



School of Management

Navigating the labyrinth

The path to progression for senior female managers
working in a foreign country

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ABSTRACT

Many articles have been written about women and what kind of barriers they face – whether it being a glass ceiling or a labyrinth - as they are progressing in their careers; gender stereotyping, double-binds, lack of role models, “old boys club”, different leadership styles, and so forth. And many others have talked about how to navigate or mitigate any obstacles that might face women due to their gender.

Purpose of Research: This report aims to give insight into another aspect of this topic, namely through the lens of a cultural standpoint: do women that live and work abroad face yet another obstacle by being *foreigners* in addition to the gender specific ones that previously have been thoroughly identified in academic research.

Research Question: *How do successful female managers overcome attitudinal and cultural barriers in a foreign country? What strategies have they used?*

Method: The main research data was collected through in-depth, semi-structured, qualitative Skype interviews with women who have chosen to work and live abroad on a local level (i.e. not expats on time limited assignments). The collected empirical data was subsequently analysed using a matrix containing key words obtained from an in-depth, two-level academic literature search. The key words supported the discussion of the empirical findings and the analysis where the barriers were identified together with the subsequent strategies these women have used in order to progress their careers.

Conclusions: As the study shows, a majority of the interviewed women have experienced positive response due to them being from a foreign culture, allowing them additional lee-way in making decisions that is considered to be non-stereotypical or norm “because-she-is-not-from-around-here” or using – very consciously – the excuse “this-is-the-way-we-do-it-in-my-home-country” to overcome attitudinal [gender] barriers. Most interviewed women also acknowledge that being a woman – in a male dominated environment such as a higher management position – differentiates them from the “crowd”, and it can be utilized as an advantage – providing that you want to stand in the spotlight. A common thread among the interviewed women was that women themselves are their own worst enemies – they often create their own internal barriers that prevent them from advancing their careers. However, the higher the women climb on the corporate ladder, the less advantage they have from being a foreigner and a woman, and the more they have to conform to the “norm” that in many places still is an “old boys club”.

Keywords: gender barriers, stereotyping, leadership, female managers, foreign culture

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Thank you to our supervisor, Dr. Marie Aurell, for thoughtful comments and nudging along this process (and not losing faith in that we could accomplish this).

As the saying goes, it's not the destination but the journey – this has been a great adventure.

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

For the past thirty years we have seen an increasing number of women entering the academic field, even surpassing men in achieving higher degrees (Catalyst, 2010; AP2, 2013). Even though the number of women in managerial positions in Sweden and other countries have increased there is still a long way to go to reach equality, and according to research, the number of women at the very top are still few and far in between.

Women are no longer facing a glass ceiling but more an obstacle course on their way towards senior management positions (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Sandberg, 2013). Both external and internal obstacles exist; external in the form of company culture, tokenism, double binds, lack of networks, lack of role models, lack of mentors, and so on but also internal barriers such as family obligations and a lack of persistence. Several research articles about women and the different barriers they face have been written, corporate and business programmes have been implemented, and special tracks for women created, however the prominent lack of women within top management and higher corporate ranks remains a problem.

In addition to the above mentioned internal and external barriers, you get yet another dimension if you add culture into the mix. Since the authors of this thesis are Swedish women living and working abroad since several years, we are especially interested in the barriers facing foreign women and if the barriers are different to the ones local women face. As we will show in our review of the current literature, there is plenty of research conducted on the topic of female career progression and barriers but very little about if and how different cultures directly affect these barriers for women in senior management position working in a “new” country.

1.2 PROBLEM DISCUSSION

In this increased global world it is essential that any organisation takes advantage of the diversity of all their employees to gain a competitive advantage (DuBrin, 2010).

In 2012 it was reported that 52% women compared to 39% men achieved a higher (post-high school/gymnasium) education in Sweden (Statistics Sweden, 2012). Of these graduating women, less than 30% were employed in companies listed on the Swedish stock market. Further down the work force funnel, 27% of the employed women were managers and only 5.5% were appointed as Chief Executive Officers (CEOs). Approximately one fifth (22%) of the company board members were women, and only just over 4% of these were nominated as chairman of the board (AP2, 2013).

The above is not a situation unique for Sweden. According to Grant Thornton’s 2012 International Business Review, only 21% of senior management positions globally were filled by women (Grant Thornton, 2012 cited in Subramaniam, Arumugam, Akeel & Almintisir, 2014). The number increased slightly the following year when 24% of all senior management roles were filled by women on a global count (Catalyst, 2014).

The reason for the scarcity of women in senior management positions has often been explained by the term “glass ceiling” which is a metaphor used to describe the invisible barriers that prevent the promotion of women (Oakley, 2000; Hoobler, Wayne & Lemmon, 2009).

Eagly and Carli (2007) however point out that it is not really a ceiling anymore since we *do* have women that are CEOs, board members, and presidents of companies etc., but rather a labyrinth with twist and turns, with different obstacles to face, different paths to take, and a need for awareness of where you have been, where you currently are and where you are going next, in order to take the path that leads to the centre. In a more contemporary twist, Sandberg (2013) cites Pattie Sellers, a Fortune Magazine author, who says that you should think about your career as “jungle gym” instead of a ladder when you are looking at the progression path in front of you.

Ely, Ibarra, and Kolb (2011) have coined the term “second generation barriers” concluding that even after legal frameworks have been put in place to make gender discrimination illegal, there are still gender biases left. They describe it as “something in the water” in the sense that the reason for the lack of women in leading roles is not due to a conscious discrimination against women but rather due to what they refer to as a “second-generation form of gender bias” (Ibarra, Ely & Kolb, 2013). According to Simpson, Sturges, Woods and Altman (2004) there are two main types of (gender) barriers; *person centred* and *situation centred*. Person centred barriers relate for instance to the lack of education and desired key skills or that women may prioritise work-life balance, the decision to have a family as described by a recent study by Subramaniam et al. (2014), and job satisfaction compared to men who may chose career success as their most important priority (Powell, 2000 cited in Simpson et al., 2004). One could say that these barriers are *person centred* since women, in theory, can overcome these barriers through for instance further studies and skills development.

Situation centred barriers on the other hand relate to the barriers presented by Judith Oakley in her research from 2000 and can be divided into *corporate practices*, and *attitudes and culture*.

Corporate practices all relate to career development, promotion, training, and remuneration. For instance, international experience is often listed as a prerequisite to be promoted to the top of an organisation as more and more companies have a global presence (Caligiuri & Stroh, 1998 cited in Linehan & Scullion, 2000) and international experience will give an understanding for other cultures and issues facing a company that expands internationally (DuBrin, 2010).

However, the number of women on international assignments is still underrepresented. Linehan and Scullion (2000) found in their research that the two leading selection criteria for an international post are technical skill and track record within the domestic organisation, generally speaking usually male dominated fields, whereas skills such for instance language skills and the ability to adapt to an international environment are considered less important. Since women in senior management often take on staff supporting positions such as human resources, they do not get the broader experience from marketing, operations and sales that give them the desired track record for being considered for an international post (Lublin, 1996 cited in Oakley, 2000). Women therefore automatically get disqualified from international assignments, and in the long run, top senior positions. This ties in to another common assumption in regards to a successful international assignment, a “trailing spouse”

i.e. someone who has no career or is willing to give up his/her career to accompany the spouse on an international assignment - a family situation still more common for men than for women (Ely, Ibarra, & Kolb, 2013).

Other barriers preventing women to gain international experience are the three myths Adler (1984, cited in Janssens et al., 2006) claims surround women expatriates; 1) women don't want international assignments, 2) foreigners will not accept women in leadership positions and, 3) companies don't want to send women abroad. However, Adler found in her research that only the last one, i.e. the companies *themselves* have a lack of faith in the competence of the manager due to her gender, was grounded in empirical testing.

Attitudinal and cultural barriers on the other hand relate to gender based behaviours such as double binds, gender communication styles, gender-based stereotyping, preferred leadership styles, the "old boys club", tokenism, and so on.

Double binds are behavioural norms that are deeply rooted and either consciously or subconsciously based on traditional gender roles. Men are assumed to have agentic qualities which, according to social cognition theory perspective, mean assertion and control, with traits such as being aggressive, strong, dominant, forceful and individualistic. Women on the other hand are assumed to have communal qualities e.g. expected to be nice, caring, helpful, friendly, and sensitive, and to make sure others are treated with compassion (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Corell (2004; 2013) talks about diffuse gender characteristic, i.e. that subconsciously there is an expectation that one gender is more capable of certain things than the opposite gender, and that studies have found that men are usually understood to be more capable and competent than women.

Another *attitudinal and cultural barrier* stems from the differences in how men and women communicate. According to Oakley (2000) women's generally less assertive and aggressive style of communicating is considered "unacceptable" at the highest level of many organisations. Women are also more likely to speak in a non-self-promoting way which can be associated with how girls are already at a very young age taught not to sound too confident as that will make them unpopular with their peers (Tannen, 1994 cited in Oakley, 2000). Unfortunately this is still an issue over 20 years later as pointed out by the campaign "Ban Bossy" launched in the US in spring 2014. It highlights that when little girls speak up, they are called "bossy", while boys doing the same are called leaders (BanBossy, 2014). Taylor and Grant (2014) stress the *overall ability* to communicate in order to be perceived as a strong leader, regardless of gender, but they also identify the following "six communication essentials that can help women project confidence: 1) starting strong, 2) staying succinct, 3) dimensionalising content, 4) owning voice, 5) controlling movement, and 6) projecting warmth." (Ibid, p.73).

Summarising the barriers women face when trying to move up in the hierarchy, navigating the labyrinth, or swinging in the jungle gym, facing new career challenges, we get the following:

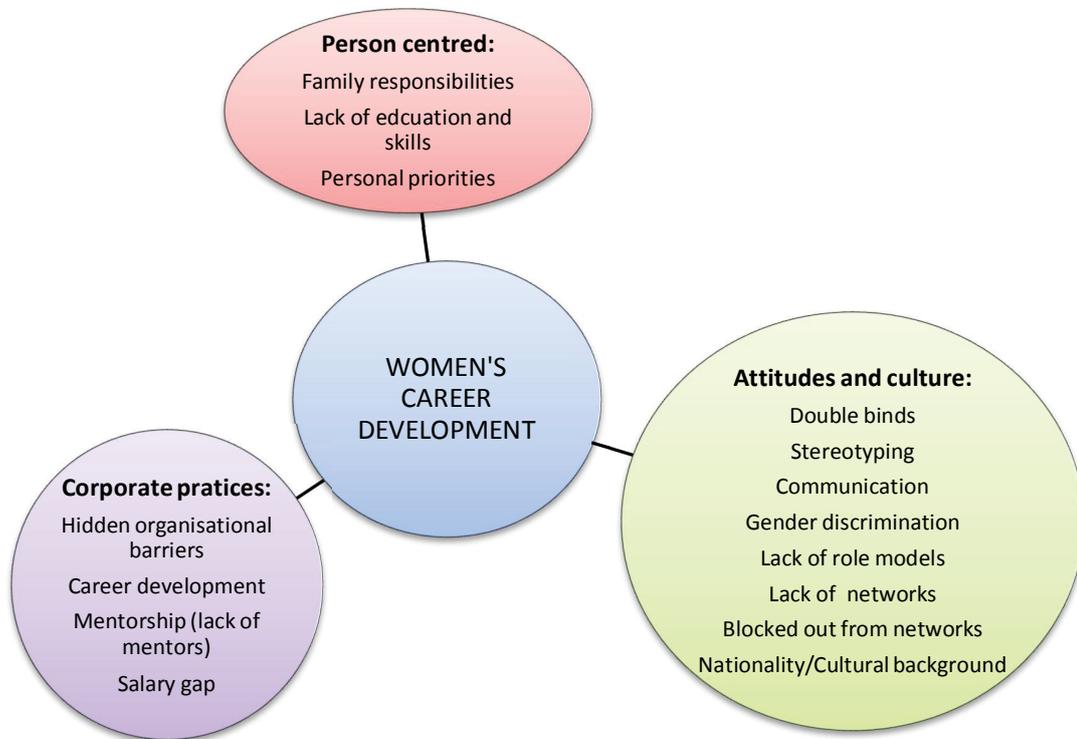


Figure 1.1: Types of gender barriers experienced by women in their career development. (Source: own)

1.3 PROBLEM FORMULATION AND PURPOSE

The review of the current literature indicates that women have entered the work force in large numbers, companies have made strides with policies and programmes, and more women have been promoted into (middle) management positions and thus filling the pipeline with “potential” candidates for the corner office and the C-suite, a slang term referring to the highest level positions starting with “Chief”, such as Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Chief Operating Officer (COO), Chief Financial Officer (CFO) etc.

