UPWARD MOBILITY CRITERIA FROM CROATIAN WOMEN'S POINT OF VIEW

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Abstract

Little is generally known about the factors affecting the career advancement of women in the world of work. This is especially true for Croatia. Formally and legally, women should have equal opportunities for employment and advancement as their male counterparts have. However, in practice, situations are often different due to socio-cultural, support systems, self imposed barriers and the like. This paper examines factors facilitating and hindering career advancement from the Croatian women's point of view. Differences between female managers and workers related to the career advancement criteria, which give them an edge in today's global workplace, are discussed as well.

While the top female managers pointed out the personnel competence and soft factors as the most important in climbing the managerial ladder, the other working women did not assign the greatest importance to these factors. This can be explained in the social-cultural context that has been developing in Croatia. Unfavorable consequences of the transition process, the war as well as a decrease in trust in the most of institutions in Croatia jeopardized social and working norms making the personnel competence, self-initiative, pro-activity, responsibility and the similar characteristics without consequent reward in terms of better and higher job positions. But, many Croatian firms faced with global competition and necessity of following transparent business behavior norms have been forced to conduct a proper career advancement policy. Consequently, women employed in such firms stressed above mentioned factors as the most important for career advancement.

Key words: career advancement, working women, female managers, factory analysis

1. Introduction

Although the statistics in most countries indicate that women make up the majority of the human population, the statistics on how women fare in the labor market indicate the gender asymmetry, i.e. the gender inequality at work. The fact that there are numerically less working women than working men, and that they are significantly less employed at the top executive positions is known and is also conformed by statistics from developing and transitional countries, as well as from industrialized or advanced economies. A numerous studies stand out discriminative relations toward women in business and in society (Alder and Izraeli, 1988; Snayder, 1993; Large and Saunders, 1995; Hersch and Viscusi, 1996; Alder, 1997; McDowel et al., 1999; Jackson, 2001; Bell et al., 2002; Elmuti et al., 2003). Women all over the world suffer from unequal treatment and a lack of business opportunities. However, the improvement in equality of opportunities exists as a trend since couple of years ago; regardless if it is measured by a woman number entering the labor market, women's employment choices, salaries, percentage of working women at the top executive positions, women's start-ups, and the like. However, progress seems to be more evolutionary than revolutionary. It still seems to be a glass ceiling, and the exact dimension of it varies according to the country, industry and organization.

The term designed to amalgamate the visible and invisible barriers preventing the upward mobility of women in corporative world is known under the name glass ceiling. Although the term is relatively new,[1] it has been extensively researched, providing evidences from countries around the world. A number of different barriers have been identified that fall under the broad categories of corporate culture and corporate practice. Among them, child care and family responsibilities, awareness of success, perception problems, cultural attitudes toward women, stress, dating and marriage, involvement of professional associations are usually emphasized (AICPA, 1988).

In today's global and highly competitive world, the business, state authorities and the whole society are especially interested in overcoming the glass ceiling. Only the human organizations deprived from any kinds of discrimination can be effective and sustain competitiveness and growth. From that standpoint, women are slowly but steadily becoming a more significant component in the study of Croatian economic development in general and business in particular (Dezeljin et al., 1999).

Gaining a greater understanding of who the business women are and with which

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[1] The term "glass ceiling" was first used in a 1986 Wall Street Journal special report on the corporate women (Hymowitz and Schellhardt, 1986). It described a corporative world in which achieving the certain level in corporation for women was blocked by individual or corporate tradition and prejudices.

barriers they are facing in business world is a first step toward better addressing how the women's work potential networks, maximizes and transforms to be beneficial for the whole society. The main purpose of this paper is to provide that first step. The paper explores the business challenges which Croatian women have been facing; especially those connected to the career advancement. The career advancement can be defined as one person's commitment to personal development, occupational choices, continuous education and building a professional image and reputation valuable to overtake greater responsibilities in the area of her/his professional interest. It represents a climbing the organizational ladders in order to increase power, responsibility and incomes (Borozan, et al., 2003). Little is generally known about the factors affecting the career advancement of women in the world of work in Croatia. This paper examines factors facilitating and hindering career advancement from the Croatian women's point of view. Differences between female managers and workers regarding factors important in career advancement are also discussed.

The paper is based on the secondary source of information (opinions and experiences of working women published in different journals and daily press) and additional statistical analysis of data collected by research performed in the second half of 2002 in the frame of the University Fellows International Research Consortium, international organization directed to research of business operations.

