Gender, mentoring and social capital in the National Health Service (NHS) in Scotland, UK

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ABSTRACT

Research Paper

Purpose
This chapter investigates the role of gender, mentoring and social capital and contributes to literature about the career development of women in senior management roles in the National Health Service of the UK.

Design/methodology/approach
This chapter draws on a doctoral study of senior level managers in a Scottish NHS Board. The data collected are: i) documentary; ii) quantitative; and iii) qualitative. The quantitative data is collected through questionnaires, while the source of qualitative data is in-depth semi-structured interviews. The doctoral study is embedded within an interpretivist and feminist paradigm.

Findings
Although access to mentoring and social capital was seen as likely to enhance the career progression of females to senior managerial roles, gendered work and family expectations, gendered organisational culture, and normative performances of gendered senior management were identified as obstacles in taking advantages of mentoring and social capital.

Research limitations/implications
The study provides a starting point for further investigation of the role of mentoring and social capital in the career progression of females all across the National Health Service (NHS) in the UK.

Originality/value:
To the best of our knowledge this is the only piece of work that explicitly investigates the role of mentoring and social capital in managing gender diversity at the senior managerial positions of the NHS. .

Keywords**:** *senior managers, gender, managing diversity, glass-ceiling, career progression, mentoring, social capital*

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to investigate the role of mentoring and social capital in managing gender diversity in senior managerial positions. Gender diversity in the workforce in Britain is increasing (England, 2010; Davies, 2011), but organizations are yet to be successful in ensuring full integration of females in the workplace (Taylor, 2010; Ng and Wyrick, 2011).

Recent employment trends show that the percentage of women in the UK labour force is 46.4% while that of men stands at 53.6% (Catalyst, 2012). Among the people engaged in part-time employment, over 70% are women (ONS, 2012). These statistics reveal that women represent nearly half of the labour force but their representation at the senior organizational levels is significantly poor (Coleman, 2011; LaPierre and Zimmerman, 2012; Applebaum, 2013; Muller-Kahle and Schiehll, 2013). In Scotland, only one-third of the managerial jobs are held by women (EHRC 2012). Also, women across the board in the UK earn an average of 15% less compared to their male counterparts (Fawcett, 2013). According to the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC, 2011) some of the reasons behind the underrepresentation of women in senior positions are: the lack of flexibility in organizations and the presence of outdated working pattern; under estimation of part-time work (Tsouroufli et al. 2011; Ozbilgin et al., 2011); and the tendency of women to switch to self-employment instead of waiting to be promoted to senior management roles. In this respect, Coleman (2011) summarized the barriers to career progression of females as the result of: male dominated work cultures, especially at the senior levels; prevalence of gender stereotypes which portray males as the leaders and females as the subordinates; and genuine and professed impact of family responsibilities on the females' work capacity.

Moreover, women's career progression is slow in professions that have been traditionally occupied by men, such as academic Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics and Medicine (STEMM) (Servon and Vissor, 2011; Isaac, Kaatz and Carnes 2012; Bevan and Learmonth, 2013). It is also argued that sluggish career progression is the result of persistent assumptions and stereotypes which see women as communal, dependent and passive and thus incapable of successfully handling the demands of a senior role (The National Academies, 2006).

This study has been carried out in light of the above context. It draws on Bourdieu's notion of cultural capital and social capital to investigate whether access to mentoring and social networks can facilitate the career progression of females to the senior managerial positions within the NHS. Therefore, the main objectives of this research study are:

1. To investigate whether access to mentorship is likely to promote the career progression of females

2. To analyse whether access to social capital is likely to promote the career progression of females

Mentoring can be described as a relationship between an individual who is less experienced with a more experienced individual (Leck and Orser, 2013). The role of a mentor involves providing support to protégés, including career development support. Conversely, social capital involves forming networks with resourceful people who could benefit one's career development (Broadbridge, 2010). The significance of mentoring and social capital in the career progression of females in light of Bourdieu's notion of cultural and social capital will be discussed later in the chapter.

In the following section we will give an overview of managing diversity and its related concepts. Next, the role of mentoring and social capital in the career development of females to senior management roles is reviewed from the existing literature. We also provide a brief description of the methodology implemented in this research. Then the subsequent two sections provide the findings of this research and discussion of the research findings respectively. The chapter ends with a conclusion.

