td>Accommodating</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 Gender Impacts on New Venture Organizations (Ding & Qi, 2008)

Overall, the gender perspectives play an important role and take a vital status in leadership positions that it affects the leadership effects in a positive way or negative way. Both men and women have the communication barriers because they operate with different values (Piller, 2009). By reason of men are manifestly driven by competition and women by cooperation, there are some misunderstandings and fights based on sexes (Piller, 2009). For women leaders, authentic leadership is especially a
challenge and they may be criticized for not being agentic enough. Women leaders are always expected highly ambitious and self-confident which are associated with the typical male leaders’ behaviors (Margaret & Deborah, 2015). Nevertheless, whether the characteristics may be high status or low status depending on how people judge it variously and also rely on which roles we fill (Michelle & Linda, 2010).

### 2.3 Female Leadership

On purpose to research the challenges and difficulties facing female in the leadership ladders, female leadership is a vital concept for this research. In the beginning, it is significant to see the traits of female leadership. Knowing the feature of female leadership and how it works on females’ performance in the leadership ladders are the original inspirations to formulate the Transformational Leadership sector.

With female leadership style is taken as transformational leadership style based on the different leadership behavior, both male leadership and female leadership have the diverse advantages of leadership performance. However, why the top female leaders are still rare (Quiroga Fernandez & Wang, 2011) compare to male top leaders? This question is answered in the Legitimacy sector within details.

Providing the Legitimacy concept to introduce the illegitimacy status of female in their work, the Gender Talents concept shows that, actually female are good at leadership as well. This concept is in order to investigate what barriers female play a better performance to move up in the leadership ladders.

#### 2.3.1 Transformational Leadership

Leadership was separated in two styles by Burns in 1978: transactional leadership and transformational leadership (Ding & Qi, 2008). Transactional leadership means that it
is a process of transaction or exchange that takes place among leaders, workmates, and followers (Bass & Riggio, 2006). The purpose of transactional leadership is in order to exchange the demand of one person and valued things (Ding & Qi, 2008) like the leaders need the followers’ efforts and cooperation to acquire achievement while followers exchange their efforts to obtain the trust from their leaders. While transformational leadership is one more person engage with others in a way that both leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality (Ding & Qi, 2008). Transformational leadership involves building oneself as a role model in order to gain the trust and confidence from followers (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt & Engen, 2003). Furthermore, transformational leaders motivate others to do more than they originally intended and even more than they thought possible (Bass & Riggio, 2006). They empower followers and care about their individual needs and personal development, discovering the leadership potential of their followers as well (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

As the gender roles exert some effects of leaders to some extent, female and male leaders tend to behave somewhat differently (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt & Engen, 2003). From the earlier research of leadership styles of women and men, female leaders were more transformational than male leaders and also engaged in more of the contingent reward behaviors with occupying low-level leadership roles mostly (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt & Engen, 2003). From the leadership style of female leaders, they are less hierarchical, more cooperative and collaborative, and more targeted to increasing others’ self-worth (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt & Engen, 2003). Moreover, women prefer to be more interpersonally-oriented and democratic styles more than men (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt & Engen, 2003). That means, women are concerned and concentrate on the interpersonal relationships more as their leadership behavior. In the contrast, male leaders were generally more likely to manifest the other dimensions of transactional leadership, and men tend to perform more task-oriented and autocratic styles compare to women (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt & Engen, 2003). They are willing to pay more attention to the
accomplishment of the assigned tasks of the organization.

Based on women prefer to adapt leadership styles that are particularly well suited for the complexity of contemporary organizations and can translate into enhanced institutional effectiveness (Hoyt & Murphy, 2016), this paper takes transformational leadership as the trait of female leadership, which influences the followers and empowers them in the management process.

2.3.2 Legitimacy

“Legitimacy” could be defined as the sense of obligation or duty to feel free to comply with the directions and decisions of authorities (Vial & Brescoll, 2016). Although women have already received great educational advances in recent years, the female candidates still suffered from the obstacle of gender bias for the advancement of leadership roles (Vial & Brescoll, 2016). When women take powerful positions, they have a harder time than men to obtain respect admiration from their subordinates (Vial & Brescoll, 2016). And powerful women, relative to powerful men, are less likely to be perceived as legitimate authorities (Vial & Brescoll, 2016). Therefore, female power-holders are seen as less legitimate than male power-holders (Vial & Brescoll, 2016). More than three decades after female started to pursuing careers in earnest, the “glass ceiling” kept impact on the equal of both male and female’s performance in their leadership positions (Michelle & Linda, 2010). The conflict roles between women and leader are problematic for the female in leadership, and for women, one’s behavior must like women: to be nurturing, relational, and other-centred (Michelle & Linda, 2010). In the contrast, to be a leader, one must act stereotypically like a leader: to be authentic, direct, and task-focused (Michelle & Linda, 2010). Therefore, the impacts of “glass ceiling” on female leaders would diminish the performance of female leaders and result in the lack of legitimacy of the leadership roles.
Legitimacy is important to a leader in the leadership process because of legitimacy represent authority to some extent. For a legitimate leader, it would get easier to exert the power in a compulsive way or emphasize the power differentials to make their subordinates to collaborate and follow (Vial & Brescoll, 2016). Meanwhile, for the subordinates, the power of legitimacy leads them to follow and execute the decisions acceptable (Vial & Brescoll, 2016). Because of women are keeping a lower-legitimacy status in leadership, they are very sensitive to the possibility that their subordinates probably not accept and follow them (Vial & Brescoll, 2016), and this phenomenon would bring the negative emotions and consequence of female leaders’ management and also decrease the effectiveness of leadership in an organization.

Illegitimate leaders’ behavior will likely impact their subordinates’ behavior as well (Vial & Brescoll, 2016). As female belong to an illegitimate leaders’ status, they lack authority and experience the stereotype threat in leadership domain (Vial & Brescoll, 2016). On the other hand, the organizations are gendered entities which require women to adapt to male-dominated contexts (Margaret & Deborah, 2015). Combined with the higher transformational and accommodation personalities mentioned above, female leaders tend to adopt a more masculine style in the leadership context. The most distinct way in which women desire to achieve leader positions may attempt to fit in male-dominated organizations is by emphasizing what they see as masculine characteristics and leadership styles (Derks, Van Laar & Ellemers, 2016).

2.3.3 Gendered Talent

Although women are now empowering in managers and supervisors and also they are business owners in their positions, the number gap of women and men in “management of companies and enterprises” still exists (Michelle & Linda, 2010).
Women leaders in organizations in which most executive positions are held by men may reproduce rather than challenge the existing gender hierarchy (Derks, Van Laar & Ellemers, 2016). From the data of Fortune magazine, in the top 1000 industrial companies and the 500 largest U.S. corporations, women occupied only 3% to 5% percent of top management (Michelle & Linda, 2010). Nonetheless, from the findings of Ruderman and Ohlott’s study about leadership self-identity, women are actually high in self-clarity and they can learn something from what happens even in chaotic situations, and they are able to admit mistakes and learn from failures as well as successes indeed (Robbie, 2010). That is to say, the ability to be a high-achieving managerial woman is a crucial requirement of being a successful leader. But women are experienced devalued and losing the balance of their time, their personal lives, the needs of their families, the demands of the job, and themselves in and out of the role of president (Robbie, 2010). This phenomenon makes people reflect on the relationship between gender talents and leadership seriously.