2. Factors in career advancement: the Croatian female top managers' point of view

Studies about the position and career advancement possibilities of Croatian women are extremely rare, sporadic and uncoordinated. There is a great uncertainty and lack of knowledge about these issues. This can be explained particularly by the fact that the official statistics does not have an obligation to systemically monitor and report gender differences consistent with different working characteristics. At the same time, a network of organizations or associations exploring women issues in business and societies does not exist. Consequently, the unique and compressive data base aiming to provide the analytic basis for sophisticated analysis concerning women issues also lacks.

As a topic, working women and particularly women as managers or entrepreneurs are gaining increasing attention around the world. This is simultaneous with increasing consciousness about the idea that insufficient involvement of women in business and policy is a significant barrier to sustainable development. In recent time, a special research attention is given to women in the frame of entrepreneurship in Croatia. Researchers of entrepreneurship have looking on women entrepreneurship in Croatia as a phenomenon being in early stage which should be fostered in a different ways.

Wertheimer-Baletic analyzed in numerous papers changes in economic and social structure of Croatian population and of women particularly (e.g. Wertheimer-Baletic, 1991). Valdevit (2003) analyzed determinants of economic activities of women population during the last 50 years and compared them with the European countries. She documented changes in economic activities between men and women and indicated several trends, such as aging of Croatian population, increase in women's educational level, decrease in women's share in agriculture, i.e. in primary sector and simultaneously increase in tertiary sector (mostly in trade, education and medical care). She found out the same gender tendencies in Croatia and in developed economies. Mildrag Smid (2005) questioned the economic status of women in Croatia. She indicated the inequality in employment access (at the expense of women), little chances for full-time employment for women, especially in private firms, and that work of women is less valued than the work of men. Kerovac (2005) studied the position of women on Croatian and European labor markets. She stated that women in Croatia on the average wait longer for employment, that the concentration of women in so-called typically women's professions is still remarkably high, etc. Singer and Grgic (2003) analyzed the level of women involvement in Croatian economy and found out, using the data from the Commercial court, that women in economy, especially in management positions participate disproportionally less than in the Croatian population. At the executive positions women accounted for only 27% in 2003 and in the list of 100 the most powerful enterprises, i.e. in their executive boards for only 14%. The empirically based results of research conducted by Poloski (2002) suggested that there is a difference between the masculine, traditional and feminine, modern leadership style in Croatia and that women are those who are the primary holders of the feminine leadership style. She concluded that Croatian enterprises that want to use the advantages of the feminine leadership style characterized by democratic leadership style, cooperation, highly developed interpersonal skills, encouraging participation, charismatic power, sharing of power and information, enhancing self-worth of others, energizing others, setting positive examples and teamwork, have to employ more women in management positions because they are familiar with it. Barkovic and Borozan (2004) identified constraints to advancement of female entrepreneurship in Croatia and defined suggestions for promoting and advancing female entrepreneurship in Croatia at the policy and research level.

Contrary to Croatian practice, the researches exploring the women issues in the world of work have been extensively conducted in developed countries two decade ago. Among them, the increasing attention is given to the study of advancement and mobility of women in business world (Tharenon et al., 1994; Wentling, 1996; Adler and Izraeli, 1998; Adler, 1997; Still, 1997; Williams, 2000; Wood and Lindorf, 2001; Van Vianen and Fischer, 2002).

In business world, as workers, managers or as entrepreneurs, Croatian women have been facing not only visible barriers registered in working practice (despite the legal prohibition of any kind of gender discrimination on the occasion of employment, in the work process and career advancement[2]), such as signing the part-time work contract in which the obligation that woman will not have children five years is stated,[3] but also numerous and different invisible barriers that blocks women, among others, from rising to the top. Breaking through the glass ceiling and fostering women entrepreneurship is a goal of women entrepreneurship association "Krug". "Krug", in cooperation with the Institute of international affairs conducted a survey under the name "Business Women" aimed to detect the opinions and attitudes of Croatian female managers and entrepreneurs in 2003. That was the first survey of such kind performed in Croatia. Unfortunately, its details remained mostly unknown to the public.

The same purpose had the editorial of the monthly publication "Business Magazine" which dedicated the number in 2003 (5/2003) to successful top female managers. Based on the content analysis of many published interviews in it, as well as interviews published in other business journals, career patterns and characteristics of Croatian female managers, which enabled them to climb over the top management positions, can be identified.

Firstly, the most of interviewed female managers highlighted that a woman has to be more competent than a man at the same level of organizational ladder if she want to be noticed and rewarded as well as if she want to go upward.[4] Such opinion has been sharing also by Croatian women participated in the survey of "Krug". 78% of surveyed women found out that they have to work more and be better than their male counterparts if they want to go upward. [5] This percentage is even less than the percentage calculated by Ragins et al. (1998). They said that 99% of the surveyed female executives face the need to prove their ability repeatedly and over-performed in order to counter negative assumptions. And even if they are really competent, upward mobility is not granted. They found the reasons for poor upward mobility in glass ceiling.