Setting the context: an overview of managing diversity and related concepts

Managing diversity has now become more important than ever before because of several reasons such as globalization, the rapidly changing workforce demographics and the increasing consciousness among people of the fact that differences exist between individuals (Cox, 2001; Hays-Thomas, 2004; Thomas, 2005; Hite and McDonald, 2010). The practice of diversity management is prevalent in both public and private organizations (Kirton and Greene, 2009). The Human Resources functions of organizations are primarily responsible for making opportunities equally available to people of all gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and physical ability (Shen et al, 2009).

A diverse workforce benefits organizations and society in a number of ways. For example, in business organizations, diversity is a pivotal source of competitive advantage (Basset Jones, 2005; Herring, 2009) and is linked to profitability (Richard, 2000; Jackson, Joshi and Erhardt, 2003; Ng and Wyrick, 2011). A number of studies were conducted to establish the business case of managing diversity and to illustrate the benefits that diversity management brings to all stakeholders of an organization (Cornelius et al. 2001; Mulholland, Ozbilgin and Worman, 2006; Ozbilgin et al. 2008; Davies, 2011). Proponents of diversity management indicate that diversity is important in the workplace as it enhances the effectiveness and productivity of organizations (Choi and Rainey, 2010) through broadening the perspective of employees, creating stronger teams, and adding to the resources required for problem solving (Cox, 2001; Herring, 2009). On the other hand, it has been argued that the benefits outweigh the potential costs of conflict and lower group cohesiveness (Skerry, 2002; Herring, 2009). The benefits of a diverse workforce are also emphasized by the theories of organizational change (Katz and

Miller, 1986; Cox, 1993; Thomas and Elly, 1996; Cross, 2000; Meyerson and Fletcher, 2000; Thomas, 2001; Zane, 2002).

There are different types of diversity that the organizations need to manage, such as gender, age, ethnicity and disability. The focus of this study is centered on gender diversity.

Diversity Management and Gender

The most cited definition of managing diversity is provided by Kandola and Fullerton (1998, p.8),

"*The basic concept of managing diversity accepts that the workforce consists of a diverse population of people consisting of visible and non-visible differences which will include factors such as sex, age, background, race, disability, personality and workstyle. It is founded in the premise that harnessing these differences will create a productive environment in which everyone feels valued, where all talents are fully utilized and in which organizational goals are met.*"

The word gender refers to the social connotation of being 'a man' or 'a woman' (Game and Pringle, 1984). Therefore from these definitions of managing diversity and gender, the authors of this chapter resolved that managing gender diversity refers to managing a gender balanced workforce, where both men and women are represented in equal proportion to reflect their representation in the society. According to Acker (2012), gender and organizations began to be theorized in the late 1960s and early 1970s as a result of criticisms from feminist scholars that conventional organizational research lacks adequacy due to the fact that they fail to recognize the importance of gender in working life (see Acker and Van Houten, 1974; Kanter, 1977).

Over the years, the literature on the study of women and work with explanations for the lack of women in top managerial positions has been enriched by researchers. LaPierre and Zimmerman (2012, p.101) classified the explanations of under-representation of women at the top into two basic categories. The first of the two categories are those that emphasize the characteristics of individual employees to explain their under-representation at the top. The second category focuses on the work environment to explain the under-representation women. The two categories can be seen in the work of Kanter (1977); Reskin (1993); Tharenou (1999) among others. These two approaches eventually led to the development of the 'pipeline theory' and the 'glass ceiling effect'. While the pipeline theory is based on the view that women's progression to top management can be achieved as women gain more qualifications and work experience, the glass ceiling concept is focused on the obscure yet powerful forces that prevents capable and qualified women from reaching the top management positions (Eagly and Carli, 2007; Carceres-Rodriguez, 2011; Powell, 2012; Smith, Caputi and Crittenden, 2012).