But as Carter and Silva (2010) show in their survey of top MBA graduates from business schools around the world, women still lag behind men in career advancement and compensation, as well as feeling less satisfied with their career as a whole. The slow increase seems to catch a lot of people off guard, albeit earlier studies had predicted this (Helfat, Harris & Wolfson, 2006).

Companies did what they thought were right – they conducted training, wrote policies for promotion and compensation, and they *did* manage to get more women into the pipeline - but the pipeline seems to be leaking since the available research tells us that women are still scarce in *senior* management positions. Have the barriers changed over the years, i.e. have we overcome some barriers only to see new types of barriers taking the old ones place?

In addition to the above described gender barriers, which can apply to women of any nationality, at any age, at any level, in any industry etc., it is easy to make the assumption that being a female manager in a foreign country adds an additional barrier for women swinging the corporate jungle gym.

It is a known fact that national culture influences people and their leadership behaviours and traits, and recent research shows that national culture is indeed a strong feature in leadership (Hofstede & Minkov, 2011; 2012). However, Snaebjornsson and Edvardsson (2013) found in their literature review that the *actual* barriers women face, are *similar* in different countries. Snaebjornsson and Edvardsson therefore point to the fact that there is a gap in the research field in how nationality really influences leadership. Ayman and Korabik (2010) argue that both culture *and* gender impact leadership because the way a leader chooses to lead will be based on the gender identity *and* cultural background. They therefore called for additional research “to better understand the role of cultural norms and values in the leadership process” (p.166, 2010).

Research done by Janssens, Cappellen and Zanoni (2006) shows that successful women expatriates are active agents, i.e. they are purposely making use of their gender, hierarchical status, and their culture in order to better position themselves and overcome barriers that face them in the international organisation. They draw attention to – or away – from being “a woman, a manager, and a western expatriate.” (p.134).

Drawing a parallel to this study, and since we personally know several successful women with this type of “non-local” background that are pursuing successful careers in a “new” country, we are wondering if successful, foreign female managers who has chosen to remain in the country that she moved to - initially either as an expatriate or as a spousal support - actively chooses to utilize her “own” culture as a means to overcome barriers that face her in the labyrinth towards success? I.e. could a constraint such as being a foreigner and having a different cultural background, actually give more degrees of freedom when handling an obstacle, similar to what Janssens et al. (2006) showed in their empirical study? Our main purpose with this study is therefore to give a better understanding of how senior female managers, working and living in a country that they were not born in, have navigated attitudinal and cultural barriers throughout their careers as The World Economic Forum has identified norms and cultural practices as one of the biggest threats to women’s accession to management positions (Zahidi & Ibarra, 2010).

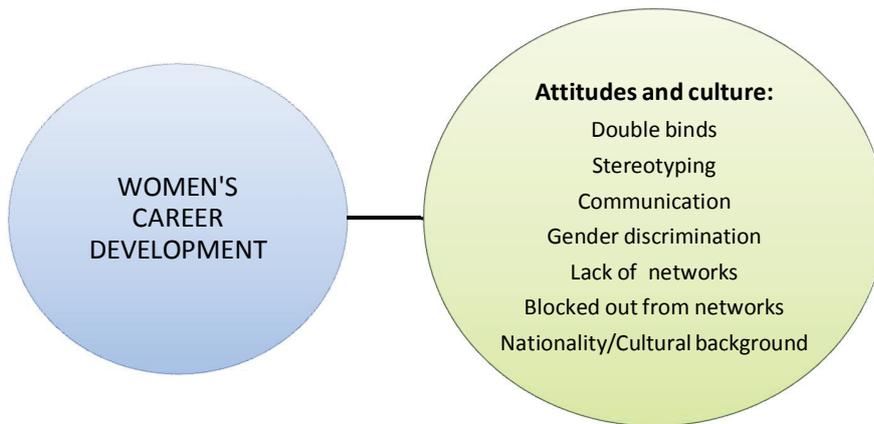


Figure 1.2: Focus of thesis study: attitudinal and cultural barriers. (Source: own)

This leads us to our **research question**:

How do successful female managers overcome attitudinal and cultural barriers in a foreign country? What strategies have they used?

By gaining deeper knowledge from empirical evidence (interviews) we hope to add a piece to the quilt of academic knowledge around how women can overcome barriers when they pursue an international career.

1.4 THESIS' STRUCTURE

This first chapter of this report presents the background, problem discussion, and problem formulation. Following this introductory chapter, the report is structured according to the following:



Figure 1.3: Thesis structure. (Source: own)

Chapter two describes the theory, and includes the theoretical aspects of differences in leadership based on gender, culture and physical appearance. A description and discussion regarding the choice of research method used follows in chapter three. The empirical findings are presented in chapter four, followed by an analysis in chapter five, where we discuss how and why the findings correspond or deviates to the existing theories. The report concludes with chapter six that summarises the study and the findings, discuss possible implications for future research, and also highlights shortcomings with the study. In the concluding chapter we have also added some empirical findings regarding mentorship that lay outside the scope of this study, but are worth mentioning.

2 THEORY

2.1 GENDER

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines gender as “the socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities, and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for men and women”. By having a distinct definition of the role, and subsequently an expected behaviour of such a group, gender inequalities might occur (i.e. systematic favour of one group and its behaviour) (WHO, 2014).

If the definition of gender is widened, you can also include gender schemas, gender stereotypes, gender-role identity, gender specific traits, attitudes, expected social roles and gender specific interactions. Furthermore, gender can be a status characteristic, where one gender obtains a higher status with more access to power and privileges than the other (Ayman & Korabik, 2010).

2.1.1 Psychological gender differences between women and men

In her study conducted in 2005, Janet Hyde instigated the idea of “The Gender Similarities Hypothesis” as a response to the widely spread hypothesis about gender *differences*. The hypothesis states, in contrary to hypotheses about gender differences, that males and females (and boys and girls) are more alike than they are different on most (but not all) psychological variables. Hyde based her study on a review of 46 meta-analyses conducted on psychological gender differences and where she assessed cognitive variables, verbal and nonverbal communication, social and personality variables, psychological wellbeing, motor behaving (such as throwing distance), and miscellaneous constructs (for instance moral reasoning).

Hyde found that out of 124 effect sizes, where an effect size measures the effect of gender differences, 78% of the gender differences were placed in the close to zero, or small range i.e. very little registered differences between genders. The areas where larger effect sizes (e.g. bigger gender differences) were measured were motor behaving (especially throwing velocity and throwing distance), and some measures of sexuality, and aggression (Hyde, 2005).

Hyde’s study is well supported by the theories presented by Maccoby and Jacklin (1974, cited in Hyde, 2005) after the pair assessed over 2 000 studies into gender differences and dismissed several common beliefs. Maccoby and Jacklin found that gender differences are actually only well established in four specific areas; verbal ability, visual-spatial ability, mathematical ability, and aggression.

These two studies help us to understand that there are no real *physiological* differences that prevent women from being promoted to the top of an organisation, and that differences between men and women are rather related to stereotypes and belief systems within an organisation or culture.

2.1.2 Gender and stereotyping

Correll (2004; 2013) describes gender stereotypes as a set of beliefs about certain characteristics, traits, or how someone should (or would be expected to) behave based on their gender, including beliefs of the type that “women are better than men on a certain task/action”. Since the beliefs are often engrained in a culture or an organisation, gender stereotyping might obstruct objective decisions.

Gender stereotyping is something humans are introduced to at a very young age. Condry and Condry (1976 cited in Plant, Hyde, Keltner & Devine, 2000) found in their widely spread study that emotional displays were interpreted differently if an infant was labelled either “boy” or “girl”. The emotions displayed by an infant labelled “boy” were interpreted as angrier and less afraid than if the infant was labelled “girl”. Condry and Condry’s study shows that the socialisation of children begins when they are just infants and it is the adults’ gender stereotypes of emotions that affect the socialisation. Another fundamental learning from the study is that if we allow gender stereotypes to influence how we interpret emotional expressions, it can have implications for social perception (Plant et al., 2000).

Plant et al. (2000) also conducted their own studies into the concept of gender stereotyping when it comes to emotions. In their studies they found that both men and women suppress the expression of emotions that are not in line with their gender role i.e. men suppress for instance emotions of sadness since they should not cry and women suppress anger since it is not appropriate for women to show anger from a gender stereotype perspective (Ekman & Friesen, 1969 cited in Plant et al., 2000).

2.2 LEADERSHIP

There is a clear distinction between management and leadership, where the latter entitles the ability to inspire, motivate, and influence people in the organisation to achieve the organisational goal, while a manager also deals with the administration that comes with the role (DuBrin, 2010).

As DuBrin points out, there is really “no one best or most effective leadership style” (2010, p.123), it is instead a flexibility in your skillset as a leader that is needed and your ability to take into account the specific situation and culture – which could both be organisational and country specific – in order to become an effective leader/manager. As someone gets promoted into a new role, that person needs to develop the leadership role that comes with the new position, internalize and work himself or herself into the role and this can be a struggle for anyone regardless gender.

An effective leader pursues goals that advance the collective good, and aligns with their personal values, which allows them to go outside their comfort zone and develop as leaders, sending signals that they are authentic and trustworthy (Ibarra et. al, 2013). In an organisation marred with a deeply rooted culture about what is the “right norm and/or behaviour” for a leader/manager, and where it might be marred with stereotypes such as “male (behaviour) is the norm”, this can be challenging.

2.2.1 Leadership and gender

Several studies have researched the effect that gender has (or do not have) on the differences in leadership styles portrayed by men and women in the corporate world (Rosener, 1990; Gibson, 1995; Eagly, 2005; Vinkenburg, van Engen, Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2011). However, can these differences be considered as *actual* differences between men and women or are they influenced by “stereotypes” or “traits” we *want* to classify as either typically male or female depending on what is considered to be the “norm” in a specific circumstance?

Studies has pointed to that especially women struggle with transforming their leadership style, which could be tied into the barriers facing them as they navigate the labyrinth and obstacles, perceived expectations of a leader within the organisation, and themselves (Eagly & Carli, 2007).

Do men and women lead differently? In 1990, Dr Judy Rosener published an article based on her extensive research conducted on behalf of the International Women’s Forum (IWF). The article was titled “Ways women lead” and provided detailed insights into differences between the ways men and women lead.