Barriers noted by Croatian top business women and being identified from different sources can be sorted in five groups:

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[2] In the frame of Croatian laws regulating the area of work any kind of gender discrimination is prohibit.

[3] More about this can be red on web site www.babe.hr/zakoni/status3.htm

[4] Competence could be defined as possessing a specific range of skills, abilities, or knowledge (Elmuti, et al., 2003).

[5] More details about this survey is given in croatiabiz.com/magazine/index.php?what=article&ID=473&this_broj=10

- Socio-cultural attitudes toward women - include the whole range of outdated and negative ideas about women in working places, such as women are less competent than men, or for woman is better not to be a leader in organizations but a supportive follower;

- Support system barriers - such as the existence of unclear and vague career advancement criteria which can lead to biased decisions in the processes of making promotion and judgment of women's career potential, etc;

- Perception problem – occurs when working women or men ignore the existence of obstacles to the career advancement of women;

- Need to achieve and sustain balance between private and business life – leaves them less time to develop new competences;

- Self-imposed barriers – are related to the struggles with the pressures of family responsibilities and management, cultural prejudice, and the perception that to succeed women must outperform their male counterparts.

Barriers noticed by Croatian top female managers are general in nature. They are not remarkably different from barriers facing the female managers in other culture like in the USA, Europe or Australia (for example see Baxter et al., 2000).

"To be better" according to successful Croatian business women means, besides to be competitive, to possess also:

- certain characteristics defined by experts as biological determined (Moir and Jessel, 1989), such as sensible women intuition and ability to understand the emotional states of others;

Successful business women pointed out also the following characteristics: pushiness, persistence, endurance and fearlessness as their biological advantages. They found out that biological characteristics enabled them to gain better positions in inverbal communications, to have multiple perspectives and to expand the context for evaluation and decision-making,

- genetic congenital and by education potentated interest for people and relationship developing among them which experts call psychological characteristics (Heim and Golant, 1992). These characteristics contributed to sensible feeling for formulation and effective operation of work teams, social networks and for creation balance between private and business life.

Biological and physiological characteristics determine mostly individuality of women in working place. In working place, successful female managers pointed out especially the following characteristics which enabled them to reach the top executive positions:

- vision and ability to ensure sustain and innovative development of the firm;
- hard belief that this what they are doing is necessary and correct, as well as that it is useful in long-run, not only for the firm, but also for the society;
- honest and responsible relationship to herself and to work, persistence and commitment to work, systematically doing on goals, synchronization to a vision;
- following the moral principles in behavior, decision-making and requirements toward subordinates;
- developed emotional intelligence;
- developed real optimism;
- self-confidence, courageousness, pushiness, persistence, risk openness, readiness to confrontation with authorities and untactfulness in a sense of consequences of today's moves to future career;
- openness to business challenges, new people, ideas, solutions, approaches and learning;
- flexibility and intelligence;
- balance between private and business life;
- developed interpersonal skills and high involvement approach; ability to create good interpersonal relationships, sensitivity to the needs of others, empathy, ability to motivate others to express his/her ideas, feelings, approaches, and business solutions;
- ability to manage a team and to motivate the team members, expressed organizational abilities, patience, commitment and loyalty to team, respect and understanding the other in team, developed feeling of fairness, good sense and feeling to recognize experts, honest and responsible people and choosing such people for associates;
- enjoying in business, partiality toward dialogue and consensus, expressed tolerance;
- decision-making based on logic, experience, knowledge, business ethics, but also on intuition and emotions.

Successful Croatian female managers pointed out especially the soft characteristics which enabled them (besides personal competence) to take over and keep the top executive positions. Although the above mentioned characteristics are not the only and exclusive characteristics of these women, underlining the soft characteristics as the main characteristics of their management and leadership style is closer to women than to men. But, some researchers find out that personal and professional style of women described as soft or feminine can presents barrier to upward mobility; especially in masculine corporate value system, as for example is American (Ragins et al., 1998; Jackson, 2001) or Croatian (Poloski, 2003).

It should be noted that some of interviewed women explained insufficient involvement of women in Croatian society, i.e. in political and business world, not only and exclusively with existence of patriarchal relationship in society, conservatism of business world, outdated and negative ideas, but first of all as "… insufficient initiatives of women to prove themselves through their knowledge, expertise and experiences as persons who can cope with the most complex tasks" (S. Krasic, the main state inspector, Business Magazine, 5/2003, p. 18). Marceta Racanovic (executive of Varazdin stock exchange, Business Magazine 5/2003, p. 21) highlighted that "the greatest potential and barrier for achievement a success in business world lies in a woman herself. One expects a lot from women, in private and in business life. Therefore, a woman needs to determine by herself her goals and limits in her attendances and sacrifices."