Women in the UK labour force

Gender diversity in the workforce is growing in number (England 2010; Davies, 2011) but organisations are yet to be successful in ensuring full integration of females in the workplace (Taylor 2010; Ng and Wyrick, 2011). Mainstream management research historically marginalized gender (Broadbridge and Simpson, 2011). According to Dwyer, Orlando and Chanwick (2003) management literature did not give sufficient attention to gender diversity when they were researching in 2003. It indicates that management literature had failed to fully grasp the significance of managing gender diversity only over a decade ago. However, it is now believed that research on gender and diversity is important in management studies (Metcalfe and Woodhams, 2012; Broadbridge and Simpson 2011). Gender and diversity research generally derives its premise and hypotheses from sociological study of gender and women. Tatli and Ozbiligin (2012) emphasized that research in the field of business and management benefits from insights drawn from gender and women's studies. This indicates to the importance of gender and women's studies for the business and management practitioners. Gender and women's studies enable practitioners to run successful organisations by employing, training and retaining a gender balanced workforce which is more creative, innovative and productive as is seen in the business case argument of managing diversity.

The percentage of women in the UK labour force is 46.4% while the percentage of men in the UK labour force stands at 53.6% (Catalyst, 2012). Among the people engaged in part-time employment, over 70% are women (ONS, 2012). These statistics reveal that women currently represent nearly half of the labour force, but, their representation at the senior organisational levels is poor (Coleman, 2011; LaPierre and Zimmerman, 2012; Applebaum, 2013). In Scotland, only one-third of the managerial jobs are held by women. Moreover, the annual gender pay gap between women and men in full-time employment in the UK is 19.6% (EHRC, 2012). According to the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC, 2011) some of the reasons behind the underrepresentation of women in senior positions are: the lack of flexibility in the organisations and the presence of outdated working pattern; under estimation of part-time work; and the tendency of women to switch to self-employment instead of waiting to be promoted to senior management roles.

The importance of 'capital' in female career progression

The theoretical framework of this current research is based on Bourdieu's notion of capital. The theory of capitals put forward by Bourdieu includes social, cultural, economic and symbolic capitals (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). The capitals are resources that individuals accumulate and use. The two forms capital examined in this research are cultural and social capital.

Cultural capital comprises of education, professional experience and qualifications. The sociological dimension involved in cultural capital differentiates it from Becker's (1993) understanding of human capital. Mentoring received by an individual will enhance their cultural capital due to the learning that occurs throughout the mentoring process. The current research examines the role of mentoring which falls under Bourdieu's notion of accumulating cultural capital, and the role of social capital in female career progression.

According to Field (2005), Bourdieu is one of the original thinkers behind today's debate on social capital. The initial definition of social capital provided by Bourdieu (1977, p. 119) is, "capital of relationships which will provide, if necessary, useful 'supports': a capital of honourability and respectability which is often indispensable if one desires to attract clients in socially important positions, and which may serve as currency, for instance in a political career". Over a decade later, a more general definition was provided by Bourdieu, "social capital is the sum of resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 119).

Cultural capital and social capital in human resource development

In organisations, career progression can be facilitated through Human Resource Development (HRD). Hezlett and Gibson (2007) contended that the understanding and application of mentoring and facilitating the access to social capital are likely to remain very significant for the human resource development professionals in organizations. Mentoring is very useful in promoting career development (Morrison and Glinow, 1990; Gubbins and Garavan, 2005; Noon, 2010). Similarly, social capital has also been identified as beneficial to career progression (Forret and Doughterty, 2004; Broadbridge 2010; Kumra and Vinnicombe 2010). Although the notion of social capital originates from Sociology (Portes 2000; Storberg-Walker, 2007), it is used in numerous disciplines, including Human Resource Development (HRD) to explain, understand and determine a number of phenomenon (Coleman, 1988; Emirbayer and Goodwin, 1994; Lin 2001; Fine, 2002; Storberg-Walker, 2007). McDonald and Hite (2005) concurred with the view that networking opportunities, the informal ones in particular, are difficult to avail by minority professionals and managers (Ibarra, 1993; Combs, 2003; Forret and Dougherty, 2004). Therefore, human resource development practitioners in an organization can facilitate their employees' access to mentoring and social capital. McDonald and Hite (2005) categorised the responsibilities of the HRD function as bounded activities and boundary spanning activities. They identified mentoring as one of the bounded activities of HRD and social capital as one of HRD's boundary spanning activities. HRD practitioners can understandably facilitate mentoring opportunities for employees for their career development. However in order to understand how HRD practitioners can be involved in developing an employee's social capital, it is necessary to understand what boundary spanning activities involve. Four functions of boundary spanners are identified by Shantz,

Wright and Latham (2011). The first one is to contribute in increasing organisational effectiveness by sourcing information from outside the organisation. The next one is the formation of relationships with key stakeholders by facilitating the exchange of ideas and information among them. The third function involves   enabling the exchange of valuable resources among multiple parties. Fourthly, boundary spanners also aids in developing long-term relationships between individuals within and outside the organization. Examples of boundary spanners provided by Shantz, Wright and Latham (2011) are the recruitment agencies and employees who refer others for promotion.