Rosener (1990) presented two main leadership styles; *transactional leadership* and *transformational leadership*. Transactional leadership is commonly described as looking at job performance as a number of *transactions* with employees and an exchange of rewards for services rendered and some type of punishment for performance considered to be insufficient. In her study, she found that men were more likely than women to describe themselves as *transactional leaders* (Ibid, 1990).

In comparison, the female respondents rather described themselves as portraying a more *transformational leadership* style which is a style that is more associated with getting employees to *transform* their own personal self-interests into the interest of the organisation and working towards a broader, common goal (Rosener, 1990).

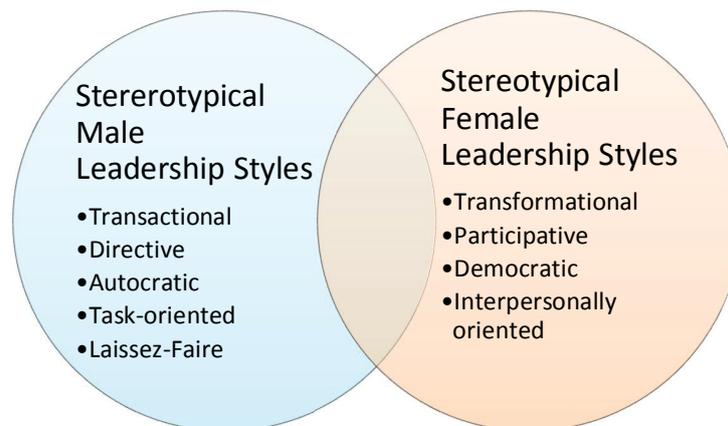


Figure 2.1: Stereotypical leadership styles for men and women. (Source: own)

From the idea of women describing themselves as *transformational leaders*, Rosener (1990) investigated further which lead her to the concept of “interactive leadership” as the central, common leadership style many women portray. She referred to the style as “interactive” since the women actively worked towards the goal of making all interactions with employees a positive experience for everyone involved (Ibid, 1990).

Within the way in which women actively work to create a sense of interactive leadership, Rosener (1990) found two distinct patterns; female managers seek to encourage participation, and they seek to share power and information. As a result of these two patterns they also seek to improve the self-worth the employees feel, and they strive to energise others.

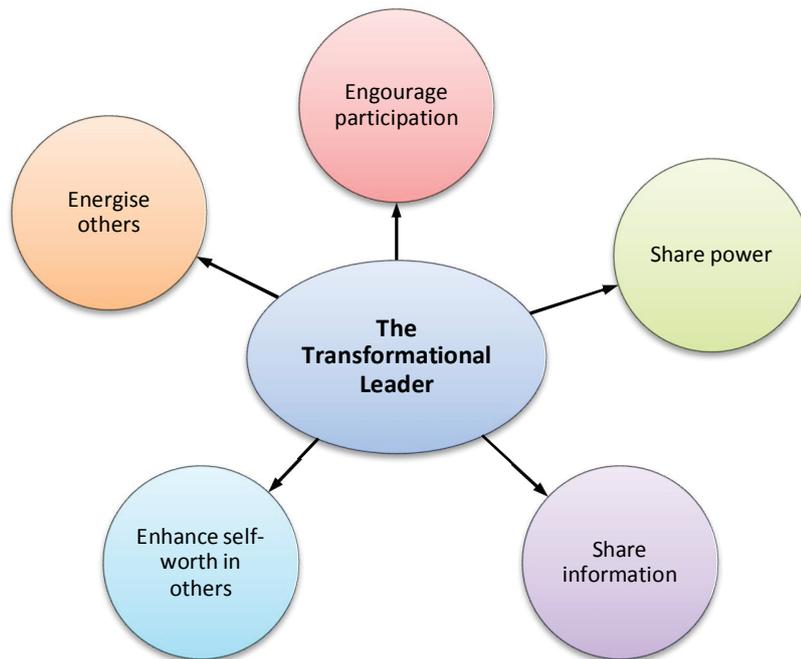


Figure 2.2: *The Transformational Leader.* (Source: own)

Rosener’s findings are supported by Eagly and Carli (2007) who in their article point to a meta-study which shows that women tend to have slightly more transformational leadership skills i.e. they lead by using charisma, high emotional intelligence, and lead by example, and therefore bring about major changes in an organisation by gaining trust and empowering the employees to achieve their full potential. Men on the other hand were shown to often portray a more transactional leadership style with more focus on routine and rewarding their employees for achieved objectives and corrections for non-achieved dittos (DuBrin, 2010).

Bass and Avolio also came to the same conclusion in their 1994 article *Shatter the Glass Ceiling: Women May Make Better Managers* where they say:

“It must also be noted that women managers, on average, tend to be more transformational and more proactive in addressing problems. As a consequence, they are likely to be seen as more effective and satisfying as leaders by both their male and female followers.” (p.557).

According to them, flatter organisational structures mean that less authority is concentrated at the top. This requires a different leadership style, a style that is more transformational than “command and control”. The transformational style results in more motivated and productive employees as well as an overall increased satisfaction with their manager.

However, there must be no mistake about that it is the situation at hand that determines the appropriate leadership style, “The ‘best’ leadership style depends on the organisational context” (Rosener, 1990, p.125), but it seems however that even if women have the “better” leadership style,

they are still not moving up the ranks which implies that there is something in the social structure of the organisation that holds them back.

2.2.2 Leadership and stereotyping

Recent studies have shown that the gender stereotyping in leadership “think manager – think male” is still a norm by male business students (Paris & Decker, 2012; Berkery, Morley & Tiernan, 2013). A common attitudinal barrier is that women are being judged on the same norm as men in regards to career development and promotion since a majority of companies were built by, and are still controlled by men (Linehan & Scullion, 2001). Oakley points out in one of her articles that “The cultural stereotype of leaders is male, and presents a formidable barrier to any woman who aspires to a leadership position” (2000, p.327). Leadership has evolved during the years since Oakley wrote those words and many studies and articles on leadership has been performed and written. Nowadays leaders need to have the “right stuff” and as Kirkpatrick and Locke puts it “leaders are not like other people” (2001, p.59) however, one of the major impediments that Ibarra et al. point to, eleven years later, is that the stereotypical leader is still a masculine man, “decisive, assertive, and independent” (2011, p.476).

Hoobler, Wayne and Lemmon (2009) found in their research that managers tend to think that women experience more family-work conflicts even though female employees reported less family-work conflicts than their male colleagues. Managers also rated the female employees lower in terms of job and organisational fit due to perceiving them as having more family-work conflicts.

Studies have also shown that there is a double standard for assessing competence based on cultural beliefs and stereotypes about gender; men tend to overestimate their ability at a task and women underestimate their ability. The same studies also showed that people who are in a more favourable position will get less scrutinised, and thus are also set to a more lenient standard (Corell, 2004).

Because female managers still are scarcer than men, they have to manage their gender identity, e.g. they have to overcome the barrier of being inferior to the norm (the male). Empirical studies have shown that in order to succeed, female managers have to try harder and outperform men (Westwood & Leung, 1994).

2.2.3 Leadership differences from a cultural perspective

According to Hofstede (1980; 2001 cited in George et al., 2012) culture is something that is a well-established, learned pattern in your mind – much like a piece of software – habits, norms, behaviours that you learn early on in life and that stays with you as you grow older. Hofstede coined the phrase that culture can be seen as “software of the mind” (quoted in George et al., 2012, p.148). He further concluded that differences in culture can thus have an impact on the way you lead, and that a theory or idea that is applicable in one country (or region of the world) might not be applicable in another due to cultural reasons. This is in contrast to the nationality, e.g. which country that you were born in (or have obtained your passport from).

Hofstede identified five main cultural dimensions: 1) masculinity vs. femininity 2) individualism vs. collectivism, 3) power distance, 4) uncertainty avoidance, and 5) long term vs. short term orientation (George et al., 2012). Studies have shown that successful foreign managers adapt to the new country they reside in (Muna, 2011).

Ayman and Korabik (2010) have grouped culture into two distinctive groups: visible (such as country boundaries, skin color etc.) and personal, more invisible characteristics, such as the cultural dimensions described by Hofstede. In their research they stress that culture (and gender) can have an important impact on leadership – and it should be incorporated as a variable when leadership aspects are studied. In the increasingly global setting, it is important for leaders to understand “their own preferred [leadership] style and behaviours and how these may differ from those preferred by others” (Ibid, p.157). Given the wide array of both individual and relational processes that leadership entails – e.g. cognitive, perceptual, and social – as well as situational settings, there are many situations where culture can play a role (Eagly & Chin, 2010).

Parallels can fairly easily be drawn between gender and culture: there are visible and invisible barriers that affect the way you get viewed by others, your status in a group, your privileges, stereotyping etc. (Ayman & Korabik, 2010).

2.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR LEADERSHIP AND GENDER

Our literature research reveals that many theories about gender and leadership have been developed over the past decades (Hirdman, 1988; Ridgeway, 2001; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Ridgeway & Correll, 2004).

In Sweden, Hirdman’s (1988) theory of the gender system prevails. This system talks about gender as a social construction with two main principles: 1) segregation or the division of areas into male and female and, 2) “male is the norm”, where men have the “power and authority” while women always have the inferior/subordinated role. This persistence of gender hierarchy has also been pointed out by Ridgeway and Correll (2004), and both point to the fact that the gender hierarchy is a self-sustaining system: even if the society redefines “men” and “women” and what they can do, the male norm will always come out on the top. A reason for this is the so called “gender contracts” passed on from mother to daughter and from father to son. “Gender contracts” relate to the very concrete opinions on different levels about how men and women should relate to, and behave towards each other, in life, in love, in language (i.e. how we speak to each other), at work, in the ways we dress and look, and so on (Hirdman, 1988).

Ridgeway (2001) argues that expectation states theory is a preferred approach to understand and explain the barriers a woman faces when she is progressing in her career; expectation states theory uses status beliefs and social hierarchies as their two main components. Status beliefs are widely held cultural beliefs about one gender being superior to another, and a parallel can be drawn to the segregation component and “gender contracts” in Hirdman’s theories. This creates an implicit expectation of performance for the women, because the “norm” is what men do. Ridgeway (2001, p.652) states:

“When women do assert themselves to exercise authority outside traditionally female domains, as they must do to be high-status leaders in our society, gender status beliefs create legitimacy reactions that impose negative sanctions on them for violating the expected status order and reduce their ability to gain compliance with directives. As this suggests, the performance expectations and legitimacy reactions created by gender status beliefs create multiple, nearly invisible nets of comparative devaluation that catch women as they push forward to achieve positions of leadership and authority and slow them down compared to similar men.”

According to a summary prepared by Ayman and Korabik (2010) the intraphysic perspective, the social structural perspective and the interpersonal perspective are the three most common theoretical frameworks for leadership and gender studies:

- *intraphysic perspective* focuses on the internal characteristics of the leader, such as gender–role traits, attitudes, and values - which are acquired through socialization, and how these affect the preferred leadership style (Ayman & Korabik, 2010, p.163);
- *social structure perspective* focuses on the role a certain gender/culture should play in society, the different status and privileges that are attached to a certain gender, and how having to adhere to the norm and others’ perceptions and evaluations affect the leadership style (i.e. predicts that certain leadership behaviour will be “a function of the congruence between the leadership role and the leaders’ prescribed gender role, attributed status, or both” (Ayman & Korabik, 2010, p.163); and
- *interpersonal perspective* focuses on how the leader interacts with co-workers; gender will influence your (social) interactions, and these will influence how your leadership is perceived (i.e. predicts that “differential effects will occur as a function of the gender of the leader or subordinate, or both, and that these will be moderated by the context and type of task.” (Ayman & Korabik, 2010, p.163).