Gender is a primary cultural frame helping people in building and maintaining relations with others (Sidani & Karam, 2015). Women are less likely than men to be related with leadership, and the consciousness of the gender stereotype may undermine women’s performance in leadership tasks (Latu & Mast & Lammers & Bombari, 2013). The gender stereotypes of emotion present a fundamental barrier to women’s ability to ascend to and succeed in leadership roles (Brescoll, 2016). Women are struggling with biased assessment of their capabilities to be leaders, although women are qualified, better educated with higher degrees, and the firms are providing programs to support female leadership, women in top positions are still rare (Quiroga Fernandez & Wang, 2011). Women keep longer level before they get promoted into managerial positions (Quiroga Fernandez & Wang, 2011). It is provides an evidence that women account for occupying a smaller percentage at CEO or senior executive level (Quiroga Fernandez & Wang, 2011). Therefore, the female talents are devalued and the power of them is diminished as well.
Although female leaders are devalued more than men from recent studies (Vial & Brescoll, 2016), sometimes female’s behavior and self-evaluated performance could be empowered and inspired by some highly successful female role models (Latu & Mast & Lammers & Bombari, 2013). Since the female leaders moving ahead in the twenty-first century around the idea of self-awareness, female leadership drew attention to the public of the voice from women (Kleinerman, 2010). Yet, the first step in learning to lead others is fostering the self-awareness of personal leadership (Kleinerman, 2010). Moreover, the visibility of female leaders like Hillary Clinton as a potential President of the United States and Christine Lagarde as the Managing Director of the International Monetary is increasing and affects the public interests (Eagly & Heilman, 2016). However, it still seems difficult for many women to say clearly about their accurate feeling of defiance or apology (Kleinerman, 2010).
3. Methodology

3.1 Research Approach

There are two main logic processes in research: deduction and induction. The deduction is a process of reasoning in which one proceeds from general principles or laws to specific cases (Carr, 2009). Therefore it is independent and depends on the experience or observation but comes from logic order (Fisher, 2004). Induction is a form of reasoning in which one arrives at general principles or laws by generalizing over specific cases (Carr, 2009). It is a conclusion which is drawn from experienced experimentation, and the conclusion is based on the assumption that the object has always in this way and will continue to be this way in the future (Ding & Qi, 2008).

The figure 1 below elaborates the function of the induction and deduction. The induction process is obtained by the observation of facts. Following the observation of facts, people conclude the laws, theories, knowledge to regulate/define an authentic way of people’s behaviors. And then, following the process of deduction, people could make the explanations and predictions by transferring these laws, theories, and knowledge. Furthermore, the process of induction and deduction can co-exist at the same time. So scholars could use both induction and deduction in one research (Ghauri & Gronhaug, 2002).

For this paper, the conclusion is based on the literature review of existing theories and the empirical data by case studies. Since Bryman and Bell hold that a deductive research approach is to establish the relationship between existing theories and the empirical data (Bryman & Bell, 2015), the deductive process will be applied in this research. That is to say, this research needs three steps to find out the answers to research questions: 1) discovering the relationships between the theories based on the literature review; 2) collecting data in order to explore the relevant result; 3) setting
up the connection between theories and empirical data.

Because of this paper focus on female leadership in China, feminism is an indispensible philosophy of this study. Feminism is an attractive concept and it can broadly describe as a range of social movements and theories that have discrimination on the basis of gender as their crucial concern (Piller, 2009). It is a critical theory that concentrates on emphasizing a variety of social phenomenon by the gender perspectives (Ding & Qi, 2008). There are three central elements of mainstream feminism: 1) gender represents an original role in attempt to explain all social activities; 2) gender relations are taken as problematic when they are associated with the constraint conditions, inequality, stress and conflict; 3) gender relations are consequence of socio-cultural and historical conditions and could be replaced by human movement (Ding & Qi, 2008). These three elements are the background of this research and also conduct much academic research in this field. Rely on this philosophy, this research starts from the existing literature of leadership, gender perspectives, and female leadership as the theoretical framework. Then, obtaining the
empirical data from case study and analysis the data related the literature review to answer the research question.

### 3.2 Research Design

There are several methods of acquired the empirical data, including case study, experiment and analysis of archival information (Ding & Qi, 2008). This paper will choose case study, which is determined by the research question mentioned above. Because of case comprises the type of phenomenon that an inference attempts to explain and it also try to elaborate the behavior of individuals (Gerring, 2007), it is used as a research design. The control for the researchers during the research will be the minimum when they are attempting to reflect the question such as why and how, while it is good for the investigator to concentrate on a current problem ultimately (Yin, 2003). The purpose of this paper is to figure out the challenges and difficulties facing the female who is in their work, hence it is better to investigate a few Chinese females as the cases. It would be understood distinctly and deeply by discussing the research question by case study.

### 3.3 Sampling Method

Researchers are not willing to limit the individuals who are possible to be related to their study while it also limits the researchers’ potential to get their research candidates (Bryman & Bell, 2015). The sampling method in this research will be snowball sampling in order to approach the target group. Because of snowball sampling exposed a connection of candidates within a network (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Therefore the sampling selection will be started from a small group of people who are relevant to this research. Approaching these first potential candidates, the possibility to receive more recommendations will come as follows.
The target group of this research is vital to the consequence. Since the “mobile female” can be defined as the females who have the desire to move up in the leadership ladders, for this research, the target group is including 1) the female employee who is working in the private companies within service industry in China; 2) the female who has former work experience in the private companies within service industry in China.

The research method for this thesis is: the primary data mainly comes from the case study on 6 Chinese female who is from the target group; the secondary data is based on the sector of the literature review.

The six cases come from six interviews with Chinese female in the private firms within the service industry, who mainly consisted of the person introduced by friends. These Chinese female are all in their work or has the former work experience in their companies and realize the leadership ladder for some time, and also some has already in their leadership positions (managers), and others have the desire to climb up the leadership ladders – to struggle for a better position. This thesis is considered as an important research for people to understand the challenges of the female researchers in the private firms within service industry in China.

### 3.4 Data Method

Viable research starts with a research question that means, what it is the investigator expects to find out, which has to be interrogated, discussed and honed to unequivocal clarity (Morse, 2015). Qualitative research is undertaken in natural settings and is interpretive in nature, with the main approach of collecting information is interviews and observations (Morse, 2015). Taking the qualitative data method, the primary data of this paper mostly comes from the case study on 6 Chinese female who is in service industry from the private firms in China firstly. There answers to the research question of this paper are the source of primary data. Then we choose to use qualitative research in order to collect the primary data, which is also due to the traits of the
research questions’ answers are open and personalized.

Secondary data comes from a number of literature reviews. There are plenty of previous academic publications major in female leadership, gender perspectives, China’s growth, and leadership. Each part of them will be reflected in this paper. Hence, a number of books and articles are the main source of secondary data. Moreover, in order to introduce China’s situation of female status which is revealed in the chapter of introduction, some news and data from internet and official documents are used as well.