However, prior to HRD professional's intervention in the career progression of females through facilitating the access to cultural capital and social capital, it is instrumental to investigate the usefulness of mentoring and social capital.

Mentoring

It is frequently argued that, mentoring of employees is of utmost significance for the development of human resources (Kram, 1985; Daloz, 1990; Segermann-Peck, 1991; Bozeman and Feeney, 2007; Peterson, et al., 2012). Mentoring is the process where a more experienced person supports the personal and professional growth of a less experienced person. The less experienced person is the protégé or mentee, and the more experienced person is the mentor. Mentoring is a mutually beneficial relationship, but the usual focus of a mentoring relationship in the workplace is the professional development of the protégé (Russell and Adams, 1997; Noe, Greenberger and Wang, 2002; Hezlett and Gibson, 2005; 2007). However, although mentoring is beneficial to the career success of both men and women (Allen et al. 2004; Ng et al. 2005; O'Brien et al 2008), there are studies that suggest that mentoring is particularly beneficial to the career success of women (Ragins 1997a; Ragins 1997b; Tharenou 2005). For example, in a large scale longitudinal study of mentorship in Australia, Tharenou (2005) found that mentorship support was more helpful for women in advancing their career compared to men.

Social Capital

Bourdieu (1984) attributed the lack of women in senior managerial roles to insufficient social capital possessed by women. Similarly, Eagly and Carli (2007) also maintained that gender affects access to social capital, thus disfavouring women. In general, social capital refers to the network of people that an individual is connected to and from whom they can obtain potential career benefits (Broadbridge 2010; Kumra and Vinnecombe, 2010). Coleman (1998) identified social capital as a resource because this network is built upon trust and shared values and with an expectation of mutuality. There is evidence to suggest that networking is essential in the current economy in finding opportunities of career progression both within and outside of an employee's work organization (for example, Osnowitz 2010; Vallas, 2011;

Williams, Muller and Kilanski, 2012). Kirton and Greene (2005) argued that social networks are male-dominated and females are excluded from it informally by the practices and behaviours of their male co-workers. Thus, female career advancement in organizations is inhibited by their inability to access micro and meso level social capital (Miller, 2007). This demonstrates that although access to social capital could potentially aid women in their career progress, women fail to reap the benefits of social capital.

It can be concluded from the above review of literature that women are underrepresented in senior managerial positions. It is seen that women face many hurdles, which are often invisible, in progressing their career. It can also be argued that access to mentorship and social capital is likely to help in managing diversity at the senior managerial positions. In this chapter we will focus mainly on qualitative data (semi-structured interviews with senior managers in the NHS) and questionnaire data to explore their views and experiences of using mentoring and building social capital.

Research methodology

This chapter draws on a study, which collected data from one of the fourteen health boards in Scotland. Primary data were collected through questionnaire surveys and interviews. The source of secondary data was relevant documents and statistics that were obtained from the organization studied and NHS sources.

The primary data were collected from the male and female senior level managers of the organization. All senior managers were identified based on their pay scale, which was in bands 8 and 9. The pay system of the NHS has three pay spines or series of pay bands. One of the series is for the employees in the remit of Doctors and Dentists, one for employees who are under the extended remit of the pay review body for nursing and other health professionals; and the last one is for other NHS staffs who are directly employed, but it excludes the most senior managers. The employees in the remit of Doctors and Dentists were not included in this research.

A list of 460 females and 179 males making a total of 639 said employees were obtained and 633 were sent the questionnaire. It was possible to successfully send out the questionnaire to a total of 633 participants. A total of 257 responses were obtained. Finally, 242 out of the 257 responses were found to be complete and useable for analysis. This gives a 38.23% response rate, which is acceptable. Among the respondents, there were 179 females (74%), 62 males (25.6%) and there was 1 person who identified himself/herself to be in the gender reassigned category. The ethnicities of the respondents were Scottish (72.3%), Irish (2.9%), British (21.5%), Indian (0.4%), mixed background (2.1%) and other (0.8%).