Since our study focuses on how female managers navigate the maze set by perceptions in the organisations they work for, we have chosen to use a social structure perspective for our research.

2.4 STRATEGIES FOR OVERCOMING BARRIERS

The above mentioned barriers and theoretical framework support the fact that a woman due to her gender has an inferior position in the hierarchy of a company compared to men.

In searching current literature for clear strategies helping women to navigate through the “labyrinth” or climbing the “jungle gym” it becomes clear that women’s career development is full of double binds and “lose-lose” situations. We here point to eight strategies that Dulini Fernando (2012) identified in her research among Sri Lankan skilled women. These direct strategies are actively used to manage organisational gender stereotyping. It is interesting to note that several of the identified strategies actually reinforce and contribute to maintaining traditional gender stereotypes. We have also

included some strategies identified by Janssens et al. (2006) pertaining to the cultural aspect of women working in a foreign country:

Demonstrating expertise: Since women are often considered as less capable than their male counterparts women find themselves energetically demonstrating their skills and experience. Fernando (2012) found that the increased status the demonstrated skills and experience gave the women seemed to outweigh the fact that they were women.

Manipulation: Some women from Fernando's research (2012) explained how they in their early career made sure to integrate with certain key "gatekeepers" so when they later applied for a management position they could not be "over-looked". This strategy might help women to achieve a promotion but it does not challenge existing gender biases.

Accepting: Some women portrayed to have accepted the "fact" that they would never be considered for a senior management position purely due to their gender. They had reconciled with the current norm that only men make good leaders (Ibid, 2012).

Avoiding: To avoid the consequences of gender stereotyping, some of the female managers Fernando (2012) interviewed admitted to make an active decision not to apply for senior positions in organisations which were known for their stereotyping and labelling of women as less capable than men. They instead targeted departments with an already high representation of females in senior management (such as HR, and administration). This was done to protect themselves from negative or disappointing outcomes of gender stereotyping. However, by applying this strategy, the negative spiral continues as one of the things holding women back from higher management positions is the lack of experience from marketing, operations and sales (Lublin, 1996 cited in Oakley, 2000).

Adopting an anti-woman approach: This strategy refers to female managers who distance themselves from other women in the organisation who are seen as typically feminine or have typical female responsibilities such as taking care of children. One of the women in the study who had adopted this strategy said that she is very hesitant to give certain responsibilities to women with small children. Another manager from the study said she consciously makes sure to prioritise the company's interests over her own personal interests to come across as "less" female (Fernando, 2012).

Performing masculinity: Women in Fernando's research (2012) spoke about how they displayed certain characteristics more associated with men, such as aggressiveness and competitiveness, to not come across as weak or less capable. However, by doing this the women; 1) risk being judged from a double bind perspective and, 2) contribute to the opinion that it takes a man to be a good leader.

Explaining: To be taken more serious, many women in the study found themselves explaining a situation through in-depth and detailed descriptions and justifying their arguments by referencing to logical and credible evidence (Fernando, 2012).

Playing the female card: Sometimes though, women can use the stereotypes to their advantage. One woman Fernando spoke to said that she sometimes use her child as an excuse to not have to work

late or attend a work function (2012). This strategy will however reinforce the opinion that women cannot devote maximum time and effort to their work due to family obligations. A slightly different female card was played by the women in Janssens et al.'s study (2006), where some women used their "softer, more feminine side" to become less threatening (e.g. in the situation with a male supervisor that felt threatened by male assertiveness).

Playing the cultural card: Janssens et al.'s study (2006), showed that some women used their different cultural background in order to distract from the fact that they did not conform to the (male) norm, and thus were able to get acceptance since they were culturally different.

2.4.1 Female networking to replace the "old boys club"

Several studies address the lack of access to networks and especially the concept of the "old boys club" as a barrier for female career progression, (Linehan & Scullion, 2000; Oakley, 2000; Evans, 2010; Ibarra, Ely & Kolb, 2013). It is believed that an increased number of women in top management will impose a threat to the "old boys club", the informal "successful men only" social system that today stretches within and across organisations. The system currently preserves and enhances rewards for men at the top, so a shift of the balance would challenge the current status quo and the male culture as the "norm" (Oakley, 2000).

In their research, Linehan and Scullion (2000) found that getting access to traditionally "male only" networks is considered as the biggest barrier female managers have to overcome. They also found in their study that in some instances women had established their own networks, both female only and/or mixed. However, is it the "best" strategy? Linehan and Scullion found that even though there are several benefits from female only networking, to be truly visible in the organisation and increase the chances of obtain organisational promotions women need to gain access to male only networks since these networks are often responsible for nurturing and maintaining the negative attitudes within the "old boys club".

3 RESEARCH METHOD

Research is a logical way of collecting empirical data and analysing it by using a theoretical framework as the foundation. Social science research usually involves the use of qualitative (descriptive) data such as interviews and observations in order to understand and explain the question(s) that the research is aiming to answer. For this qualitative research study, we have to a certain extent followed the “linear, but iterative process” (Yin, 2009, p.2) for case studies.

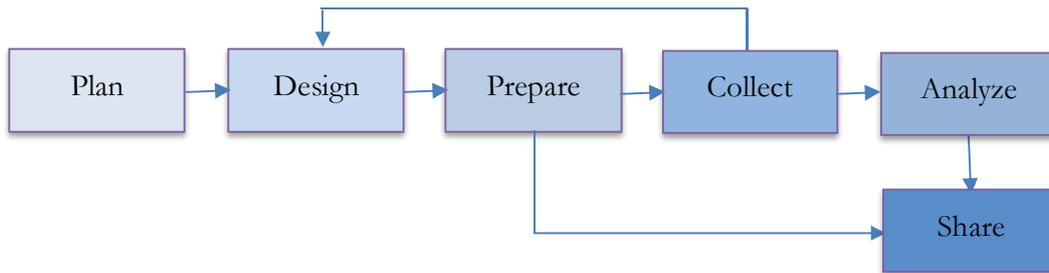


Figure 3.1: Case study methodology. (Source: Yin, 2009)

Research can be done in many different ways: surveys, case studies, experiments, archival analysis etc. Yin (2009) points out that you have to look at three factors when you decide upon the method that is preferred for your research: 1) type of research question, 2) how much control you have over the events and 3) whether it is a contemporary or historical setting. Since our research question is based on a “How” question (*“How do successful female managers overcome attitudinal and cultural barriers in a foreign country? What strategies have they used?”*) and we cannot control the contemporary events that we are studying, Yin (2009) suggests that the use of a case study is one of the preferred methods.

The unit of analysis for this study is a single individual – a female manager with a foreign background to the country where she currently lives and works in. We have chosen to study self-initiated foreign expatriate women, i.e. women that have chosen to immigrate to a country that she was not born in and/or grew up in. We have purposely chosen not to interview women that are working on a contract basis sent out from a “parent” company in their home country, since they are considered to be expatriates with a time-bound assignment that might impact their perception.

Our initial plan was to collect data from a sample size of 12-15 women. We ended up interviewing 11 women which was slightly less than preferred. Since we have a limited number of participants and have obtained in-depth data from each participant, this is a qualitative multiple case study.

3.1 METHOD OF LITERATURE SEARCH

Our literature search followed the method described by Kaniki (1999) in where he says that “A literature search is used in two levels to identify a research problem” (1999, p.18). We conducted an extensive literature search of the topic (i.e. Level 1) and quickly realised that a lot of literature has been written about women and the different barriers they face when they advance their careers, and that the research area seemed pretty well covered. We drilled further down (i.e. Level 2), and tried to find a gap in the existing literature by our iterative process of probing the topic from different angles.

Finally, when looking at it from the gender/culture angle, the search produced fewer articles and more opportunities where authors called for expanded research in the gender/culture/leadership/management area (Ayman & Korabik, 2010; Snaebjornsson et. al., 2013). By not stopping after Level 1 and just look at women and barriers but rather drill down further, our literature search allowed us to sharpen our research question and set the parameters for the study from the outset. By doing this we avoided to find at a later stage that the research questions was too vague and the research problem too wide to draw any worth-while conclusions (Kaniki, 1999).

After having identified the core concepts and parameters of our study through our two-levelled literature search we proceeded to look for core literature containing information about all concepts (i.e. gender stereotyping, “old boys club”, double binds etc.) to first get an overview and then focus on each individual concept to get more detailed information (Kaniki, 1999).

3.2 METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION

Our data was collected through in-depth, semi-structured interviews of eleven female managers from middle to large sized companies in the private sector to identify any barriers that they have had to over-come, how they did it, and what kind of barriers they still perceive exist in their respective companies that might hinder a positive career development path. Of particular interest was if being a foreigner has been an asset or another barrier in their career.

To identify initial potential candidates to interview we used our professional networks as well as posted an “ad” on two non-public Facebook groups administrated by an organisation called SWEA (Swedish Women Educational Association), reaching about 1,500 Swedish-speaking women¹. In the “ad” we asked for women who would either be interested in participating in our research directly or if they could refer us to someone they thought would be interested (please refer to 8.1 Appendix A – Ads posted on SWEA Facebook pages/Groups for full text). We also asked all the interviewed women if they could refer us to someone they would see suitable for our research. The two latter methods can be referred to as a type of snowball sampling, which is a chain-referral method that is used for sampling rare populations (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981 cited in Janssens et al. 2006). Even though more elaborate methods have been developed lately, such as Respondent-Driven-Sampling (RDS), we have chosen to utilize the simpler snowball sampling technique and duly note that the initial sample is not collected in a random way, and that it can introduce bias in the sample population (Heckathorn, 2011).

Through the sampling methods described above, we got in contact with eleven women that we interviewed; nine through our professional networks, and two through the SWEA Facebook groups. To introduce ourselves we submitted an introductory e-mail to the candidates explaining our study and our objectives. We also made it clear that we would treat any information given to us confidential, and ask for their consent in case we wanted use any quotes from the conversations (the email we submitted is enclosed as 8.2 Appendix B – Initial E-Mail to Potential Candidates).

¹ In order to be a member of SWEA you need to be a woman who speaks Swedish, and who has lived abroad for at least a 12 month consecutive period.

Our initial goal was to interview all candidates together face-to-face or via Skype. However due to being located in different time zones, all interviews were conducted as Skype calls (some with, some without video), and some of the interviews were conducted by only one of the two authors. In all cases where one of the authors could not take part in the interview, she could listen to the recording of the interview and make her own notes and subsequent data analysis.

The interviews were based on an open ended semi structured questionnaire to cover the same main questions. These are outlined in 8.3 Appendix C - Background & Interview questions, and were submitted in advance to all respondents, so they had a chance to think about them prior to the interview, and to reduce any misunderstandings. Thus the interviews were not conducted as a formal interview per se, but more of a conversation around the pre-defined questions, combined with actively listening, and trying to probe with follow-up questions and “nudging” deeper on things we sensed were a “message *between* the lines” (Yin, 2009, p.70). In order to make sure we captured everything correctly, notes were also taken during the interviews by each one of the authors. Each interview averaged between 1 and 1.5 hours, with one exception of an interview being almost two hours long.