3.5 Interview Guide

All of the interviews are conducted in two kinds of ways: 1) the female who was in YSYF Headhunting Company was interviewed face-to-face when I was doing my research in Sweden; 2) for the researchers who were interviewed in China, I took video calls by Wechat for dealing with the problem of distance. The interviews were scheduled and conducted between March and May. I interviewed them in Chinese for a better communicate effect of information exchanged and translate the content into English here afterwards. All the contents of respond published here are allowed by the interviewers during the research period. The tools for recording the interviews’ content are: voice recording by my mobile phone, and notes during the interviews.

For knowing more background information about the interviewers and their careers, some interview questions may seem not focus on the topic straightforward. Yet, the indirect questions are meaningful to the research because they could inspire both the investigator and the interviewers. Only the relevant answers are reflected in the case telling. Moreover, the order of questions might be an adjustment and collected into a flexible way for a better understanding in this paper. Since a few words are not closely connecting to the research questions, the whole interview is not present here.
The interviewer questions for this research can be provided as follows. As the conceptual framework is built into “Leadership + Gender Perspective in Leadership = Female Leadership”, the questions of interview (except the basic information) are formulated rely on the concepts from literature.

**The interview questionnaire:**
1. Name, age, and belong to which company
2. Education background (bachelor, master…)
3. When you got married? Family members?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concepts</th>
<th>Theories</th>
<th>Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>Schein pointed that leadership is the ability to change the processed to be more adaptive in 1992; Garner holds that leadership is also a behavior to care about others and guides others to self-discovery in 1993; Houses and colleagues state leadership is an ability to influence, motivate and enable others to contribute toward the effective and achievement of the organization in 1999; Yukl holds that leadership is process of influencing others to figure out what they required to do and how to do it effectively in 2002; and Borra&amp; Kunkel states that leadership is an ability to inspire and guide others toward building and achieving a shared vision (Gregoire &amp;</td>
<td>1. How long have you been participate in job? How long you work for the current company? What do you think is the most important factor for moving up to a higher position?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Gender Perspectives

“The belief that women are more emotional than men is one of the strongest gender stereotypes held in Western cultures (Brescoll, 2016).”

“Gender stereotype-based expectations not only influence who people see as “fitting” the preconceived notion of a leader, but they also have impacts on women themselves (Hoyt & Murphy, 2016).”

“From the opinions of Eagly & Karau & Heilman, the gender stereotypes influence people’s reflection and perceptions of appropriate male and female behaviors (Wang & Chiang & Tsai & Lin, 2013).”

1. Do you think there are still some gender-stereotypes in your work?

2. Will you influenced by the gender-stereotypes?

3. Do you think there is something unfair related to gender in your work? (Policies, regulations, etc.)

Female Leadership

Transformational leadership:

“From the leadership style of female leaders, they are less hierarchical, more cooperative and collaborative, and more targeted to increasing others’ self-worth (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt & Engen, 2003). In the contrast, male leaders were generally more likely to manifest the other dimensions of transactional leadership, and men tend to perform more task-oriented and autocratic

1. What the differences between male leaders and female leaders in your opinion?
styles compare to women (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt & Engen, 2003).”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legitimacy: “the organizations are gendered entities which require women to adapt to male-dominated contexts (Margaret &amp; Deborah, 2015).”</th>
<th>2. How do you feel about facing the male/female supervisors?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Legitimacy: “Although women have already received great educational advances in recent years, the female candidates still suffered from the obstacle of gender bias for the advancement of leadership roles (Vial &amp; Brescoll, 2016).”</td>
<td>3. Do you think there are still some gender biases for female candidates? What are they? How do they influence your behavior?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legitimacy: “And powerful women, relative to powerful men, are less likely to be perceived as legitimate authorities (Vial &amp; Brescoll, 2016).”</td>
<td>Do you think the young talent female leaders are difficult to convince their followers?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legitimacy: “More than three decades after female started to pursuing careers in earnest, the “glass ceiling” kept impact on the equal of both male and female’s performance in their leadership positions (Michelle &amp; Linda, 2010).”</td>
<td>5. For the phenomenon that there are more male top leaders in business, what the barriers/challenges/difficulties for female to confront and overcome in their work? What is the “glass ceiling” for stopping female move up in your opinion?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legitimacy: “The conflict roles between women and leader are problematic for the</td>
<td>6. Do you think female are not fit the impression of leaders? Why?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
female in leadership, and for women, one’s behavior must like women: to be nurturing, relational, and other-centred (Michelle & Linda, 2010).”

**Legitimacy:** “The most distinct way in which women desire to achieve leader positions may attempt to fit in male-dominated organizations is by emphasizing what they see as masculine characteristics and leadership styles (Derks, Van Laar & Ellemers, 2016).”

7. What is your position now? Can you describe your leadership style? (This question is for the female managers)

**Gender talents:** “Women are actually high in self-clarity and they can learn something from what happens even in chaotic situations, and they are able to admit mistakes and learn from failures as well as successes indeed (Robbie, 2010).”

8. What the advantages of female to become leaders compare to male?

**Gender talents:** “But women are experienced devalued and losing the balance of their time, their personal lives, the needs of their families, the demands of the job, and themselves in and out of the role of president (Robbie, 2010).”

9. Does the family play an influenced role in your work? How can you balance the needs from both family and work?

**Gender talents:** “although women are qualified, better educated with higher degrees, and the firms are providing

10. Do you think there are some influenced regulations (maternity leave, etc.) with a negative effect for female?
programs to support female leadership, women in top positions are still rare (Quiroga Fernandez & Wang, 2011).”

3.6 Scientific Credibility

There are three elements to ensure the quality of the case study in exploratory study: construct validity, external validity, and reliability (Yin, 2014). Construct validity means that the researcher will take several sources of evidence, make a chain of the evidence, and analyze the key information to report (Yin, 2014). For this research, the theories and perspectives rely on literature review provide the main sources of the evidence. The conceptual framework shows the chain of evidence. External validity is the consequence of the research can be generalized in other social settings to some extent (Bryman & Bell, 2015). The consequences of this research will be the reasons for why do Chinese females who are in the private companies within service industry face more challenges and difficulties compared to males. However, the consequences can be seen within other industries to some extent. Reliability refers to consistency and repeatability, it including internal reliability and external reliability (Bryman & Bell, 2015). The internal reliability is all the team members of the research agree with the empirical information they have collected. There is no any divergence in one research for every team member. For this research, I, Jing Tan, am the only author for this thesis. Hence the divergence problem will not happen in this research. Meanwhile, the external reliability is the degree of replicability in the research is a low level in business research. Moreover, there are four factors for affecting reliability: Participant error, means participant is influenced by factors to perform in a wrong direction; Participant bias, means participant induced by factors to show a false response; Researcher error, means researcher’s interpretation is changed by factors; Researcher bias, means researcher induced by the factors in the recording (Saunders,
Lewis and Thornhill, 2016). The author(s) should follow the advice about how to prevent the factors above and make sure the research process are distinctly considered, logically coherent, and without false assumptions (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2016). In order to prevent to be influenced by these factors, the interview questions will be explained during the interviews in case some misunderstandings. In addition, the objective attitude towards the primary data is the basic self-requirement as the author for this research.

### 3.7 Ethical Considerations

Ethic is how the researchers treat their study subjects, and it should be considered in business research as well (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2016). There are four ethical principles aspects: *Harm to participants; lack of informed consent; invasion of privacy; deception* (Bryman & Bell, 2015). The researchers should protect the participants’ physical, mental and career development (Bryman & Bell, 2015). The questions of the interview should not harm the participants with some sensitive information. The interviewees can skip the sensitive questions by their willingness. Yet, keeping the personal information, such as name, address, etc, is author’s obligation as well. Furthermore, the resource of empirical data should make sure that only this thesis’s researcher can access the personal information, and the author should not cheat or threat the participants in order to complete research or acquired some false data.