Interviews were conducted with 13 senior managers, who were spread over all the area

covered by the NHS Board. Each of the interviews lasted between 40 minutes to 1 hour 40 minutes. Out of the 13 interviewees, 10 were female and 3 were male. The age of the interviewees ranged from 34 years to 61 years and the ethnicities represented comprised of one English, seven Scottish, one Irish, one Indian, one German, one Middle-eastern and one from mixed background.

Primary data was analysed using SPSS software package and thematic analysis. The secondary data collected from the NHS Board were interpreted to establish the research problem and help in answering the research questions.

Findings of the research

The secondary data collected from the NHS Board showed that the percentage of females dropped significantly from salary Band 5 to Band 9. The data presented on Table 1 shows that, in November 2013, there were 88.83% female employees in Band 5, but only 37.50% at the top salary band, which is Band 9. This clearly shows that females are not represented in equal proportions in all levels of management. Although over 80% of the employees in the junior and middle-managerial levels in the NHS Board are women, the most senior management level is very male dominated. Therefore based on these statistics, it can be concluded that the glass-ceiling is prevalent in obstructing the career progression of females to senior management roles.

Salary Bands	Pay Range (from 1st April 2014)	Percentage of Female Employees
Band 9	£77,850 - £98,453	37.5
Band 8D	£65,922 - £81,618	50
Band 8C	£54,998 - £67,805	70.27
Band 8B	£45,707 - £56,504	77.06
Band 8A	£39,239 - £47,088	76.81
Band 7	£30,764 - £40,558	81.35
Band 6	£25,783 - £34,530	84.82
Band 5	£21,478 - £27,901	88.83

Table 1. Percentage of female employees in salary Band 5 to Band 9 as of November 2013

Interviewee Number	Gender	Ethnicity	Age	Role	Length of Service
1	Female	Indian	49	Diversity Manager	19 years
2	Female	British	49	Network Manager	27 years
3	Male	Mixed Background	53	Head of Department	20 years
4	Female	Scottish	48	Nurse Consultant	22 years
5	Female	German	40	Team Leader	6 years
6	Male	Scottish	49	Manager	21.5 years
7	Female	Scottish	61	Head of Department	10.5 years
8	Female	Scottish	57	Principal Clinical Pharmacist	11 years
9	Female	Irish	57	Principal Radiographer	25.5 years
10	Female	Scottish	49	Team Leader	27 years
11	Male	Iraqi	61	Head of Department	10 years
12	Female	Scottish	38	Service Co-ordinator	16 years
13	Female	Scottish	34	Clinical Psychologist	10 years

Table 2 Demographic descriptions of the interviewees

Table 2 represents the demographic descriptions of the interviewees. The prevalence of the glass ceiling was also confirmed by comments made by the interviewees:

 "When you are higher up in the organization, in comparison to the whole gender diversity of the organization, it (gender diversity) is not reflected at a higher level." – Interviewee 1 (*Female, Age: 49, Diversity Manager*)

"When I sit on our management team meeting there's someone from NHS Lothian, NHS Grampian, NHS Tayside and NHS GG&C and its all men, I'm the only woman" – Interviewee 2 (*Female, Age: 49, Network Manager*)

However, nearly all interviews felt that the NHS has improved massively in the last 20 years in terms of gender and ethnic diversity and that discrimination on any grounds is very rare. These very positive claims about gender equality were in contrast with persisting gendered practices and expectations in the organisation as we will explore later The following section looks briefly at the representation of ethnic minority women in the NHS Scotland. An in depth and intersectional analysis of the gender and ethnicity in senior management in the NHS in Scotland is beyond the scope of this chapter.

Ethnicity of female employees in the organization

Data on the ethnicity of the female employees from salary band 5 to salary band 9 show that among the 37.50% female employees in salary band 9, the majority were Irish at 66.67% while the rest were Scottish at 33.33%. There was no other ethnic group represented among the females in band 9.

Female employees in Band 5 and Band 6 are most ethnically diverse. In Band 5, there are 0.31% Asians, 0.03% Caribbean or Black, 0.21% from mixed or multiple ethnic groups and 1.25% of the female employees are from other white background.