Our respondents were informed prior to the conversations that we would keep all responses confidential, and it would not be possible to link any answers back to a specific respondent. Where possible, and with the respondents permission, the interviews were recorded. Two of the interviews were not recorded due to technical difficulties, but for these interviews both authors were present which gave us two sets of notes which were compared to reduce the risk of misinterpretation of any of the answers. Having the conversations recorded made it possible to revert back and “re-listen” to the conversations, to make sure all findings were captured correctly, and to confirm the wording of all quotes. For the two interviews that were not recorded we referred to our notes when quoting. For all quotes used in this report great care was taken to quote as close as possible but there may be minimal deviation from what the respondents said. These differences will have no effect on the contents or meaning of the quote.

The interviews were conducted using a mix of Swedish, English, and “Swenglish” – in some cases all three “languages” were used in the same interview. Since this report is written in English, we would like to point out that we have taken extra care when translating responses from Swedish to English to not introduce any bias and/or miss-conceptions, but there might be words that *could* possibly be interpreted differently in English vs. Swedish. In these cases the Swedish word has been included as a footer. Some quotes were also said in Swedish, these have been marked [*translated from Swedish*] to acknowledge that *minor* grammatical adjustments have been made to the quotes to allow them to read well in English without influencing the meaning and/or nuance of the quotes.

Based on where our identified respondents are currently located, we chose to focus our study on female managers working in Sweden, the U.S, Hungary and Germany. We also elected to keep the researched population to local hires, i.e. we did not include any persons employed on an “x year contract” sent out from their home country and/or current company as “expats”.

Due to the sampling method used, all except one of the respondents were of Swedish nationality. This respondent was born in a foreign country but moved to Sweden in her late teens and has thereafter made a career in Sweden. Most of the women were in their early to mid-forties with three exceptions, one was 39, one gave a range i.e. 46-55, and one was 60. The respondent who did not grow up in Sweden and thus from birth was influenced by different culture, attitudes, values, traditions etc. could be seen as a deviation or “outlier”. Also the woman who is 60 could be considered as an “outlier” since she is in a different stage of her career. A third outlier could potentially be the respondent who has never worked in Sweden as she relocated directly after graduating from university, and thus only have experienced a non-Swedish working environment. We however chose to include all these women as we found that their responses added value without skewing any results.

The sample size for this study was very small, and has been identified through the authors’ professional networks, which implies that it is not randomised, not representative, and any generalisations for the “female foreigner manager” population as a whole can therefore not be drawn.

Please refer to 8.4 Appendix D – Overview of Respondents, for a demographic snapshot of the women that we interviewed in this study, including title, nationality, age, and country they currently reside in.

3.3 METHOD OF ANALYSIS

The main research method used in this study is data collection through qualitative, in-depth interviews of eleven female managers from middle to large sized companies in the private sector².

The recorded interviews were stored on Google Drive, in folders named “Respondent #1”,...”Respondent #11”. The folders also contained any prior documentation the respondents had submitted to us via email, as well as our interview notes. This allows for independent analysis of our raw material, which increases the validity of our findings (Yin, 2009).

According to Terre Blanche and Kelly (1999) there is not a defined point in a qualitative study where data collection stops and the analysis begins. The one fades into the other as you naturally start to look for patterns and linking data from one interview to the next. After each interview, we therefore went through our notes and recordings (where available) and made sure we had obtained all the necessary data that we had intended to collect. Then each one of us individually went through our notes and the recordings again and mapped the interviewees answers to key words regarding cultural and attitudinal barriers (described in Sections 2.1 and 2.2), the strategies commonly used to overcome barriers (described in Section 2.4), as well as identified leadership traits and communication styles (described in Section 2.2) that we had obtained through our literature search.

By going through both our notes and re-listening to the recordings several times we got to know our data inside-out. This first phase of the analysis can be referred to as “familiarization and immersion” (Terre Blanche & Kelly, 1999, p.139). The initial analysis of the data was done individually through

² We have defined a middle size company to have 50-499 employees, and a large size company > 500 employees

explanation building, a special type of pattern matching, which is one of the five preferred analysis techniques described by Yin (2009, pp. 141-144).

In an interview the answers a respondent gives are presented in a chronological order. By breaking the data up and matching it to themes and key words, comments which were said far apart and may not have been linked together, can through pattern matching easier be brought together by just re-listening to the interviews (Terre Blanche & Kelly, 1999). Thus we based our analysis on the re-occurrence of specific themes and key words in the empirical data set and matched them to key words regarding cultural and attitudinal barriers, strategies and leadership. After the initial analysis, we compared our individual findings and discussed and brain-stormed both general findings, and detailed finding directly related to barriers and events experienced by the interviewed women. In the few cases where we had interpreted the data differently we went back to our notes and/or recordings and discussed until we reached an agreement on how we would interpret the data.

The collected data was documented in a data base in the form of an Excel spreadsheet; we identified key words, the words that the respondents had used, and which of the barriers and strategies that had been used, and mapped this to a separate tab in the data base (please refer to for a snapshot of this data base and the tabs in 8.5 Appendix E – Data Analysis Sheet –Tabs). We thereafter continued our analysis of the empirical data by discussing how our findings correlated to the existing literature, if the data we had obtain supported earlier findings or not, and this became the foundation for the empirical findings, and analysis section.

4 EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

This section of the report summarises the qualitative findings from the eleven conducted in-depth interviews.

The interviewed women were all higher educated, with the majority (>80%) having MSc degrees – and in some cases also a MBA and/or a PhD in addition to their MSc degree. The age of the interviewed women ranged between 39 – 60 years old, and they have been working abroad (in a foreign country) between two and 35 years. Please refer to 8.4 Appendix D – Overview of Respondents for details.

4.1 BARRIERS

4.1.1 General barrier related findings

Several of the respondents mentioned the “typical Swedish” way of often thinking/saying “*No way I can do that*” [*translated from Swedish*] (Respondent #5, 2014), “*I don’t know how to do that*” (Respondent #8, 2014) i.e. questioning one’s ability and portraying a lack of self-confidence. Respondent #1 (2014) connected it to the Swedish concept of “The law of Jante”, i.e. you are not to think that you are something special (Jantelagen, 2014).

Another respondent had experienced no barriers at all in her early carrier even though she was working as one of very few women in her field. She believed that it could partly be due to working for a very large and international company where she worked with over 40 nationalities, and where mutual respect for everyone – regardless of age, gender or background, was the company culture – she only started to encounter (gender) barriers when she was older (>40 years) and joined a company with a “old boys club” culture.

One respondent mentioned that business and sports have a lot in common and since men generally do sports from a young age, they automatically learn about perseverance, team work, and working through the pain whereas this is something girls miss out on which can have an affect later on in their careers

Some of the respondents felt that there is too much focus on gender barriers in society and because this added focus, the barriers become an issue, “*You end up building barriers that really do not exist*” as Respondent #7 (2014) said. “*Don’t think about barriers, just do it*” was the advice from Respondent #9, (2014).

4.1.2 Internal barriers

Several women mentioned internal barriers as a much bigger problem than external barriers. According to our respondents you can “work around” external barriers by not giving them too much attention, especially as they easily become “energy thieves” if you encourage them, whereas internal barriers are much harder to overcome. One of the women said she has been an “expert” at setting up internal barrier for herself by questioning her competence and wished she had had more confidence to step outside her comfort zone; another respondent expressed that when she got head-hunted for

different jobs, she had overcome the fear [of failure] with the strategy of thinking that another person had found her competent enough to handle the position she was asked to fill. Others spoke about that you [as a woman] are harder on yourself [than men]; “*You are trying to 'have it all', and that doesn't work.*” (Respondent #6, 2014). There is no such thing as “work-life” balance; an example one of the respondents gave was that many women in higher positions consciously chose not to have children. Another respondent stated that she didn't know anyone – male or female – on her level that had a spouse that also worked (which this specific respondent has).

The respondents who were considering, or had been offered, to move up to VP or C-level were debating what they would have to sacrifice on a personal/family/leisure level, in order to meet the added expectations, and were pondering if it was worth it. As Respondent #6 (2014) stated “*In my opinion – regardless of what Sheryl Sandberg says – if you reach the higher levels, there is no balance*” noting that if you are at a C-level position you will get the calls anytime – and an “I will call you back later” excuse is not acceptable. Another respondent remarked that she believed that looking at the *whole picture* was a typical “female trait” – in her case she didn't just have to ponder a new position, but *also* try to figure out all the logistics (cleaners, nannies, chefs etc.) that would be necessary if she were to accept a higher position.

We also observed this holistic view from another respondent who had decided to not accept a management position because she knew she was leaving the country in six months – instead of prioritizing herself and her career she put the company and the employees she knew she would leave behind first. That these are *personal* internal barriers can be justified by the fact that another respondent had no problems leaving a position after just a couple of months when another “better” opportunity presented itself.

A common response to how to get around internal barriers was to be more brave – “*Take the leap; don't put up your own (internal) barriers that say 'I cannot do this, I cannot be this, I don't know this'*” [translated from Swedish] (Respondent #5, 2014) but also to remove some of the pressure and realise that “*Everything does not have to be fabulous all the time. Everyone is so occupied with their own things so no one cares if a small little mistake happens - learn from it and see the possibilities.*” (Respondent #7, 2014).

One of the respondents reflected over that you as a woman might feel the urge to “jump” because you get head hunted into a great position, but that it sometimes doesn't work out: she advised that you should think and make a *conscious* decision about a new position and not just “jump” because it would advance your career. It is worth taking some time to make sure that you accept a position in a corporate environment that suits *your* traits, and *your* leadership style – and if it doesn't fit the [corporate] model and job description, think twice about taking the position.

4.1.3 Gender and cultural barriers

Nine of the eleven interviewed women had in one way or another experienced some kind of gender based stereotyping and the majority had faced barriers relating solely to the fact that they are women.

Some of the respondents identified the fear of failure as a central barrier especially early in their careers and one respondent classified it as a “typical barrier for a woman”. One respondent also

spoke about the fear of being perceived as “stupid”, while men tend to be pushier and more risk-taking: “*Women – in general – doubt their abilities much more than men do. We are afraid to seem “stupid” and/or say something that seems stupid. Men can speak of something that they actually don’t know anything about and make it sound like they know it”* [translated from Swedish] (Respondent #5, 2014). Another respondent ended up as the “scape goat” for some of the projects she had worked in, even though she wasn’t the one at fault, and the men “*got away without any consequences even if they were the ones that screwed things up*” (Respondent #11, 2014). This influenced her further career as she became more risk-averse and conscious about how she needed to act. Overall, she felt that she has been forced to work harder than everyone else to prove that she was as good as her male colleagues: “*I think they feel uncomfortable because I am more knowledgeable, and it is easier to pick on me because I am a woman*” (Ibid, 2014). Similar experiences were shared by other respondents who had felt they needed to work harder than their [male] counterparts. Another respondent said that by being a woman you are in the spotlight, and you need to be self-confident and prepared to be more scrutinised than your [male] colleagues.

A majority of the respondents had faced stereotypical attitudes; one respondent had several times faced the stereotypical attitude that, since she was a woman, she couldn’t possess any high-level expertise in a very technical field, and thus her ideas and suggestions were not taken seriously (or not noted at all). Another respondent spoke about the frustration she felt at meetings where her ideas seemed to fall flat, just to be picked up moments later by a male person attending the meeting, pitching the idea as his, and getting positive response from the group. She has since learned to “reclaim” her idea by immediately stating: “*I am delighted that you also liked my idea...*” (Respondent #10, 2014). A similar type of gender stereotyping was confirmed by a respondent whose presence in meetings was queried by especially older men. It was only after she had proven her competence and explained that “*yes, in my role as design manager*” [translated from Swedish] she *should* be in the meeting (Respondent #4, 2014).