Therefore, the six interviewees are numbered into A1, A2, A3, A4, A5, and A6 here to protect the private information. The number will be used in the following parts instead of their name. So the basic information of interviewees cannot be found in the empirical data and analysis chapter.
3.8 Summary of Methodology Choices

In order to present a clear structure of the methodology chapter, the table as follows summarized the methodology choices.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Approach</th>
<th>Deduction</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research Design</td>
<td>Case Study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sampling Method</td>
<td>Snowball Sampling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Method</td>
<td>Qualitative - Semi structured interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scientific credibility</td>
<td>Construct validity, external validity, and reliability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethical considerations</td>
<td>Number the interviewees to protect interviewees’ privacy, and provide the correct information to them during the research</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: The Summary of Methodology Choices
4. Empirical Data and Analysis

This chapter is the analysis process based on the empirical data. The answer from the six case studies of in-depth interviews will be analyzed with the theory in this chapter. The perspectives from the interviewees are the main sources of this analysis. Since the target group of this research are six Chinese females including 1) the female employee who is working in the private companies within service industry in China; 2) the female who has former work experience in the private companies within service industry in China. The basic information and their background related their work will be introduced before presenting the empirical data for a better understanding. As mentioned in the Ethical Considerations sector, the full name of the interviewees is hidden and numbered in order to protect their privacy.

Interviewee 1

Name: A1
Age: 28
City: Beijing
Firm: You Shi Yi Fang head-hunting company
Interview Date: 28 April, 2018

Background:
A1 is a former team leader in You Shi Yi Fang (YSYF) head-hunting company which is located in Beijing, China. The main business of YSYF Company is to hunting the talented people and offered the information of them to the firm who needs to position these talents. Since she has already worked for 6 years ago, she became the team leader for over one year and managed the team members with her leadership way. In her opinion, A1 tends to pay attention to the team building and the self-development of the team members for an effective performance. So far, A1 is struggling for a master degree majored in entrepreneur management in Sweden, with giving up her
work before she came to Sweden.

**Interviewee 2**

Name: A2  
Age: 23  
City: Beijing  
Firm: Xin Dong Fang New Oriental Education & Technology Group  
Interview Date: 2 May, 2018

**Background:**  
A2 is working as a full-time employee in Xin Dong Fang New Oriental Education & Technology Group (XDF). So far, XDF Group is the biggest training group which covers 50 cities in China, providing a series training service of a various subject for different age groups students. With XDF is growing up and becoming famed as a big company, it attracting young talent employees to join it as well. Therefore A2 was engaged by XDF’s large scale and high salary when she finished her bachelor study majored in culture management last year.

**Interviewee 3**

Name: A3  
Age: 39  
City: Beijing  
Firm: Beijing Fazheng Group  
Interview Date: 26 April, 2018

**Background:**  
A3 is working full-time as a manager in the financial department in Beijing Fazheng group. Beijing Fazheng group is a sort of company which offers a series service covering estate transaction, healthy care, hocking, and educational training. The educational background of A3 is bachelor majored in the accountant. She finished her
studies when she was 22 years old and also began her work after graduated. It takes her over 16 years on work so far. However, A3 is struggling to resign from her company now. Because her company decided to transferred her to another location which is far away from her home, it is troubled her to take care of her family. In A3’s opinion, her family is certainly more important than work, especially when the time is not enough to pay attention to both family and work, she will definitely be partial to her family.

Interviewee 4

Name: A4
Age: 38
City: Beijing
Firm: ASC Fine Wines – an auction company for wines
Interview Date: 26 April, 2018

Background:
A4 worked full time as a former manager in ASC Fine Wines Company. It is a sort of company belongs to China which provides the service of getting contact with the foreign wines company and competing for the best price of wines for their Chinese customer, holding the lecture of wines, offering the delivery service from the foreign wines company who has not a delivery system in China. The education background of A4 is the bachelor, and she started her work in the year of 2001. After 5 years, A4 moved up to the senior manager position of logistics, charging the delivery and customer service for the regions of north China, as the only female senior manager among totally 7 senior managers in Chinese business area.

Interviewee 5

Name: A5
Age: 41
City: Beijing
Firm: Great Wall Concert- a management consultancy company
Interview Date: 26 April, 2018

**Background:**
A5 is working full time as a manager in financial department in GWC – a management consultancy company. She completed her bachelor degree which majored in accountant and participated in her job in 2001. From 2015, A5 moved into GWC and worked as a manager in financial department directly. Before that, A5 worked as an account in China National Cereals, Oils and Foodstuffs Corporation (COFCO) – one of the biggest Chinese state-owned companies for over a decade years. From A5’s perspective, what makes her become a competent manager is sufficient working experience. On the other hand, what makes her stop by a manager position is the challenging task of being a top leader.

**Interviewee 6**
Name: A6
Age:  47
City: Beijing
Firm: Beijing Xiang Yu Environmental Engineering Technology Company
Interview Date: 6 May 2018

**Background:**
A5 is working full-time as an accountant in financial department in Beijing Xiang Yu Environmental Engineering Technology Company. The main business of A5’s company is providing the design of an environmental protection system for some petrochemical companies, the eco-park designing, and other sorts of environmental design for other firms. The education background of A5 is the junior college, majored in financial accounting, and graduated in the year of 1990.
4.1 Leadership

Since leadership could be defined as a behavior, an ability, a process to influence others to achieve a shared goal, and a subject (Gregoire & Arendt, 2004), what the interviewees’ reflections towards the leadership are? What is the most important factor for the interviewees to move up in their leadership ladders? Figuring out the most important factor for moving up in the leadership ladders is significance for realizing the factor which barrier them to upward in their work.

“As I had already changed my work to YSYF head-hunting company for three and half a year, I moved up to the position of team leader when I was 26 years old. As a young talent team leader, I think the most crucial important factor for this position is my personal capability for a better work performance.” (A1)

“I started my work for 5 months ago...I was trained for at least 3 months. The training of XDF Group was a sort of competition: someone would be dropped if they haven’t did a good job for the training task...I performed well during the whole training period and enrolled in the end...what benefited me most for the training competition was, my hobby is preside over and I had plenty of experience for being a compere in various activities when I was in her school. Therefore I had an outstanding ability of presentation and communication, which were attractive for XDF and it was vital for working in a training agency.” (A2)

Personal capability for a better work performance is the most important factor for moving up from A1’s perspective. While in A2’s opinion, the outstanding ability of presentation and communication is the most important factor for moving up in the leadership ladders. From the reflection of leadership over past 100 years, leadership can be defined as the ability to operate the process to be more adaptive (Gregoire & Arendt, 2004), A1’s leadership ability approaches the achievement which can benefit her to move up to the higher position. While A2’s leadership ability meet the demands
of her employer. Therefore they are moved in their leadership ladders by their personal work capability.