As can be seen on Table 2 below, female Asian employees are only represented in Band 5, Band 6 and Band 8A. The highest percentage of female Asian employees is in Band 6 at 0.37%, and the lowest in Band 5 at 0.31%. While, the representation rate of Asian females is only 0.32% in Band 8A. Females from Caribbean origin are only represented in pay band 5 at 0.03%. However, the highest percentage of females who identified themselves as White – British is in Band 8D at 28.57% while the lowest percentage of White – British females is represented in Band 5 at 7.01%. The percentage of White – British females increases sharply from band 7 at 8.16% to Band 8A at 14.94%. Another significant rise is percentage of White – British female is seen from Band 8C to Band 8D. At Band 8D, it almost doubles to 28.57% from 15.38% in band 8C. Also, White – Irish females are only represented in salary Band 5, 6, 7, 8A and Band 9. Their representation is very low in the first four bands at only 1.26% on average. Nevertheless, there is a significant leap in the percentage of White – Irish females in Band 9 at 66.67%. Similarly, White – Scottish females are represented in all the bands. However, the percentage of White – Scottish females is generally inversely proportional to increasing salary bands. The highest percentages of females from Scottish origin are represented in Band 5 at 67.29% and the lowest in Band 9 at 33.33%. Conversely, females from other white backgrounds are only represented from Band 5 to Band 8A. The lowest percentage is in Band 5 at 1.25% and the highest percentage is in Band 8A at 2.38%. Similar to females from other white backgrounds, females from mixed or multiple ethnic groups are also represented from Band 5 to Band 8A. Their highest percentage is in Band 6 at 0.37% and the lowest is in Band 5 at 0.21%.

Ethnicity	Salary Bands							
	Band 5	Band 6	Band 7	Band 8A	Band 8B	Band 8C	Band 8D	Band 9
Asian	0.31%	0.37%		0.32%				
Caribbean	0.03%							
White - British	7.01%	8.21%	8.16%	14.94%	16.67%	15.38%	28.57%	
White - Irish	1.15%	1.05%	1.54%	1.30%				66.67%
White- Scottish	67.29%	66.17%	67.14%	65.58%	61.90%	57.69%	50.00%	33.33%
White- Other	1.25%	1.48%	1.65%	1.30%	2.38%			
Mixed or multiple ethic group	0.21%	0.37%	0.35%	0.32%				

Table 2. Ethnicity of female employees in Band 5 to Band 9 as of November 2013

The data presented on Table 2 above clearly indicates that females from ethnic minority backgrounds struggle to progress to the senior managerial levels of the organization. Therefore, it can be concluded that when gender intersects with ethnicity it is even more difficult for females to progress their career.

In the following section we discuss the findings of the study.

Mentoring

In the questionnaire survey, 72.6% of male and 64.8% of female respondents indicated that they had never been mentored. Out of the females who were mentored, 55.7% indicated that it had helped them in their career progression. However, among the males mentored, 64.6% indicated that it helped them progress their career. This indicates that males find mentoring more useful for career progression compared to females.

Here are some comments made by the female interviewees on mentoring:

"I think I did find it (mentoring) useful I think, but I don't think I used it right, I don't think I used it effectively…my mentor helped to tease out the skills that I was not recognising myself as having, what he said was that I lacked confidence in moving my career forward and he helped tease out those issues" - Interviewee 1 (*Female, Age: 49, Diversity Manager*)

"I have found it (mentoring) useful and I know that people I have managed have found it useful so I have mentored people and I have been mentored and I think it is a really good way of helping women." - Interviewee 2 (*Female, Age: 49, Network Manager*)

"I think it's (mentoring) a really useful tool and I think that mentoring is really helpful. I think I certainly wouldn't be precious about it at all, if people want to look out with the service to be mentored, either professionally, managerially, I think to do some shadowing of peoples roles I think gives you an insight into what people do". - Interviewee 12 (*Female, Age: 38, Service Co-ordinator*)

Interviewees discussed different styles and perceptions of mentoring, ranging from advice on simply what one needs to do to progress in their careers, to reflection and support with difficult decisions and situations. The data suggests that mentoring of women by other women was perceived as more effective as the following extract illustrates:

… how to deal with difficult situations, how to reflect on things, what fair decisions are, when you have to make a hard decision and how to speak to people and I did find that useful and I think *I found it* ***useful because it was another woman and you would discuss things in the same way and so I suppose informally I also get mentored by my professor, one of them is retired and one is my supervisor but their supporting style is to tell me what to do but mentoring with another female member of staff is about what do you want to do and we'll discuss these things.*** **Interviewee 5 (Female, 40 yrs, Team Leader)**

Mentoring of women by other women was described as an exploratory process which created spaces for women to share their concerns and explore ways for bettering their professional skills and in particular their confidence as the following extract illustrates.