One respondent felt that her time was valued less than her male colleagues’ at the same (executive) level; in meetings she found herself always being the one taking notes with the general understanding that she would have more time to compile the minutes and distribute to the rest of the group. She found herself having to explain to her manager that she was just as busy as her male counterparts in the group and that the minute taking should be split between everyone in the group. The same respondent also found herself getting paid much less than her [male] counterparts, and it took some stern salary negotiations with her boss to reach the same salary level. Her advice to other women in the same situation: “*Expect nothing less than what the guys are getting!!*” (Respondent #1, 2014).

Most of the respondents have experienced double-binds especially in regards to communication and have received the feedback that they needed to be more “female” in their communication. They were perceived to be (too) “manly” since they are able to make tough decisions and communicate in a very clear and direct way. Some of the received feedback was “*don’t be too strong in your position, you need to get others with you*” (Respondent #9, 2014). Another respondent mentioned that she has been told to “soften her language” and be more female in her approach. One respondent had been told that she is too harsh, and that she should show more emotions, “be more female”, and that she is too focused on business and instead needs to show more female qualities. Others had been told that “*It is OK to*

share [the bad news] with X, she will take it as a man" (Respondent #7, 2014), implying that the news couldn't be shared with other [women] since they could be acting emotional when hearing the news.

One of the respondents said that it is difficult to determine if some comments and/or treatments are made because she is woman or if it just different *personalities* clashing. However, an immediate difference she has noted is how acceptable it is to comment on a woman's look and clothes whereas the same comments, good or bad, would never be directed to a man.

Several of the respondents also mentioned that they are very aware of how they dress at work. One said that she would never wear a dress and heels if she is having a meeting with her boss as focus would immediately shift to what she is wearing instead of the topic of the meeting. She finds herself being more "gender neutral" at work.

To avoid stereotyping, one of the respondents said that as a woman in a professional business environment she is *never* the first one to ask how the wife and kids are doing as her male colleagues will then immediately identify her as a women/wife/mother and not an equal. In an executive meeting this respondent makes sure to always position her as the leader and person in charge before any of the men do. Another respondent stated that she will never use personal (e.g. children related "duties") as an excuse since it is a private matter. If she cannot attend a meeting because she needs to take her child to the dentist, she will simply state that she has a prior commitment that cannot be changed – it is not necessary to make the follow up statement "*...because I need to take my son to the dentist.*" [*translated from Swedish*] (Respondent #10, 2014).

One of the women mentioned the "working Mom" barrier that she had encountered in the US; when she was working "like crazy" to finish something up, she was cornered by (older) men stating "*Well, you should be home taking care of your family, and you are here working...?*" and she further noted "*Would they have said that if I had been a guy? No, they would have cheered me on, saying something like "Awesome, work harder. Perfect. We'll give you a promotion."*" (Respondent #6, 2014). She felt that others in the organisation already had made the career decision *for* her and that she couldn't move up the corporate ladder.

One of the respondents who have worked in several countries finds that female managers in higher positions generally are unfriendly but for her it is not worth showing the same attitude to get in to the "old boys club". This was confirmed by another respondent that is currently struggling with the decision if she wants to change her personality as she has come to realise that she probably needs to change in order to get included in the "old boys club". Another woman spoke about the existence of "she-devils"³ higher up in the organisation – and how she didn't want to change into "*one of the very few she-devils that are at higher levels I my company – I want to be able to look myself in the mirror every morning*" [*translated from Swedish*] (Respondent #5, 2014). Another respondent spoke about how *no* support exists among women who have made it to senior levels and how it is more about backstabbing and unfriendliness than cooperation and helping each other to better positions, quite the opposite of how she sees men and their interactions in the "old boys club" where everyone seem to back up and help each other to better positions.

³ Authors remark: translated from the Swedish word "ragator"

A reoccurring comment from several respondents was that the higher up you come in an organisation, the more male dominant it gets. The reasons for this, according to one respondent, is that men are more comfortable with working together with other men, as they consciously or subconsciously prefer to work with men at the same age, with the same background etc. Another respondent stated “*In general men are uncomfortable to work with women [in the US]; they are not used to professional women [at a certain level], they are used to house wives*” (Respondent #7, 2014).

Several respondents expressed that they believed they had to work harder than their male counterparts; one respondent felt that she had to work much harder to prove herself to get into the vice-president (VP) group and one of the reasons for this was that there was a general feeling that the balance in the group, which was made up of men only, would shift – just by being a woman she would create “disturbance”⁴. Another respondent had a similar experience, where her [male] co-workers had a hard time working with “*emotional females*” – meaning that women are more prone to show their emotions, and maybe even cry if there is a hard decision to be made.

A couple of respondents mentioned language as an obstacle and that it is difficult to express oneself precise when you are fluent but not native in a language. Another respondent mentioned that the obstacles she experienced in the beginning were more related to being new to a country and having to figure out a lot of everyday things on her own.

Another culture barrier is simply the differences in business/work cultures between countries. This especially relates to differences between Sweden, Germany, and Hungary, and less in the US.

By not having a degree or any work experience from a university or a company known outside of Sweden, one women found it very hard to get into the job market – it is much easier for a recruiter/human resource department to pick someone from a [for them] known university – you have to have something very special in order to catch their attention. She therefore very much stressed the importance of networks, especially for foreigners.

One respondent said that having a Swedish boss, and she herself being Swedish, was seen by others like she was given “privileges” because she was Swedish (but she also thought perhaps being a woman could have played a role as well – it is hard to distinguish between the causes).

4.1.4 Networks and the “old boys club”

One of the women is a member of networks but *actual* networking is down prioritized due to lack of time. She does acknowledge that after nine years at the same company she could absolutely benefit from interacting with others to see things from a new perspective. However, between working full time, running a household, and taking care of two kids something has to take the back seat. This respondent finds that men carve out time for themselves but the important point she made is that women *enable* them. Another of the respondents also acknowledged that it would be useful to network in order to exchange thoughts and ideas but she is not a member of any networks. She used to be earlier in her career but she felt too “green” and not “professional” enough to market herself in

⁴ Authors remark: translated from the Swedish word “oreda”

a network. She would however enjoy being a member of a network of women who is in the same or similar function/role that she is.

Another respondent managed to get a job through the connections she formed while “*networking, networking, networking*” (Respondent #2, 2014) in the new country she and her husband relocated to. The importance of networking is supported by Respondent #10 (2014) who said “*It’s very important with a network – and to make sure you keep it up. It is so fruitful to get input from others when it comes to exchange of ideas and thoughts.*” [translated from Swedish]

Several respondents mentioned that “men recruit men” and one respondent noted that in a job interview two men step into a “buddy-buddy” relationship whereas if a woman is interviewed there is a strict interviewer-interviewee relationship.

Another respondent had found that the initial “old boys club” gradually let her in once they understood that she was competent and knew what she was doing, but not all of them – some would still be “narrow-minded”⁵ – which another respondent confirmed by noting that there will always be “idiots” who you just can’t waste your energy on.

The “old boys club” has according to one respondent a strong presence in Germany and the US. Many of these men have worked together for several years and have followed each other as a tight click on assignments around the world. The respondent reflected, “*How are we supposed to get into that click?*” [translated from Swedish] (Respondent #5, 2014). The same respondent also made the observation that many men in “the club” are not even that competent but still get the high-level positions based on their connections. Even though there are female networks, these are more “social”, whereas the “old boys club” also supports its member on a professional level.

The “old boys club” still seems very present in almost all respondents’ working life – and the higher up you get in the hierarchy, the more prevalent it is. One respondent stated that “the old boys” become buddy-buddy’s in their twenties, and they stick together and have each other’s back.”

Another respondent stated that she wasn’t really sure if “women networks” were such a good idea since you turn the focus to the *gender* instead of focusing on helping each other with professional accomplishments. Another respondents stated that she always wants to be judged by her competence and not by her gender “*I don’t want to be part of a ‘club’ that will give me a good position because I am in the club, I want to get it because of my competence*” [translated from Swedish] (Respondent #5, 2014).

4.2 ADVANTAGES EXPERIENCED BY BEING A FOREIGNER AND A WOMAN

All of the interviewed women had (consciously) used the “cultural card” of not being native to the culture/society/country they were currently working in; it gave them lee-way and the ability to stretch boundaries and/or overcome barriers due to gender, leadership, communication style etc. One respondent acknowledged that she can “do things unorthodox” in terms of communication and get away with being more direct and straight forward simply because “she is not from here”. A couple of

⁵ Authors remark: our translation from the Swedish word “insnöade”

the women had also used their culture as an “ice-breaker” – Sweden is perceived to be an exotic country, with a favourable reputation abroad, which sparks interest. Another spoke of Swedish traditions such as “Fredags-fika” that she has brought along to each country she has worked in, and how it – after some initial inertia in some places – picks up speed and becomes the social/professional networking event that she finds very fruitful.

The advantage of “not being from here” works well when you are on the lower- to mid-levels in a company; on higher levels (e.g. C-suite) you are expected to conform to the norm, and “know and play by the rules”.

One respondent had not thought about any barriers and thought it had (only) been a positive experience to be a foreigner and a woman – you stand out in a crowd. But she also stated that she has very high expectations on herself, and had worked a lot to adapt herself to the new society, learned the new language etc. She also made sure that she gained trust within the organisation and delivers everything she promises; this was mentioned by a few other of the respondents as well, as a way of getting an old [male-dominated] organisation to accept female leaders.

Another benefit is the feeling of being able to do more, one respondent mentioned. By moving to a new country she learned to try harder, to push herself and to overcome fears. If she had been asked five years ago, before her move, if she wanted to become a director she would have been scared and not ready. Her move helped her to overcome her internal barriers.

Another respondent used the term “soft tank” as in an armoured military vehicle to describe herself and how she navigates through any obstacles; interesting to note is that this is done both consciously and subconsciously – she realised, when a male colleague pointed it out to her, that she uses her femininity (e.g. softer language/communication, “asks nicely”) to get things done and/or when she wants a decision to be made.

A few of the respondents have extensively used their Swedish network such as other Swedes, former Swedish colleagues, SWEA etc. to get jobs. One respondent said that being a Swede has proven benefits as it has helped her to find two jobs in her “new” country through her “Chalmers”⁶ network. Both jobs were given to her by Swedish (men) that also had graduated from Chalmers. at the same time she noted that this had been seen by others as her being given “privileges” because she was Swedish (and perhaps a woman?) but for her it had been the opposite – the men who hired her assumed she would work harder.

All of the respondents acknowledged that they had experienced advantages of being a woman and therefore automatically “stood out in a crowd”. If they decided to embrace their femininity and stand out in a crowd by being the “red jacket among all dark suits” they were very aware of making sure that there is always a high level of professionalism in their dress code – never too much cleavage, jewellery, make up, too high heels etc. Respondent #9 (2014) stated, “*Use your femininity to stand out, but don't try to be a guy, embrace your femininity, and take advantage of the attention your get from it*”.

⁶ “Chalmers” refers to Chalmers University of Technology, Sweden

Two respondents also stated that they believed it had been an advantage being a woman [in the US/"San Francisco Bay Area"⁷] since many companies are actively searching for diversity to get another perspective, and pro-actively are searching for women to join their management team.