“...The skilled ability for dealing various types of work tasks and sufficient work experience brought me up to the manager positions.” (A3)

“...After climbed up to a manager position in the financial department of COFCO, I moved to GWC straightforward and still worked in a manager position from the beginning till now. In my opinion, what makes me become a competent manager is my sufficient former work experience...” (A5)

The related work experience is the most important factor for moving up in the leadership ladders from A5’s opinion. Both skilled ability and work experience are the vital factors for A3 to move up to a manager position from her perspective. Based on the definition of leadership, leadership can be defined as an ability to inspire and guide others to build and achieve a shared vision (Gregoire & Arendt, 2004), the skilled ability and sufficient work experience make her could guide others to approach their achievements. Therefore they could grab a higher position in their leadership ladders.

“...the most indispensable factor for me to move up to the senior manager position is the deep understanding of the policies, structure, system, and operation of my company. At the beginning...the customer service department was established by me and another female employee originally...After I could organize the customer service department well, I was raised up to charging both customer service department and the logistic of northern regions of China...I am a dedicated manager with a deep participation in her team. Here is an example that, in order to figure out how to improve the efficiency of my subordinates, I replaced the work of one of my subordinate, the task is to print out the lists of the customer. With attempting what my subordinate did, I found that the effectiveness
of my subordinate’s work was influenced by the speed of internet in the company. Therefore I solved this problem with IT department, promoted not only my department’s effectiveness but also others departments to a large extent. In conclusion, knowing every dimension of the company clearly is my crucial factor to move up in the leadership ladders. Another important factor for my successful leadership performance is I was always being well-prepared. I used to complete the work task two or three days in advance in case there was something needs to be improved. So my supervisors were satisfied with my habit and trust me than other employees…” (A4)

From A4’s particular elaboration, the deep understanding of the company and always being well-prepared bring her better performance to grab the trust from her supervisors. Hence A4’s work capability for a better performance is the most crucial factor for moving up in the leadership ladders. Since leadership was defined as a process of influencing others to realize what they required to do and how to do it effectively (Gregoire & Arendt, 2004), A4 could figure out the operation of her company and how to make her organization to be more effective, so this kind of ability brought her up in the leadership ladders.

“…For over two decade’s years, I kept staying in the position of employee, I never had an experience of being a manager in my work. However, I was regarded as a very important employee and played an indispensable role in my company. With the attitude of moving up in the leadership ladders, I think if a soldier does not want to be a general, he is not a good soldier, which is similar to my attitude toward leadership ladders. But I need to follow the arrangement and decision from my company’s HR department… the most crucial factors for moving up in the leadership ladders are 1) the educational background and 2) a remarkable performance in one’s work… I was lack of a better education background, although I have already had plenty of work experience and professional skills, I was treated with satisfied salary but the operate layer in my
company. Yet, I am a loyal employee so that I obeyed every decision from my supervisors whatever I was moved up or not. Working for a better performance is the most motivating factor in my work.” (A5)

Both the education background and a remarkable performance are the vital factors for moving up in the leadership ladders in A5’s opinion. Yet, from A5’s words, the lack of a better education background is a barrier for her to move up to a higher position. Related to leadership is a sort of behavior that commands the group achieve a shared goal (Gregoire & Arendt, 2004), A5 is dedicated to her department but barrier by the education background.

Hereby the findings of what is the most important factor for moving up in the leadership ladder could be summarized in three opinions: the work capability, the related work experience, and the educational background. As leadership can be defined as a sort of behavior, an ability, a process, and a subject (Gregoire & Arendt, 2004), the three factors mentioned above shows that, in order to move up in the leadership ladders, personal achievements based on these three dimensions are vital to the leadership performance.

4.2 Gender perspectives in Leadership

On purpose to answering the research question: why do Chinese female face more challenges/difficulties to move up in their leadership ladders, the relationship between “gender” and “leadership” is indispensable to this research. From the literature review, female are diminished by the negative gender-stereotypes, and always expected the typical male leader’s behaviors. Hence, the impacts of gender perspectives on females are the main findings in this sector.

“...about the gender stereotypes, I think there are some requirements about
gender from some of the customer companies. For instance, some positions are only offered for male candidates while some positions are only provided for female candidates. There are two main reasons for this phenomenon: firstly, the supervisor of the position is only willing to recruit a male/female subordinate based on his/her personal gender bias. For example, some supervisor regards it is easier to communicate with the same gender subordinates. Another reason is about the traits of position: some position need only male employees because there are plentiful business trips included that will challenge female for taking care of their family...there are two stereotypes that 1) people take leaders are someone’s age older than others for granted because they are more experienced. That means it is more difficult for young talent leaders to convince and motivate their followers than older leaders. 2) The top leaders of a company should be males because they are more authority than female leaders” (A1)

“...female leaders are more gentle, accommodate, hard to be authoritative, while male leaders are more depressed, strategic, and self-awareness. Therefore there are some difficulties among female and male leaders among their communication and cooperation...On the other hand, since I have a firm desire to be a hard-working leader, I even refused to give a birth to a child when I was pregnant in order to avoid spend much time on caring my baby. Under the strong persuades from both my parents and my husband, I eventually gave a birth to my son when I was 29 years old... I had totally 4 months and 15 days-off maternity leave. However, I was so afraid of outing from my job that I insisted on work until the expected date of confinement. After I gave a birth to my son, I stayed at home but attempted to keep in touch with my workmates and worked at home as much as I could. When I finished her maternity leave, I executed a command of a business trip from my supervisors without any complaints” (A4)

“...first of all, I never experienced any stereotypes in my work...but from my impression of all male and female leaders in my company, male leaders are more
rational when they are leading their followers and dealing some problems in their work, while female leaders are more perceptual, sophisticated, and sensitive compared to male leaders when they are leading someone.” (A5)

One of the reasons for females’ difficulties in approaching top leadership positions and chief is the stereotype-based lack of fit between females’ personalities and leaders (Hoyt & Murphy, 2016). Men are expected to be “agentic” personalities which are related to statement, competitiveness, and achievement, while women are expected “communal” personalities which are including concerning individuals and sympathy (A5 & Chiang & Tsai & Lin, 2013). From A1, A4, and A5’s opinions, females are suffered from gender-stereotype and behavior somewhat differently. It is hard for young talent female leaders to manage the followers because the general impressions for “leaders” are someone who is older, and the top leaders mostly are male. The different personalities and behaviors bring barriers to the cooperation among males and females. Especially for A4’s behavior, she tried her best to get rid of a family-role of female-gender stereotypes.

“...I agreed the “agentic” personalities and “communal” personalities. However, it is up to different personalities, instead of gender in her opinion...about the stereotypes in leadership, I think it could not separate in genders when I was working with both male supervisors and female supervisors. The leaders who have excellent leadership ability would be convinced for the team members.” (A2)

“...the stereotype is not related to the gender, but the occupation. For instance, people regard the female who is working in the financial department as seriously, preciseness, mechanical, severe, and inflexible employee. However, for the female who is working in the marketing department, people will take them as a sort of extrovert, flexible, and enthusiasm, which is quite distinguished from the female who is working in financial department...” (A3)
“...I am stupid to feel about others’ ideas. I think I am a straightforward, outspoken, transparent person, so I prefer to pay more attention to the work task instead of how others think about me... I take the benevolent leadership style that I always care about her followers and holds team buildings as much as she could.”

(A5)

These three interviewees do not think females are influenced by the gender-stereotypes. On the contrast, one interviewee holds that females could convince their followers by their own leadership way as well.