It seems that when business woman accepts as normal the fact that not only her results, knowledge and skills are exposed to external evaluation, but also her look, dressing style and private life,[6] and when she starts to continuously work on herself, than she transforms deceptive disadvantages in her advantages, potential and power.

Knowledge, skills, abilities and individuality necessary for promotion to the top positions underlined by Croatian top female managers are similar to those noted by females around the world. Elmuti et al. (2003) pointed out that advancement is influenced by human capital, individual, interpersonal, relational and family determinants. But, by researching career patterns and characteristics of top management women, attitudes, opinions and experiences regarding career advancement criteria of those women who did not manage (or not yet) to claim to the top are neglected. Therefore, examination of attitudes and behaviors, i.e. factors that ensure upward mobility of Croatian women is the primary task of this paper. But, are there differences in perception between women in management and non-management position related to skills and traits that give them an edge in today's global workplace is also research priority of this paper.

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[6] This is also evidenced and researched in other culture (e.g. Klenke, 1996).

3. Difference between women in management and non-management position about career advancement criteria

Based on surveying 158 women[7] in the frame of the University Fellows International Research Consortium, Borozan et al. (2003) found out the following:

- While women have clearly articulated what they found ultimately unacceptable criteria for career advancement, it still has remained unclear what is the most acceptable criterion for career advancement. They ranked criteria (according to the median) and got the hierarchical structured criteria for career advancement (Table 1).[8] Women have evaluated criteria associated with emphasizing personal competitiveness and fitting into company's working atmosphere as exceptionally acceptable for career advancement. They found the less acceptable criteria in activities that could be described as non-ethical behavior.

- More educated the women are, more they are willing to accept responsibility for any important project; they also want that important people within the company are familiar with their results and achievements compared. Opposite holds for older women in Croatia who tend to be more of the fatalistic nature, not believing that their own abilities and knowledge, as well as past achievements, are significant for career advancement.

- More educated women consider reputation, social acknowledgment and admiration of others as an acceptable criterion for career advancement. Also, they believe that their career advancement will be more achievable if they demonstrate that they possess the right knowledge and skills (e.g. particular technical knowledge) that their firm is scarce of.

- Only women from a bigger company (more then 1000 employees) find a stronger correlation between the personal achievements and success, as well as competencies and career advancement.

- Self-initiativeness as a working value and factor in career advancement is related to the position within the organization.

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[7] The sample encompassed 158 surveyed women from 20 – 59 years old. Since majority of surveyed women have completed in between 13-16 years of education, they were highly educated women with 13 years on average of working experience. Surveyed women were mainly employed as non-management personnel or low-level manager in enterprises with up to 1000 employees. They were mainly employed in service sector (finance, insurance, real estate business).

[8] Women respondents have had to grade from 1 (exceptionally acceptable) to 8 (ultimately unacceptable) what they find acceptable for career advancement.

**Table 1:** Criteria ranks for career advancement at work

Grade 2 (exceptionally acceptable)	Grade 3 (acceptable)	Grade 4 (somewhat acceptablee)	Grade 5 (in between acceptable and unacceptable)
▪ leaving a company for better work (SUI38) ▪ expressing abilities (SUI16) ▪ working overtime (SUI37) ▪ studying well work assignments (SUI28) ▪ behaving according to business norms (SUI27)	▪ good relationship with all employees (SUI34) ▪ developing mentor relationship with a peer (SUI35) ▪ self-promotion (SUI31) ▪ self-initiativeness (SUI30) ▪ continued education (SUI01)	▪ working for prosperous person (SUI12) ▪ getting admiration through particular behavior (SUI13) ▪ learning likes and dislikes of important people in a company to prevent from insulting them (SUI06) ▪ using own technical skills to make the peer dependent on them (SUI15) ▪ volunteering for unpopular assignments (SUI03) ▪ become known in a company by volunteering for special projects (SUI08) ▪ helping subordinates to develop their own skills for future support (SUI20) ▪ respecting hierarchy (SUI32) ▪ dress code (SUI23)	▪ condition-less support of important people's stand (SUI09) ▪ blaming someone else for one's own mistakes (SUI22) ▪ threatening to leave (SUI17) ▪ falsification of results (SUI14)