One respondent said that she sometimes plays the "feminine card" but "*we all play our cards to get things done.*" [translated from Swedish] (Respondent #3, 2014). A few respondents remarked that it is an advantage to be a female as they are considered as "different" in the male-dominated industries they work in. It can also be an advantage as male managers do not feel threatened or intimidated by a woman, and even less so if you are of another nationality as one respondent described it. Another respondent said that nobody could resist a smile and a "thank-you" from a woman, and that a smile can open many doors. Quite frequently she also used a "can-you-help-me" tactics – as a young, female manager she could ask for help from an older male "expert" subordinate and make him feel important – she could (of course) had figured it out herself as well, but in this way she was perceived as less of a threat and could also empower the man by "helping" her – asking for help can open many doors.

But once you reach the highest level with "Chief" in the three letter acronyms (i.e. C-level) it becomes harder to play the cultural or female card; then you have to conform to the norm – i.e. the "old boys club".

4.3 LEADERSHIP

Many of the respondents mapped to a typical transactional leadership style; they talked about getting the team on-board, being a coach, make sure to take time to listen and "feel" out their co-workers, have an open-door policy, always backing up their teams, and give credit to the one who has done the work etc. A majority of the respondents spoke about wanting to get to know the people in their team/that they managed "on a personal level" – justifying it by that the team members will be more invested in their work/co-workers and be willing to "walk the extra mile" when necessary. One respondent spoke about the value she sees in spending a lot of time getting each employee to understand why the work they do is important and how they fit into the bigger picture "*I want them to understand what they need to do, don't tell them what to do (or do their job)*" (Respondent #6, 2014). The women often praise the team they manage, and are fast to credit the team for any success, and speak about the importance of letting the team take ownership. As one respondent stated "*I don't need the recognition, I know my value already*" [translated from Swedish] (Respondent #10, 2014) and instead insists bringing in the people that have done the work into the meetings, allowing the team member that had done something good to shine, and letting that individual to get credited for it. A few of the respondents brought up that as a manager it is important to learn how to delegate, otherwise you are not free to do the things you need to do to grow [as a leader]. As Respondent #10 (2014) said "*Try to find the balance between delegating and doing it yourself – I am still working on that!*" [translated from Swedish]

⁷ For a definition of the San Francisco Bay Area, please refer to http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/San_Francisco_Bay_Area

One of the respondents identified herself as a “natural problem solver”. She has however realised that she must let others be the “doers” as her team is not challenged and allowed to grow if she always comes up with the solutions. As a comparison she said that a male manager generally would just be interested in fixing the problem and not so much in letting the team grow. Male leaders are also sometimes “*blissfully unaware about EQ*” (Respondent #1, 2014).

Many of the women noted that the Swedish leadership style is very different from the leadership styles in both US and Germany, and they have had to think about how they communicate with their teams: a lot of time when they were trying to solicit feedback on an idea, it was taken as an order to execute the idea, because “the Boss has spoken”. As one of the women said: “*I have found that people believe that I make decisions while I just wanted to test an idea/discuss*” [translated from Swedish] (Respondent #10, 2014) which was confirmed by Respondent #6 (2014) that said “*They are used to the Boss telling you what to do*” noting that she had to change her (Swedish) leadership style to better fit in to her new culture, by being even more clear about communicating expectations of her team.

One of the women currently working in Germany said that Swedish managers are appreciated and respected in Germany even though her leadership style is different compared what is the norm in Germany. This was confirmed by another respondent that stated that Swedish managers are very popular in Europe due to their [non-hierarchical] thinking and leadership style.

4.4 COMMUNICATION

A majority of the respondents stated that they are very “straight communicators”, and some of them also stated that they had been approached by colleagues who told them that others found them “intimidating”. One respondent reflected over this by stating that she probably exudes more authority than she thinks she does by communicating in a very direct way while also being very feminine, kind, petite, and dress like a woman, which might clash with the perception of how she “should” talk.

Many respondents said that they had received the comment that “they do not know how to treat you and they are a little afraid of you” stating that on the one hand they are perceived to be very feminine (e.g. dressing female, wearing high heels etc.), but on the other hand they are perceived to have very “male” attributes – e.g. being a very technical engineer that can talk technical lingo – as one Respondent reflected over her colleagues confusion over this “*How can you be both?*” (Respondent #11, 2014). A couple of women said that women that were higher up in the organisation seemed to act/become more manly – being “hard and tough” - and that they didn’t want to follow in those footsteps of having to become one of those “she-devils”.

Quite a few of the respondent stated that they have very “girly/womanly” features and appearance, and a majority stated that they are “manly” communicators with clear and concise communication, and many do not shy away from conflicts.

All of the respondents were very “non-hierarchical” in their attitude towards their organisations, e.g. they were not impressed by a [hierarchical] position, but of a person’s knowledge, and also didn’t think about “losing face or prestige” and thus do not have a problem going to a lower ranked person and ask for answer to questions, advice, etc., and as one respondent noted “*A 50+ [US] male cannot do*

this” [translated from Swedish] (Respondent #10, 2014). The respondents also spoke of straight communication and speaking their mind no different in front of the CEO vs. a manager vs. a secretary – as one respondent said “*my CEO told me that he could always trust in ‘getting the (outspoken) truth’ from me*” [translated from Swedish] (Respondent #2, 2014). This behaviour of being outspoken was noted to be something “typical Swedish” by many of the respondents, and could be perceived as either a barrier or an advantage depending on the company culture and/or situation.

5 ANALYSIS

In this chapter the empirical findings are analysed and discussed in terms of how they relate to the theories presented in Chapter 2 and how they connect to the original research question:

How do successful female managers overcome attitudinal and cultural barriers in a foreign country? What strategies have they used?

5.1 GETTING THROUGH THE “LABYRINTH”

5.1.1 Gender and stereotyping

During our interviews we found that 82% of the women in one way or another had experienced some sort of gender based stereotyping during their career. However, when asked the direct question “Thinking about your career in [foreign and/or home country] country, have you encountered any barriers due to gender or culture in your career?” the initial response was most times “No, not really” but then moving on to describe an incident which indicated gender stereotyping but it was described as the most natural thing in the world i.e. they would not see that it (the incident) could be classified as stereotyping (for instance, being asked to be more “feminine and not so tough”, or being blocked out from the “old boys club” etc.), which indicates that they don’t reflect over the “second-generation form of gender bias” (Ibarra, Ely & Kolb, 2013) that obviously exists. It was interesting to note that one respondent realised – when she reflected on an answer she gave - that she *herself* had reinforced the traditional gender role [of being the note-taker in VP-meetings] without even thinking about it; it almost becomes “natural” to get into a certain role. She further said it had been a conscious decision of breaking out of the pattern from her side (i.e. asking to share the responsibility of taking notes) - “*Until you have awareness, you can’t change*” (Hyams, cited in DuBrin, 2010, p.381).

A strategy used to overcome gender stereotyping mentioned independently by respondents is to act more “gender neutral” at work. This strategy can take the shape of dressing in a specific way not to take focus from the issues discussed, for instance *not* wearing a dress and heels to meetings, or maintaining a strict business focus and not ask about traditionally “softer”, more “female” topics such as “how is the family” in order to avoid be identified by her gender as a “woman” or a “mother” and not a business executive. By not drawing attention to the gender stereotypical characteristics, traits or beliefs as described by Correll (2004) they can to some extent avoid basic stereotyping. However, at the same time it is clear that the interviewed women are not prepared to hide their femininity and turn into men. Several of them said that even if they have to wear that black business suit they will wear it with a red or pink shirt and not the expected corporate white. It seems it exist a sense of rebelliousness which ties in with the “feistiness” of Swedish women working in a foreign country that one of the women mentioned. The women all understand that they have to conform to the corporate dress code, often based on a male dress code, but that does not mean they want to give up their individuality and femininity along the way.

The above is a perfect example of the double binds women face while navigating through the labyrinth. If a woman portrays too many feminine traits she is considered as soft, weak, and incompetent. However, if she instead behaves more “manly” she risks being seen as a threat, unfeminine, and even a “bitch” or a “she-devil”. Women who perform well in predominantly male environments or areas are often seen as competent but not that likable if they portray assertiveness and self-confidence as this is often interpreted as arrogance (Ely, Ibarra & Kolb, 2013). Oakley (2000) says that the double binds only serve the purpose of taking focus away from the real work at hand as they “serve to provoke needless self-monitoring and self-consciousness” (2000, p.325), and act as “energy drainers” if women take the double binds too seriously. This thinking is supported by the interviewed women who spoke about certain barriers as “energy thieves” and simply said “don’t focus on the barriers because then you will see them”.

Another strategy quite frequently applied by the respondents were to show that they are knowledgeable and demonstrating their expertise; one respondent pointed to the fact that she had to work hard to gain trust and used her knowledge and expertise, e.g. “*When I had this role in Europe, an action like you are suggesting now will be seen as this*” [translated from Swedish] (Respondent #10, 2014) – i.e. she used her own experience as an example that gave her an edge – an expert opinion and knowledge that none other had. Another respondent confirmed this strategy in another way: she mentioned as an example that she had to explain to her boss (and co-workers) that her time was worth just as much as her male colleagues’ with the same title. These two examples are consistent with the study by Fernando (2012), where women, in order to be taken more serious and capable, used explaining a situation through in-depth and detailed descriptions and justifying their arguments by referencing to logical and credible evidence, or energetically demonstrating their skill and expertise, as strategies to overcome barriers. This also is consistent with that female managers have to try harder than their male colleagues in order to succeed (Westwood & Leung, 1994).

Many of the respondents discussed the internal, or person centred biases (Simpson et al., 2004) they experienced and how they used skills development, such as leadership training to gain more confidence in themselves – as well as being able to (personally) allow things to be a little less than perfect.

A recurring issue among the respondents with families is the “work-life balance” (Subramaniam et al., 2014), and one strategy around this was to delegate more to a spouse/partner – and be OK with them doing it “their own way” – and also acknowledge (and be OK with) that it wouldn’t be “as perfect” as if the respondent had done it herself, but it gave her the ability to work/travel more.

5.1.2 National culture

In their study from 2006, Janssens et al. found that some women use their cultural background as a tool to shift focus from the fact that they do not act/ behave as per the male “norm” or the “typical” stereotypical gender behaviour. This theory is somewhat aligned with findings from our interviews. One woman described her Swedish peers as being more “feisty” when moving abroad i.e. exuding more confidence and being more independent and simply saying “Swedish women do X, that’s just who we are” i.e. “I will not confirm to any local gender stereotypes, because I am not local, I am not

from here” – in a sense the interviewed women allowed themselves this "different" behaviour(s) – they were themselves able to confront and break through the stereotypical (company) culture and “get away with it” – something that they acknowledged they would never had done if they still had been in their “home country”. Interesting to note is that the respondents were aware that certain things they used as excuses were not at all true (e.g. “*All Swedes are feisty and outspoken*”) - but they consciously used the cultural aspect in order to get around another barrier that faced them.

All but two of the interviewed women acknowledged that they had used their cultural background consciously in order to push through a "non-standard" in their social/cultural work environment – such as an leadership style that solicited feedback-brain storming and discussion as opposed to "the boss has spoken – go ahead and execute" style that prevails especially in the US. Also interesting to note is that the company/co-workers seemed to be accepting of this "shift" from the non-standard stereotypical behaviour with the "cultural excuse" – somewhat *less* apparent in companies with a lot of global employees, where the stereotypical norm already seems to have shifted due to the many nationalities (e.g. Silicon Valley), but still apparent that you are allowed to be “the elephant in the China store”.