Therefore the findings of the Gender Perspectives in Leadership of the interviewees could be concluded here: there are still some gender-stereotypes in leadership context: 1) Females are more emotional than male mostly and the leadership behavior of male and female somewhat differently, which verifies the belief that women are more emotional than men is the strongest gender-stereotype in leadership (Brescoll, 2016). But the leadership behavior is also related to the personalities to some extent. 2) Male are more suitable to be top leaders because of a female is always related to a “family role” in general opinions. Female leaders are always expected highly ambitious which is associated with the typical male leaders’ behaviors (Margaret & Deborah, 2015). This is why the female who struggles moving up to a higher position tends to get rid of the family role, lowering the needs of their family, ranking their work first. 3) Female leaders could overcome the gender-stereotypes to build their leadership way and convince their followers as well.

4.3 Female leadership

4.3.1 Transformational leadership

Taking the transformational leadership style as females’ leadership style, female
leaders are more transformational than male leaders with occupying low-level roles mostly (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt & Engen, 2003). However, does female leadership style belongs to transformational leadership style from the empirical data? Moreover, does the transformational leadership style make female harder to build their authority leadership roles? Is there any challenges/difficulties based on the female leadership style? This section will present the findings toward female leadership perspectives in the literature review.

“...my leadership way is: I cared about the personal development of my followers after I became the team leader. What the followers could learn from me will influence our team performance to some extent...Nevertheless, to be a team leader, what I forced to consider was not only my personal performance and personal ability but also the leadership way to multiply my team followers for a better team performance. So I tend to pay efforts to the team building for a better relationship with my team members.” (A1)

“...the relationship between “leader” and “followers” is, the leader and followers divided and undertake the different parts and play different roles in the work tasks. There is no any distinguish of the status, which is higher or which is lower, just people take diverse work and collaborate each other for a better work efficiency. Therefore concerning the cooperation in my department is my leadership way... facing a male CFO as my leader, I prefer to get on with her former female supervisor. Because of the mental distance would be shorter when I was facing my former female leader. We have more shared topics...facing my male CFO as my leader, what I talked about mainly focus on the work...” (A3)

From the leadership style of female leaders, they are more interpersonally-oriented and democratic styles (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt & Engen, 2003). In addition, transformational leaders motivate others to do more than they originally intended and even more than they are able to do (Bass & Riggio, 2006). From A1’s leadership style,
she cared about her followers, empowered them, and established a good relationship with her followers, which could be taken as interpersonally-oriented behavior. A3’s opinion towards the relationship between leadership and followers shows the democratic styles which are related to transformational leadership style as well.

“... Male leaders are good at judgments and decision-making, while female leaders are more careful, more patient to cooperate with their followers, and well-considered, which are extremely important for working. When they are leading their team, female leaders would pay attention to lots of details, while male leaders tend to take a panoramic view of the situation as their leadership style...” (A2)

The leadership style of female leaders is, they are less hierarchical, more cooperative and collaborative, and more targeted to increasing others’ self-worth (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt & Engen, 2003). A2 points that, female leaders are more patient to cooperate with their followers, while male leaders have an overview of the situations. Hence the female leadership belongs to transformational leadership style from her opinion.

“...I think my leadership style is “neutral”...I am a leader who is a task-oriented person. After I became manager, I established an explicable reward-punish system with a distinctly responsibility to every team members. Rewarding the team member who plays an outstanding performance, and punishing the team member who goes against the regulations, is the manage way of exposing my authority leadership style...On the other hand, I think leading others comes from helping others. Leaders should know and fulfill more mental demands of their followers instead of command them merely. I think my personalities are open, boyish, be popular with others. Sometimes I felt hard to communicate with other senior managers because I am the only female senior manager in Chinese business area, therefore I paid efforts on coordination and grasping through
regular team building, like dinner party, etc, to acquired a good relationship with them. I cared my team members within grasping the difficulties of them. For example, most of my team members were not local people, so I was on duty as much as possible in order to let my followers enjoy more vacation with their families. However, for my private life, I really ignored my families for a long time, including accompanied my parents, educated my son, and spent time with my husband. I never enjoyed an annual vacation when I was in ASC Fine Wines Company. This is what important for moving up in my leadership ladder but also a vital reason for my demission.” (A4)

A4’s opinion shows she tried to combine both transactional and transformational leadership styles as her leadership way. The purpose of transactional leaders is to acquire achievements through their followers’ efforts (Ding & Qi, 2008). A4’s reward-punishment system is in order to grab the better achievements of her team. Therefore the transactional leadership style can be seen from her behavior. On the other hand, transformational leaders empower followers and care about their individual needs and personal development (Bass & Riggio, 2006). A4’s leadership mind is, leading others comes from helping others, which is verifies the transformational leadership style. A4 would also pay efforts on a better cooperation with others male senior managers as her transformational leadership style.

Since leadership styles are categorized into transactional leadership style and transformational leadership style (Ding & Qi, 2008), the main difference between these two styles are: transactional leadership is a process of transaction or exchange that occurs among leaders and followers (Bass & Riggio, 2006), while the transformational leadership is one more person engage with others in a way that leaders and followers raise a high level of motivation and morality (Ding & Qi, 2008). Based on this theory and the empirical data above, the finding is female leadership style is concluded as transformational leadership absolutely. From the perspective of the interviewees, female leaders tend to convince their followers by establishing a
well interpersonal relationship, through team building and caring about their followers’ personal life. Female leaders take caring about their followers’ personal development, explore the potential of being a leader from their followers and helping their followers as their responsibilities as well, not only their own achievement. Moreover, female leaders are easier to have a closer mental distance with their followers compare to male leaders.

From the transformational leadership theory, women prefer to adapt leadership styles that are particularly well suited for the complexity of contemporary organizations and can transfer into increased institutional effectiveness (Hoyt & Murphy, 2016), that means, women tend to adjust themselves to be fitted into the contemporary leadership context. From the interviewees’ behavior, the transformational female leaders pay attention to cooperate with male leaders and their leadership behavior is more influenceable by others.

4.3.2 Legitimacy

“Legitimacy” can be defined as the willingness or duty to feel free to obey the directions and decisions of authorities (Vial & Brescoll, 2016). Female still suffered from the obstacle of gender bias and take lower-legitimacy for the advancement of leadership roles although women have already treated with great educational advances in recent years (Vial & Brescoll, 2016). In this sector, is the illegitimacy status of female leaders still challenges them to establish their authority in their leadership ladders is the main purpose.