Grade 6 (somewhat unacceptable)	Grade 7 (very unacceptable)	Grade 8 (ultimately unacceptable)	
▪ keeping information for other to look bad (SUI11) ▪ attaining exam questions in advance (SUI25) ▪ falsification of curriculum vitae (SUI26) ▪ misusing friendship to ruin someone's reputation (SUI10) ▪ hiring a criminal to hurt a competition (SUI04)	▪ threatening to reveal important information outside a company one's own demands are not met (SUI19) ▪ using damaging information for blackmailing purposes (SUI07) ▪ spreading rumors about someone/ something to ensure a career advancement (SUI02) ▪ trying to influence on peer to make a bad decision which could help them in career advancement (SUI05)	▪ trying to create situation in which a counter-candidate would be caught performing any illegal activity (SUI24) ▪ offering sexual services to peers (SUI21) ▪ hiring someone to disable counter-candidates (SUI29) ▪ secretly spying on counter-candidate (SUI18) ▪ steal and exchange business secrets for the purpose of advancement in other company (SUI33) ▪ psychologically disturbing counter-candidate (SUI36)	

Source: Borozan, Dabic and Barkovic (2003)

To find out what working women perceived as the most important criteria for career advancement, those women who clearly stated them were separated. They highlighted two factors: readiness to do overtime work and necessity to possess specific knowledge, which needs to be continuously improved.

But, those criteria have been separated by women who do not constitute the top management. In order to find out what female managers consider to be the most important criteria, the whole sample (n = 158) was split into two sub-samples; one composed of female managers (regardless the management position; n = 63) and one composed of female workers (n = 95). Sub-samples enabled identification of differences in career advancement. These differences are visualized by Picture 1.

Picture 1: Perception of career advancement criteria
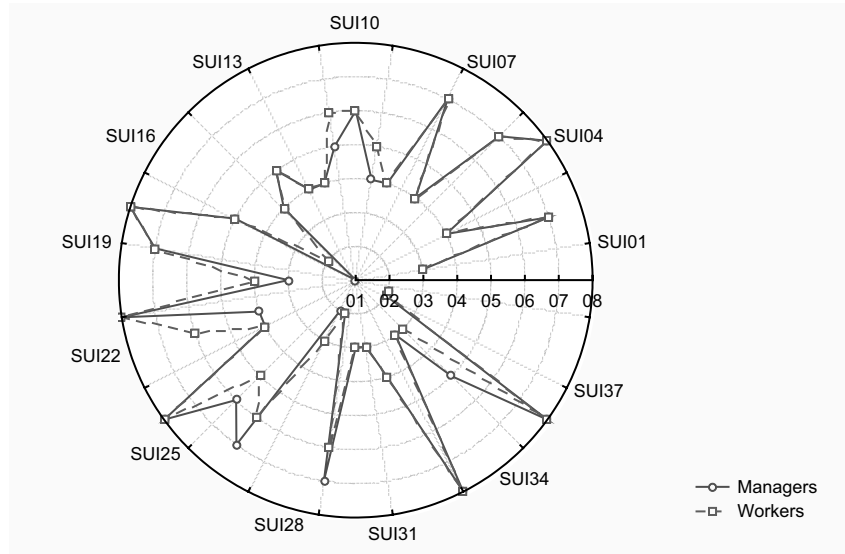
Note: the names of variables are given in parenthesis in table 1

Two basic differences are crystallized between managers and workers in perceiving career advancement at work.

- First, female managers found out that personal competence based on knowledge, abilities, hard work and life-long learning is the most important determinant of career advancement. This opinion is confirmed by the top female managers interviewed in the frame of "Business Magazine".

- Second, female managers assigned bigger importance to assisting subordinates to develop their abilities, to behave carefully with powerful people within the firm, and to keeping information in certain circumstance (although they do not treated them as especially important criteria). It should be mentioned that there is not significant difference when the less acceptable career advancement criteria come into the question.

Statistically significant Pearson's coefficients of correlation among individual criteria for career advancement suggest a possibility of gathering of enormously correlated variables in groups, i.e. factors. This, hence, calls for a multivariate explanatory technique: factor analysis.

4. Structure detection in the relationships between factors in career advancement

For the purpose of (i) reducing criteria upon which depends career advancement to those women who emphasis them as relevant and which can be connected into factors and (ii) detecting the structure in the relationships between criteria for career advancement, i.e. classifying those criteria, the factor analysis has been conducted. The factor analysis has included 38 variables, the same ones which have been related to variables that respondents identified as criteria relevant for career advancement.

For the purpose of extracting factors, the method of principal components has been applied. That method enables a combination of correlated variables into factors and consecutive pulling out of statistically significant factors. It is necessary to point out that consecutive factors are uncorrelated or orthogonal to each other and that each extracted consecutive factor account for less and less variability. Concerning the fact that theoretically speaking one can extract as many factors as there are variables, it is necessary to decide when to stop extracting factors. Although the question of how many factors to retain is an arbitrary decision, we have applied the Kaiser's guideline being probably the most widely used since it seems that the best results yields it in practice. The application of Kaiser's criterion has enabled the extraction of nine statistically relevant factors. They explain together approximately 67% of variance, which can be seen in the table 2.