"Interviewer – One last question. If an ambitious friend were to ask your advice on how to gain promotion to a senior managerial role within this organisation, what advice would you give them?

Interviewee 7 – *What advice would I give them? My goodness. I would tell them that it was important that they could show within the post they were in that they had knowledge, skills and experience plus vision, enthusiasm, dedication and commitment and by supporting them and talking through these things I would hope* ***they would recognise that they had the confidence to go ahead and apply for other posts. And if they*** *felt well, what was the point in going ahead because they were a woman, I would want to talk that through with them, and that's what we do, so unusual for me to be doing all the talking, we're usually encouraging* ***people to tell their stories and working out the skills they have* (Female; 61 years of age; Head of Department)"**

Confidence was a recurrent theme in the interview data. Some of the female interviewees felt that the organisation did not offer them opportunities, either through mentoring or other means, to build their confidence and develop skills for senior management. Senior management was seen as gendered by some female interviewees who felt that breaking the glass ceiling required building gendered cultural and social capital such as being in the right networks and behaving in masculinised ways that would fit with the male ethos of the organisation.

The following section focuses on social capital.

Social Capital

The majority of the questionnaire respondents said they did not meet their managers socially. Only 27.27% of them acknowledged to meeting their managers socially. However, during the interviews it was quite apparent that social capital is utilised in the organization to obtain promotion to senior managerial **roles. Some interviewees regarded social capital as a process which allowed professionals to advance their careers through socialising, drinking and playing golf with their bosses**. This process was indeed discussed as gendered that opened possibilities for career progression or career blocking for both men and women. For example when switching off the tape-recorder an interviewee mentioned an unfair promotion of a CEO's (Chief Executive Officer's) wife, which had attracted attention by the media.

There was a general sense of disapproval associated with developing social capital through associating with powerful people in the organisation in an attempt to secure positions or promotions that otherwise individuals wound not get. The following example illustrates this.

"You can also look at who do you associate with, if you are associated with the chief exec or the chairman then it is more likely you are going to go up the career ladder much more quickly and that's a given and we see it and its happening, it happens in our organization, and that's a sad thing when that happens because what we are doing is not promoting the right people what we are doing is promoting on who you know and not what you know." - Interviewee 1 (*Female, Age: 49, Diversity Manager*)

Social capital was not always discussed as an unfair and exclusionary process. Some interviewees perceived social capital as networking opportunities, or 'chit chat in the office' which can allow staff to talk about their work and build trust and influence as the following extracts illustrate:

"I think any connection into a networking group is an enhancement to people's careers whether they are male or female. Again, it would help women but it would help anybody if you could get into the right networking group that has the right people in it with people who are interested in what you are doing, yes it can help."- Interviewee 2 (*Female, Age: 49, Network Manager*)

"Speaking to other managers of how they operated and in terms of networking that became important because it developed a level of trust that was hugely important. It was networking in terms of expanding the number of people that you knew but also the understanding of how they operated, what environment they worked in so saying as you could just exploit it more… it is actually understanding the opportunities that are there…" – Interviewee 3 (*Male, Age: 53, Head of Department*)

However it was also noted by some of the interviewees that, often the opportunities for networking are arranged by the organization at hours that exclude certain groups of people, for example, women with family responsibilities as the following extract demonstrates:

"There's been a series of what they call breakfast senior management events and it's been run by our chief executive and it is supposed to be open to managers within the organization who want to get tips and to find out you know how different pieces of improvement work or you know managerial skills and things and they're really interesting topics and you know you can see the type of people who would be invited to that and who would make a massive huge effort to go there but they are at 7.30-8:00 o'clock in the morning and for somebody like me who's got a child to get to school and I work around about my family I'm never going to be in a position to be able to make it. I'm sure there are friendships and things that come out of these supposedly informal kind of events for progression but I, you know you're excluded immediately. You've got a child who's got to go to school."- Interviewee 4 (*Female, Age:48, Nurse Consultant*)

Discussion

The findings confirm that mentoring and social capital has a key role to play in the career progression of both women and men in senior management positions in the NHS Scotland.