“I would like to share one experience which is from my customer company: Chrysler. There is only one female CEO among all cars industry in China whose name is Zhengjie and belong to Chrysler Car Company. Zhengjie is a person who is able to organize everything of the enterprise well, self-disciplined, and has a
rapid reflection for some emergency accidents. However, there are plenty of gossips in this industry that she was moving up to the top position in some unjustified ways. On the contrary, there are no any rumors about the male top leaders among the car’s industry from my working experiences.” (A1)

“...women are lack of authority than male leaders: female leaders should pay more attention to the communication and interaction to their followers for a better management effect. Otherwise, it would be difficult to convince her followers...” (A2)

“The gender bias suffered from the female candidates firmly. With the increasing age and the need for establishing families, women will face a series of trouble and difficulties in their work...The stakeholders and workmates think the female candidates who refuse to or have not marriage till around 30 years old may have a problematic characteristic. Some people have the bias that long-time single women are not good at dealing with interpersonal relationship both in their life and work...for the married female who has not give a birth till a late age: it is also a “time bomb” for the company. For the female who is already married and give a birth, with the 2nd-child policy opened in China currently, the decision of whether giving a birth to 2nd-child is also a crucial consideration for the employers...” (A3)

Legitimacy is vital to a leader in the leadership process due to it would get easier to exert the power in a compulsive way to make their subordinates to collaborate and follow (Vial & Brescoll, 2016). From these perspectives, women are obviously belonging to an illegitimacy-status is the main findings of this sector. They are suffering from gender bias, which brings them more difficulties to raise their authority. Some illegitimacy perspectives from the interviewees are: 1) the female talent who moved up to a top leadership position suffered some negative conjecture about the unjustifiable way for their moving up, which is never happened on male top leaders. 2)
The gender biases for female could be concluded in age and family: firstly, some employer would think the female who is single for a long time is not good at dealing with the interpersonal relationship. Secondly, the female who is over around 40 years old will spend lots of time on their family. Therefore it is extremely difficult for them to change into a new challenging job. Therefore the illegitimacy status of female is a challenge facing female in their leadership ladders.

4.3.3 Gender Talent

Although female suffered from an illegitimacy status in their leadership ladders, there are plenty advantages of female leadership based on the transformational leadership style. Women are actually good at self-identity, self-clarity and they can learn from what happens even in a chaotic situation, and compared to men, they are able to admit mistakes and learn from failures (Robbie, 2010). However, women are experienced devalued and losing the balance of their time, their personal lives, the needs of their families and the demands of the job (Robbie, 2010). Hence, what the difficulties and challenges facing female in their leadership ladders is the main research question in this sector.

“...I think family is a main ‘glass ceiling’ because it occupied most of my spare time...if the work will influence my family life, like the overtime-works make me could not to join my daughter’s activities in kindergarten, I would plan to hunt a new job without huge pressure for more free time...Moreover, compare to my husband, I am sure that I spend certainly more time with our family no matter on child’s education or caring our parents. My husband concentrates on getting a better salary in order to improve the quality of our life...another reason for stopping move up to a higher position is, I have no desire to move up to the decision-making layer of my company, because of I think I am good at executing and managing, instead of decision-making...” (A3)
“The structure of top leaders was unbalanced from the gender view. The reasons for this phenomenon are: firstly, female tend to pay more attention to their families...moreover, the tremendous pressure from balancing taking care of their families and working at the same time make most females do not willing to challenge a top leadership position... From my own experience, although my parents and husband helped me taking care of my son for a long time, I still had a strong willingness to pick up the education of my son when the school time of my son was started. So I abandoned my busy work in ASC Fine Wines Company and regarded child is more important than climbing up to the top of leadership ladders absolutely...” (A4)

“Both marry and give a birth to a child affect women moving up in their leadership ladders. Because of women need time to take care of their families after they get married. It is easy to be replaced by other talent employees for the competitive situation.” (A2)

“A possible ‘glass ceiling’ for me is, the traditional female role will affect my behavior in my work. I would like to pay more attention to my family as a mother and a wife, and family is a factor which cannot be ignored in my leadership ladders. For balancing the time among family and work, I feel fortunate that I live with not only my husband but also my husband’s parents, which helps me save plenty of time for taking care of my child. Therefore I can concentrate on my job more than other females and spend sufficient time working for the manager position, including overtime work frequently...for the reason why she moved from COFCO to GWC: first of all, my son was on age to the kindergarten so I wanted to move some concentration to the education of my son. Then, age is another reason for changing my job. I personally think, it is extremely hard for women to hunt a job after 40 years old, because of: 1) China is a family-oriented country that people pay lots of attention to their families. With the child growing up and
parents getting old, I need to spend plenty of time on my son’s education, and the healthcare of the aged. It will be extremely hard to take care of both families and work. 2) When I was hunting a job on some recruiting websites, I found that most requirements for the age of employees are no more than 35 years old. But I am not sure whether it is related to the different sorts of the profession. 3) Considering the work pressure, my willingness towards to the job tend to be hard-working and challenging. I prefer to take some high strength work before getting old and lose sufficient energy...Considering the reasons for both family and age, I moved into GWC and stopped by the manager position.” (A5)

“...when I was recommending the outstanding female candidates who are meeting the demand of the position whereas the age is over the marriageable age with a single status, the customers will care about the 2-year-plan or 3-year plan of the female candidates. If the female candidates hold that they will not get married in the following several years, it could be acceptable for the employers. However, if they plan to get married in the following years, perhaps they will be dumped from the candidates’ list. Moreover, this reason never works on male candidates from my experience.” (A1)

From the above interviewees’ opinions, the family is a considerable difficulty for them to move up in their leadership ladders. A3, A4 and A5 changed/was planning to change their work due to the needs of caring their children. This reason approached the theory that women are losing the balance between their work and their personal lives (Robbie, 2010). On the other hand, since the family role of female kept as a traditional role through Chinese history for a long time, it is hard for a female to get rid of taking the responsibility to take care of their families. So the conflict roles between women and leader are challenging the female in their leadership ladders (Michelle & Linda, 2010). Moreover, both A5 and A1 regard that the age of female is a possible challenged factor to move up to a higher position as well. For the female
employees/candidates who are single, providing a 3-year plan is a usual requirement for the job application.

“...Some physical works and frequent overtime work are not fit for women, this is a sort of ‘glass ceiling’... But, the pregnant females are easy to meet some unfair treatment indeed. Women actually have fewer advantages compared to men for the absent during the maternity leave...”  (A5)

“I think the ‘glass ceiling’ in my opinions are: firstly, female need a disciplinary life, sometimes it is harder for a female to balance work and healthy compare to male. For instance, men could suffer more overtime-working, but women may get sick when the overtime-working happened frequently. Then, both marry and give a birth to a child will affect women moving up in their leadership ladders. Because of women need time to take care of their families after they get married. It is easy to be replaced by other talent employees for the competitive situation...”  (A2)

From A5 and A2’s opinions, the physical weakness is a challenge facing female in their work. Females are not fit to take participate in high pressured and strong manual labor, and females need to prevent high strength working for a disciplinary life.

“...Hence, compared to the male leaders, female leaders have the same competitive advantages or even better performance than male leaders.”  (A2)

“Women are emerging more and more advantages in their work currently: the well-considered work covering the detail as much as possible, the excellent performance for team building.”  (A5)
The gender stereotype of emotion is a barrier to women’s ability to ascend to and succeed in leadership roles (Brescoll, 2016). On the contrast, women could overcome the gender stereotypes and expose their leadership advantages currently.

“I refused to be a top leader due to I think I am good at executing and managing, instead of decision-making. Yet, based on making sure the quality of work, I am willing to pay more time on her family as much as possible.” (A3)

Both the personal willingness of work and the family needs are A3’s reason for stopping to move up in her leadership ladder.

“I have not any desire to be a top leader in GWC. I prefer to stay in the manager position and organize the current work task well. The reason for this way is I feel afraid of challenges facing a top leader in a company. Therefore, to be conservative is my choice and attitude towards the leadership ladders.” (A5)

Lacking the desire to the top positions is the main reason for A5 to stop in her leadership ladder.