Table 2: Eigenvalues for extracted factors

Factor	Eigenvalue	% Total Variance	Cumulative Eigenvalue	Cumulative %
1. Condemnation	10.88329	28.64025	10.88329	28.64025
2. Building self-image and networking	4.93450	12.98553	15.81779	41.62578
3. Initiativeness and openes to business challenges	1.86431	4.90608	17.68211	46.53186
4. Dressing code	1.58505	4.17118	19.26715	50.70304
5. Flexibility and savvy	1.41759	3.73050	20.68475	54.43354
6. Target orientation	1.33427	3.51123	22.01901	57.94478
7. Specific knowledge guarding	1.16607	3.06860	23.18508	61.01337
8. Poltroonance and slandernance	1.10784	2.91537	24.29292	63.92874
9. Competence (personal and interpersonal)	1.02111	2.68713	25.31403	66.61587

The first column shows variances, i.e. eigenvalues, of nine factors which have

been successfully extracted. As it is typical for the factor analysis, the order of factors reflects their percentage share in the variance explanation. Those values have been expressed as percentages of total variance (38.00) in the third column. It is noticeable that factor 1 accounts for 28.64% of the variance, factor 2 for 12.99% up to factor 9 that accounts for 2.68%. The fourth column contents the cumulative variance extracted.

Disclosure of the structure of each individual factor has been done based upon the matrix of factor loadings, that is the correlations between variables and the factors (or so-called "new" variables). Placing manifested variables into particular factors has been done based upon coefficients greater than 0.3 from the matrix of factor loadings obtained by the application of varimax normalized rotation. Taking into consideration that some variables have had statistically significant coefficients in several factors, they are placed in that factor where they had the greatest coefficient of factor loading.

FACTOR 1: Condemnation - is the most powerful factor (prime factor) because it explains the most of career advancement criteria variance. It collects those variables related to perceptions of respondents what is the most unacceptable in career advancement (see criteria assessed by grade 7 and 8 in table 1).

Transition processes followed in general by transformation of value system, have been additional loaded by different kinds of deviant behaviors provoked by war in Croatia. All of them contribute to development of unhealthy culture and atmosphere in many Croatian firms as well as to the creation of such value system in these firms in which personal competence do not represent basic career advancement criteria, but social contacts, connections, and money.[9] However, those criteria for upward mobility faced with the global competence and transparency, requirements of modern business and Croatian authorities attempting to build highly competitive and knowledge-based economy provoke criticism among respondents.

FACTOR 2: Building self-image and networking – is based on those variables which are related to the need of building an image as a person who proves herself with her knowledge, expertise and experiences, who is open to new

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[9] According to the research results (conducted in those part of Croatia which was especially exposed to the war activities, and which belongs to underdeveloped Croatian parts) in 2004, degradation of thrust in most Croatian social institutions was followed by transformation of culture, i.e. value system from the system in which the values such as hard work, continuous learning, specialization and honesty have primary importance in private and business relationship to system in which social connections, mutual services and bribe are treated as primer. For successful career, according to the respondents (n = 402) of which are 80% in age 16 – 25, the most important are connections, social contacts and money (see Borozan, 2005).

business challenges, who gives initiatives and is creative, and who does not disturb interpersonal relationships. The factor is related also to development of informal networks being useful for information exchange, cooperation, full participation, and to helping subordinates to develop themselves, as well as to career planning and strategizing, professional support and encouragement.

The most of working women in Croatia have been facing with stereotypes regarding their work and management abilities. This is confirmed not only by interviewed top female managers (by Business Magazine), but also by results collected by surveying (by Krug), and according to 53% of women respondents stated that they face with gender discrimination in work place.[10]

The most of working women in Croatia (especially in management positions) do not share traditional "old boy" networks which are very important in business and also to upward mobility because of family responsibility, different personnel and professional style. This is not unique for Croatian women. A numerous studies showed that women in other countries have been largely excluded from these "old boy" networks (for example, Klenke, 1996; Jackson, 2001). Informal networking in Croatia is frequently family and/or ethnic determined and went a little further than networking as it is normally viewed in Western literature (see Ball, 2002 for description of its role in American society). Such networking supposes giving higher positions to a person who is not qualified for this position, but who belongs to that network, or to design the new work position (without real business bases) for a particular person.