According to several scholars (see: Kram and Isabella 1985; Tharenou 1997; Allen et al. 2004; Briggs, Jaramillo and Weeks 2011; Durbin and Tomilson 2014) mentoring is directly linked to career development and career advancement. In recent years, mentoring has been particularly associated with female career progression (Maxwell, 2009; Woolnough and Fielden 2014). From the comments of the interviewees it can be inferred that although females recognise that mentoring is very useful to their career progression, sometimes they are unsure of how to use the mentoring received effectively. This could explain why a greater percentage of males who were mentored recognised to have found mentoring useful to their career progression when compared to the percentage of females mentored. The findings of the first research question is similar to the findings of Tharenou (1999) which indicates that there is no clear link between receiving support from mentors and women's career advancement to senior management roles specifically. There weren't sufficient evidence obtained to strongly support Guy's (2003) findings that women's inability to progress to senior management levels is directly related to the absence of mentoring. However, this research finding agrees with Maxwell (2009), who concluded that 'effective, formal mentoring' received by female employees can be successful in overcoming the career impediments faced by them.

It could be established that mentors support the career advancement of both men and women (Tharenou 1997; La Pierre and Zimmerman 2012) as the participants of this research unanimously agreed that they believe that access to mentorship is likely to facilitate the career progression of females from all ethnic backgrounds.

The second research question was on social capital. Similar to the research of Eagly and Carli (2007) and Broadbridge (2010), this research found that the both the male and female employees were fully conscious of the important role of accumulating social capital for career success. However, there was no evidence of social capital being effectively utilised for career progression.

Workplace research findings of Burt (1992) suggest that there is a positive correlation between social capital and the number of structural holes in interpersonal or organizational networks. Structural holes occur when a common third party connects two or more people or groups of people, but there are no direct connections between the two people or two groups (Timberlake, 2005). This is where HRD can make a contribution by bringing together the two unconnected people or groups through its boundary spanning activities.

Gender, Mentoring and Social Capital

The research findings clearly suggest that mentoring and creating social capital are gendered processes taking place within the gendered organisational culture of the NHS in Scotland. Although human resource development activities in the form of mentoring and access to social capital can contribute to promoting women's careers in senior management in the NHS attention needs to be paid to gendered expectations and delivery of mentoring which can have implications for women's careers progression. It would have been interesting also to explore the role of ethnicity in women's experiences of mentoring but unfortunately the number of interviewees from ethnic minority groups was extremely small in this study.

The theory of gendered organisation (Acker, 1990) argued that gender inequality is ingrained into the structure of organisations. The preference of employers to hire people who are likely to single-mindedly concentrate on work and dedicate themselves fully to the organisation excludes women who are often likely to hold primary care responsibility for the family. Hence, the image of an ideal employee for many employers is a man (Williams, Muller and Kilanski, 2012; William, 2001). Recent studies by Carter and Silva (2010); Eagly and Carli (2007); Reskin and McBrier (2000) have suggested that men usually enter managerial positions at higher levels than women. According to Kyriakidou (2012), masculine terms had been used in the past and are still in use to construct the manager and leadership in organisations. "'Man'-agement came to be defined in terms of the ability to control people, events, companies, environments, trade unions and new technology" (Collinson and Hearn 1996, p. 3). Therefore

it can be argued that management is a gendered profession by default. Some research suggest that in order to be successful in male dominated professions, it is essential for females to form mentoring relationship with powerful and established senior managers (Higgins 2000). A study by Ramaswami et al. concluded that in male gendered industries, females with male mentors achieve greater career success. Although the healthcare industry in not male dominated, however, the management profession in healthcare is gendered. Therefore, female managers in the NHS might be able to fulfil their career progression aspirations by forming a mentoring relationship with senior male managers in the organisation. In gendered organizations, senior male mentors possess the attributes that females require for career success (Ramaswami et al 2010). Senior male mentors can provide female protégés with sponsorship and legitimacy that are possessed by powerful, connected and visible mentors. Hence, developing the female protégés social capital along with developing their human capital. This will ultimately lead to overall career success.

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