In conclusion, women are devalued and losing the balance of their time (Robbie, 2010), personal life and the needs of their families could be evidenced by the interviewees. Therefore, balancing both personal life and work is a challenge facing females in their leadership ladders. Nevertheless, the reflections of the theory “women are diminished by gender stereotype” (Quiroga Fernandez & Wang, 2011) are, on the contrast, women could overcome and ignore the negative stereotype. Yet, from the policies of companies, women are offered reasonable maternity leave and also treated with a proper arrangement for the absent of their work. Hence, with the supporting from companies, the reasons for why the top female leaders are still rare are: 1) Females are not that ambitioned to struggling with a top position. Staying at the manager or senior manager position could make them feel satisfied already. 2) The
family is a considerable factor: although currently female is not required full-time stay
at home as ancient way, most of the interviewees hold that women definitely pay
more attention to their family than men, and it is hard for female to ignore their family,
especially their child, to pay full attention in their work.
5. Conclusion

5.1 Research Question

Following the analysis of this study, the research question should be answered here. Since Chinese women have already acquired the legally equal social status for a long time and enrolled equal education context, the top female leaders are still rare from the data mentioned in the introduction. Why Chinese female facing more challenges and difficulties to move up in their leadership ladders? Several reasons are concluded as follows from the investigation.

1. Transformational leadership style makes female more influenceable by male leaders

The transactional leadership style which is operated by male leaders makes them behave as task-oriented (Ding & Qi, 2008). The way of presenting a better work performance for male leaders are mainly through their achievement. The male leaders who have a better personal capability for work achievements convincing their followers. Yet, as transactional leadership style can be regarded as a sort of “exchange” behavior (Ding & Qi, 2008), male leaders tend to consider what they could get from others. However, the opinion of interviewees is, for the transformational leadership style of female leaders, they realized the importance of motivation, encourage, and empower their followers, also including dealing with the interpersonal relationship. This kind of trait make female are easily to be influenced by others and fit into male-dominant context, especially for the current status that male occupied more top leaders’ position than female (The World Economic Forum, 2016). Therefore, female leaders take “others” as an important factor for their personal achievement and the capability of manage as well. It could also be said, the male leaders hold a stronger self-awareness than female leaders. This is a barrier for a female to break and establish their own leadership style that combines both the positive effects of
transactional leadership and transformational leadership styles.

2. The gender bias and stereotypes of female still exist and played negative effects
Female candidates suffered an illegitimacy status (Vial & Brescoll, 2016) could be proved by the interviewees’ opinions. The main stereotype of successful leaders is the male rely on the perspectives from the interviewees. Because of the interviewees regard that male is good at strategic thinking, calm down and dealing some emergencies, while female is emotional and less authority, the powerful women always with lower legitimacy than powerful men (Vial & Brescoll, 2016), which is also verified from the interviewees. Therefore, the successful female leaders need to break these sorts of gender bias and stereotypes.

3. Balancing the needs of families and work is a challenge for females in their work
The employers have apparent different attitudes and considerations of male and female candidates from the results of this investigation from the interviewees’ perspectives. For the female candidates, besides of their educational background, capability and skills, the age, marriage relations, and the structure of their family are also considered by the employer. However, for the male candidates, the employers concentrate only their education background and professional skills. Female candidates are always related to the role of “wife” and “mother”. The single upward female is not willing to build a family for preventing the negative influence of marriage leave, maternity leave, and the plentiful time spending on caring the baby. Married women stop moving up in their leadership ladders due to the needs of their families from the interviewees of this research. Hence, the family can be taken as a “glass ceiling” from their perspectives. Losing the balance between family and work (Robbie, 2010) happens on the interviewees.
5.2 Research Contributions

There are some new results from the investigation which are not same as the theory will be elaborated in this chapter. Although there are still some challenges and difficulties for the mobile upwards female to confront in their work, some positive opinions come out from the interviewees. Details are as follows.

Firstly, the transformational leadership style could make female built their authority by themselves. Through the team building, well interpersonal relationships, and caring the personal needs of the followers, female leaders could also convince their followers by their leadership ways.

Then, although there are still some gender biases and stereotypes played on the female, the female could break them and ignored the negative effects to empower themselves. Yet, some stereotypes like female leaders are more emotional than male leaders are also working positives effects. From the interviewees’ opinions, female has the advantages what male lack as well. Female leaders are more patient, helpful, and easier to communicate compare to male leaders. Moreover, with the increasing successful female leaders’ role coming out, the interviewees realized everyone has different personalities, instead of judge the talent leaders within stereotypes. Therefore, the gender bias and stereotype are not working as a threaten effect like the theory.

Lastly, for decreasing the family role of Chinese female, some companies setting the regulation of paternity leave, usually for 15 days (legaldaily.com, 2018). Although there are still some difficulties to operate the regulations, it shows the appealing of male to participate more in their family and the respect of female at least. This is also present the increasing role played by Chinese female and the rising female power in their work.
5.3 Research Limitations

Obviously, the personal privacy is a considerably influenced factor for this research. Some questions during the interview were not welcome to answer by the interviewees because of the some of the interview questions are related to personal experience and private life. As a result, some questions were skipped during the interview. Moreover, because of most of the video-interviews were operated in the interviewees’ office, some questions related the policies and supervisors in their company may be answered blurred.

Then, the target group of this research is very limited as well. The topic of this paper seems general. Nevertheless, it is difficult to find the answer to cover all situations in this field. China is a big country with various kinds of companies distributing in the different area. Although I desire to gather data as much as possible for an accurate result, the time limit is not allowed to cover all sorts of domains in Chinese business context. Hence, the target group is narrowed into the service sector of private companies in China with six interviews in order to see an extremely limited part of the situation of this topic.

Moreover, whether the occupations will influence the answer to the research question has not been considered in this research. Three of the interviewees come from the financial department. However, the traits of various occupations are different and will affect the challenges/difficulties in the interviewees’ work. For instance, the employee who is working in business segments may have the different answers compare to the employee who is working in the financial department. Moreover, the service industry and the company nature is also an influenced factor. Because of the regulations in diverse kinds of companies, for example, the private companies and the state-owned enterprises are quite different. It would also impact the challenges/difficulties facing female in their work.
Last but not least, a geographically affective factor is, all the interviewees are working/worked in Beijing, a big city in China. China is a developing country with apparently gaps and differences between every city, where the urban and rural areas show obvious differences indeed. The policies and regulations are set differently among every city as well. Like the number of days-off for maternity leave and the salary are also regulated variously. It is hard to realize and understand the situation of rural area from this research with the interviewees’ experiences and opinions. Hereby the geographical limitation of this research exists as well.

5.4 Further Research

With the increasing role played by the females in Chinese economic development, the power of female should draw more attention in the academy field. As the limitations of this research have been introduced above, the further research is suggested to approaching a wider target group in order to see a general research result. Or taking another target group, for instance, to operate this research among Chinese state-owned companies, is also meaningful for the readers who are interested in this field. Another sector would also be suggested for this research question.

Furthermore, the cultural and political contexts probably have the impacts on the challenges facing Chinese female in their work as well. Therefore I would also recommend the future research could be conducted in other countries to see some interesting differences.

Lastly, as this topic could be generalized as well, changing the data method into the quantitative study in order to see the generalized answers could be done in the future.
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