FACTOR 3: Initiativeness and openness to business challenges - is related to self-initiatively conduction of those activities in which knowledge, skills, persistence, potential and readiness to life-long learning come into expression and which are oriented to promotion of personal competence and positionating herself within organizational structure. Initiativeness through volunteerism, especially for project being challenge or unwishfull from others presents "small door" through which women try to prove themselves and to climb to the top management positions.

FACTOR 4: Dressing code – is related to fitting of women's dressing style to existed business dressing norms. This factor explains 4.17% of variance, and is positively correlated to business behavior norms.

In business world is appreciated not only if a person has knowledge, expertise, flexibility, innovativeness and creativity, ability to solve problems and make decisions, but also if she/he does not create unnecessary burdens. Such unnecessary

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[10] Surveying was conducted in Croatia in 2002 in the frame of Croatian Association of Business Women. The sample encompassed about 100 business women (according to Vulić, 2003).

burdens can be potentiated by disturbing business dressing and in general behavior code (T. Holjevac, Business Magazine, 5/2003, p. 16).

FACTOR 5: Flexibility and savvy – is related to "change-able" with a practical understanding of the dynamics of an organization and business, and the ability to effectively present and position oneself and one's work within it, as is explained by Williams (2000). Savvy suppose the knowledge of own limits, and also the limits of other associates, capacity to start-up new business out of firm if the overbridging of existed limits in firm is not valuable.

FACTOR 6: Target orientation – is related to willingness to conduct different, but legal activities, in order to achieve business targets. If they could not be realized, women do not need to accept compromise and they have to conform with supervisions.

FACTOR 7: Specific knowledge guarding – is related to development and keeping special knowledge and abilities aiming to create dependence in organization. Because the criteria "using own technical knowledge and skills to make the supervisions dependent on them" perceived in the level of acceptability and nonacceptability (see Table 1), and because it is positively correlated with the criteria such as spreading rumours about someone/something to ensure a career advancement and attaining exam questions in advance, and negatively correlated with the criteria helping to subordinate and keeping good relationship with all employees, it is the unacceptable criterion factor.

FACTOR 8: Poltroonance and slandernance – is related to fawning to powerful people in organization and slandering the other people in order to achieve personal benefits. The factor is composed of criteria perceived as unacceptable in career advancement (grade 4 to 6 from Table 1).

FACTOR 9: Competence (personal and interpersonal) – is related to building personal competence through work and learning, readiness to helping coworkers, ability to develop and sustain good relationships with other employees. Although the factor explains the least variance, interviewed top business women pointed out primarily on it as the basic career advancement criterion. This provided a motivation for additional analysis; conducting factor analysis on sub-sample – female managers (n = 63). The following conclusions were drawn from this analysis.

- Accepting the Kaiser's criterion, 10 relevant factors are extracted;

- The structure of extracted factor indicates the difference in comparison to structure gained from full sample. This indicates the relatively instability of full sample which could be improved by taking a bigger sample.

- It is conformed that female managers articulate also more easily the most unacceptable career advancement criteria. Unacceptable criteria were split into four independent factors: factor 1 which explains 29% of variance, and gathers mostly items grouped in factor 8 of full sample, factor 2 gathers items involved in factor 1 of full sample (it explains 13.71% of variance), and factors 6 to 8 explain together about 11% of variance.

- Acceptation of business behavior code also formed separate factor (factor 3). It includes also dressing code.

- Especially acceptable criteria are arranged into three independent factors: factor 4: competence (personal and interpersonal), factor 5: flexibility in business, savvy, initiativeness and business openness, and factor 9: need for life-long learning and self-actualization. These factors explain together about 11.5% of variance.

- The most important difference is that female managers found out that personal and interpersonal competence is very important career advancement criteria. While this factor explains 4.81% of variance in the sample of female managers, in the full sample it explains only 2.69% of variance.

5. Concluding remarks

In most countries around the world, the proportion of women who occupy the top management positions is noticeably small. In this context the situation in Croatia is not unique. According to the statistics, women in Croatia account 52% of total population, but representing approximately 48.3% employed and 53.9% of unemployed inhabitants. Taking into question their share in the top executive positions the statistics is disastrous. According to the research conducted in 2003, on the top management positions there are only 27% of women, while in supervision committee of firms there are only 19% of women (Singer and Grgic, 2003). In investigating why women are having difficulties going up the managerial ladder, researchers created the term glass ceiling. It relates to the visible and invisible barriers that keep women and minorities from rising above a certain level in corporation. Although the term is in some sense fuzzy and not precisely operationalized, similar barriers exist in different more or less sophisticated forms in Croatia, as they exist in other countries.

Little is generally known about the factors affecting the career advancement of women in the world of work. This is especially true for Croatia. Formally and legally, women and minorities should have equal opportunities for employment and advancement. But, in practice, situations are often different due to socio-cultural barriers, support systems barriers or self imposed barriers, etc.

Regarding the main aim of this paper, to examine factors facilitating and hindering working values and career advancement, as well as to find what skills and traits give women an edge in today's global workplace from Croatian women's point of view, the analysis in this paper was based on data collected from secondary source of information (opinions and experience primarily of the top female managers published in different journals and daily press) and from research conducted in the second half of 2002 in the frame of the University Fellows International Research Consortium.

The most of business women highlighted that a woman has to be more competent than a man at the same level of organizational ladder in order to satisfy prerequisites for going up. "To be better" according to successful female managers (besides to be competitive) means that a woman has to possess also biological determined characteristics, genetic congenital and many others characteristics which can be portrayed as soft or feminine. Knowledge, skills, abilities, individuality and leaning on feminine characteristics having crucial importance in career advancement, and underlined by Croatian top female managers are similar to those noted by female managers worldwide. Some of interviewed top female managers explained insufficient involvement of women in Croatian society, i.e. in political and business work, not only and exclusively with existence of patriarchal relationship in society, conservatism of business world, outdated and negative ideas which prevent women to going up, but first of all by insufficient self-initiatives of women.

It seems that when a business woman accepts as normal the fact that not only her results, knowledge and skills are exposed to external evaluation, but also her look, dressing style and private life, and when she starts to continuously work on herself, than she transforms deceptive disadvantages in her advantages, potential and power.

The results of research conducted in 2002 showed that women have clearly articulated what they found ultimately unacceptable criteria for career advancement, but it remained unclear what is the most acceptable criteria for career advancement. To find out what working women perceived as the most important criteria for career advancement, women who clearly stated the most important criteria were separated. They highlighted two factors: readiness to do overtime work and necessity to possess specific knowledge, which needs to be continuously improved. But, those criteria have been separated by women who do not constitute the top management. In order to find out what female managers consider to be the most important criteria, the whole sample was split into two sub-samples; one composed of female managers and one composed of female workers. Among others, female managers found out that personal competence is the most important factor in career advancement.

This opinion is confirmed by the top female managers interviewed in the frame of "Business Magazine".

The structure of factor analysis loaded the items into nine factors: condemnation, building self-image and networking, initiativeness and openness to business challenges, dressing code, flexibility and savvy, target orientation, specific knowledge guarding, pooltronance and sladernance and competence (personal and interpersonal). The findings of factor analysis do not confirm completely previous mention empirical observations and conclusions drown by content analysis of interviewed top business women. While the top female managers treated the personal competence as prerequisite for upward mobility, in factor analysis this criterion explained the least of variance (only 1%). Therefore, factor analysis on sub-sample – female managers was conducted. This analysis confirmed that female managers recognize in personal and interpersonal competence very important career advancement criterion.

Identified factors of career advancement could not be explained well without understanding socio-cultural context within which they were formed. The socialistic heritage (expressed through moderation, subordination, servitude, keeping a low profile and similar behavior) has been implicitly felt in the answers of respondents and thus influencing attitudes towards career advancement (Borozan et al, 2003). The criteria are also influenced by consequences of transition processes followed in general by transformation of value system, being additional loaded by different kinds of deviant behaviors provoked by war in Croatia. Many unfavorable processes developed in transitional context contribute to development of unhealthy culture and atmosphere in many Croatian firms as well as to the creation of such value system in these firms in which personal competence does not represent basic career advancement criterion, than social contacts, connections, and money. Many research conducted in Croatia indicate a degradation of socio-cultural capital in terms of a decrease of trust in the most of institutions in Croatia (e.g. legal system, Parliament, public services), negative trend in networking of people with various institutions (e.g. membership in political parties, non-government and non-profit organizations, religious associations) and jeopardized social norms (e.g. cheating of the state through tax evasions and corruption).[11] Such socio-economic context has produced uncertain and vague criteria for career advancement. In many work situations criteria for professional development and career advancement such as competitiveness, responsibility, self-initiative and achievements, risk taking behavior, often remain without a proper reaction in the sense of better and higher job position. This is important reason why respondents were not able to articulate the most important criteria for career advancement.

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[11] See Report on social development of Croatia 2001, the Agency of United Nations UMDP and UN/DESA and the Economic Institute in Zagreb.

But global competition, impacting directly on local firms which are faced not only with increasing global competition on foreign market but also with direct competition from foreign firms in their own domestic markets, has been imposing the need of more transparency, certainty and order in this area. The interviewed top female managers, being employed in firms which have to play according to market criteria, pointed out the new values such as self-initiative and pro-activity, responsibility, competence, independence, ambition, risk taking, successfulness as the most important criteria for career advancement. They assigned also the greatest importance to the soft or feminine characteristics.

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