However, even though playing the cultural card might allow these women to “get away” with certain aspects they will eventually reach a level where everyone has to “conform” to the norm. It is usually at this point women fall away as the norm for a leader in a higher position equals a man (Hirdman, 1988; Ridgeway & Correll, 2004), As Oakley (2000) stated in her article, if more women are “allowed” to join the “old boys club” the status quo i.e. the norm is threatened. This is clearly illustrated by the respondent who said that she has to work harder to reach the VP level and that there is a sense, or perhaps more, a *fear* that her presence (or any other female presence) on that level will disturb the balance. Another respondent confirmed this by saying that she had to change [her behaviour] in order to get into the highest level, she was sure she wouldn’t be offered a position at that level if she didn’t conform to the norm.

5.1.3 Networks and the “old boys club”

That the “old boys club” still is a current barrier even in the 21st century is evident. Several of the women interviewed spoke about the “buddy-buddy” relationship between men in senior top management. None of the interviewed women had gain access to the “old boy club” and one of them straight out asked “*How the heck do we get into the club?*” [*translated from Swedish*] (Respondent #5, 2014). The same women pointed out that the men in these clubs are in many instances not even that qualified or competent but they still get that high-level position because of their networks.

As mentioned in Chapter 2.4.1 several articles and studies have investigated the concept of the “old boy club” and how including women would change the status quo (Linehan & Scullion, 2000; Evans, 2010; Ibarra, Ely & Kolb, 2013). Oakley (2000) takes the reasoning even further and says that there is a specific aspect that processes the biggest threat to the members of the “old boy club” and that is money. Since females on all levels in the corporate world generally are paid less than their male counterparts more women in top senior position and in the “old boy club” could potentially become a threat to the over-inflated salaries and other perks offered to a selected number of men at the top.

In order to overcome this barrier, most of the women that are considering high level positions are struggling with what they perceive is a need to change [their behaviour] and conform to the [male] norm of behaviour in order to be considered for a higher level position, just as gender theory states (Hirdman, 1988; Ridgeway, 2001; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Ridgeway & Correll, 2004). One anomaly must be mentioned – that might show some indication of progress towards the [male] norm changing – one respondent had the opposite experience – in her view it had only been an advantage being a woman, even though “old boys club” existed in the company; other factors probably have to be weighed in such as tenure, location of the company, the age of the company, and the overall social structure where the company is headquartered.

Some women spoke about the importance of identifying gatekeepers and key persons, and make sure they notice you – either by interactions in a meeting or at a later stage - and not to waste time and energy on the ones that will not bring you forward. Another respondent said “*Think smart*” [*translated from Swedish*] (Respondent #4, 2014) when it comes to your career, and she had consciously identified people that she approached and asked if they could mentor her. These examples points to behaviours similar to the *manipulation* strategy identified by Fernando (2012), where women in their early careers made sure to integrate with certain “gatekeepers” so when they later applied for a management position they could not be “over-looked”.

Some of the other respondents had come to the insight that the company they worked for would *never* consider females at the top levels – regardless of their competence – the norm is male, and had no other choice than to accept this as a fact, using an *accepting* strategy to overcome the barrier (Fernando, 2012). Noteworthy is that the respondents realised this and took action by changing jobs (and companies) – thus causing the “old-boys-club” company to lose a great asset.

5.2 WHY WOMEN STILL DO NOT REACH THE C-SUITE

5.2.1 Internal barriers

From our interviews we found that one of the biggest obstacles for women while navigating the labyrinth does not seem to be the attitudinal and cultural barriers discussed in Chapter 2 but rather internal barriers created within the women themselves, i.e. more related to the *person* centred barriers such as choosing to prioritize work-life balance or the decision of having a family (Simpson et al., 2004; Subramaniam et al., 2014).

These internal barriers might go as far back as how we are labelled as infants (Condry & Condry, 1976 cited in Plan et al., 2000) as well as being a result of traditional gender roles and gender stereotyping that has been around for generations. As long as male is the norm in management and leadership (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Paris & Decker, 2012; Berkery, Morley & Tiernan, 2013) it will be important to acknowledge that women need to gain trust and confidence in *themselves* – be comfortable in their “skin” both as persons and as leaders, and not set up higher expectations for themselves and their performance than they need to. One respondent said that everyone she knows – male and females – makes (professional) mistakes, but as a woman you worry more over the typo in a power point than a man would do - and she would like to take away the small voices [in her head]

that tells women that everything has to be perfect all the time – “*We [women] have this internal “need” to be competent and good in everything we do*” (Respondent #7, 2014). However, it is difficult to do since women have to fight against the status beliefs that there is an expectation of performance for the women (since male is the norm) and anything you do that is outside this norm is seen as “less good”, thus devaluing women’s performance (Ridgeway, 2001).

Respondent #7 (2014) continued “*If a woman don’t fulfil 10 out of 10 criteria for a job, she will not apply for it, while a man thinks he is a perfect match at 5/10*”, confirming the double standard for assessing competence based on cultural beliefs and stereotypes about gender where men tend to overestimate their ability at a task and women underestimate their ability (Corell, 2004).

The internal barriers are difficult to fight for women in their early careers. With age and more experience, both personal and professional, the respondents in our research who had put up internal barriers had come to realise that if you want to get some where you must stop focusing on the internal barriers – as Respondent #10 (2014) stated “*It is OK that you are not being best on things – and it is important to figure out what you thrive at (and is not so good at)*” [translated from Swedish]. She further reflected over the fact that you should be comfortable with the decision to *not* advance your career as well – nothing states that it is a *must* to do a career, and it is easy to slip in to a path of “Now you are at a Directors level, and now you need to do x, y and z to further your career” – without even reflecting on what *you* would like to do, and what you are really good at? You might be better as an independent consultant instead of a line manager with people reporting to you?

However, a statement as the one made by respondent #10 above can be viewed from two angles. It can simply be, as in the case of our respondent, a statement that acknowledges that a career within senior management is not for everyone. However, it is also possible to draw parallels to Fernando’s (2012) research into strategies Sir Lankan professional women implement to overcome barriers and especially the strategies “accepting” and “avoiding” which women sometimes use to shield themselves from the repercussions of gender stereotyping i.e. it is safer to say that “I am not interested in a career, or senior position” to avoid the disappointment when for instance male colleagues with less experience gets promoted.

5.2.2 Leadership and communication

When asked to describe their leadership style the respondents used words as “personal”, “team-oriented”, “interaction/dialogue”, “open door policy”, “want to have people participate and feel that they contribute their ideas”, “listen”, “emphatic”– all which clearly points to a transformational leadership style that several studies have shown that women are more prone to (Rosener, 1990; Bass & Aviole, 1994; Eagly & Carli, 2007). The respondents also showed evident signs of “interactive leadership” (Rosener, 1990) as they actively encourage participation from their teams, and talk about the importance of trusting in the team and praising them. The majority of our respondents identifying their leadership style as “very typical Swedish” - non-hierarchical, having an open door policy, and actively soliciting feedback from peers and their team-members – indicating that national culture has a large impact on their leadership style (Hofstede & Minkov, 2011; 2012)

In 1994 Westwood and Leung found in their research that female managers have to try harder than their male colleagues and also adapt to the “male norm” in order to succeed. 20 years later, a majority of the women in our research described how they, to some extent, found themselves in the same situation if they want to reach the absolute highest levels (“C-suite”) and they are cornered into the decision that *if* they want to make it to the C-suite, they need to change in order to conform to the (male) norm.

Thus, even though the transformational leadership style many of our respondents portray is somewhat seen as a preferred leadership style, your *gender* (i.e. being a man) and not *how* you lead is still the norm for selecting a top senior level manager, indicating that the gender system (Hirdman, 1988; Ridgeway and Corell, 2004) with its “male as the norm”, where men have the “power and authority” while women always have the inferior/subordinated role, still prevails at the higher levels.

As described previously, many of the respondents have received the feedback that their communication style is typical agentic – strong, forceful, dominant, and somewhat individualistic, and not as “inclusive” as expected of female managers (Eagly & Carli, 2007). This is a school book example of a double bind. Women are often considered to be “weak” and lack confident due to the way they communicate but when they adopt a more manly way of communicating they are considered to be too aggressive – a typical “lose-lose” situation (Oakley, 2000). Most of the respondents managed to get around this double bind by using their (foreign) culture, and could in a sense justify their communication style by playing the cultural card and simply state “It is a typical [Swedish] thing to say it this way”.

5.3 STRATEGIES APPLIED

One thing we realised during the interviews is that none of the respondents had utilized one *single* strategy while advancing their careers, but rather *many* depending on the situation. If we summarise the different barriers that our eleven respondents have encountered, and the strategies they have applied throughout their careers and map it to the strategies that Fernando found in her research from 2012, the ones identified by Janssens et al. (2006), as well as add some new ones we identified through our interviews, we get the following table:

	Barriers					Strategies									
	Double Binds	Gender Stereotyping	Gender Discrimination	Lack/Blocked out of networks	Cultural/Nationality	Internal barriers	Demonstrating expertise	Manipulation	Accepting	Avoiding	Adopting an anti-woman approach	Performing masculinity	Explaining	Playing the female card	Playing the cultural card
Respondent 1	x	x	x			x	x	x				x	x	x	x
Respondent 2					x		x							x	x
Respondent 3	x	x	x				x							x	x
Respondent 4	x	x					x	x				x		(x)	
Respondent 5		x		x		x	x							x	x
Respondent 6	x	x	x	x			x		x			x			x
Respondent 7		x	x	x	x	x	x					x			x
Respondent 8						x	x								
Respondent 9	x	x		x	x		x	x						x	x
Respondent 10	x	x					x	x						x	x
Respondent 11	x	x	x	x			x		x					x	x

Table 5.1 Final Data Analysis Sheet. (Source: own)

As can be seen, a majority (73%) of the respondents have, either consciously or subconsciously (the latter marked with an “(x)” in Table 6.2), used the “female” card, but even more (82%) have also used the “cultural” card in order to avoid barriers that they have met during their careers; note that the “female card” that they used wasn’t, in any of the eight respondents’ cases, the strategy identified by Fernando (2012) i.e. to use female stereotyping to their advantage, but rather the one identified by Janssens et al. (2006) i.e. using their “softer, more female side” to become less threatening. In the case of using the “female” card it was mostly conscious, but in other cases more subtle, such as noticing (when asked the direct question if she had used her gender as an advantage) that they probably use their gender as a slight advantage by being able to stand out in the crowd, give an extra big smile, or as in one case where the respondent hadn’t been aware of that she used it until pointed out by a co-worker that she was using a more “*feminine side/language to get things done?*” [translated from Swedish] (Respondent #4, 2014). All of the respondents also acknowledged that being a woman [in a male-dominated company] had given them an advantage – as well as being some kind of a barrier according to all but one respondent. By actively using the fact they were women they could gain attention – as long as you were prepared to be scrutinised and handle to be in the limelight it could be

perceived as an advantage – at least on lower levels. This advantage seems to vanish on higher levels, where you have to conform to the [male] norm.

All of the respondents have experienced more advantages than barriers as a result of being a foreigner, e.g. the language, and the (unspoken) cultural rules within the company; they instead spoke of the advantages from simple things as using their background as an "ice-breaker" to getting more leeway and acceptance for doing things "un-orthodox", e.g. "this-is-the-way-we-do-it-back-home".

In either way these actions show that our empirical findings confirm the results from the study performed by Janssens et al (2006), i.e. that you actively can use your cultural background as a tool to shift focus from the fact that you do not act/ behave as per the male "norm". Interesting to note is that if the cultural card "fails" – i.e. if you really note that you crossed the "invisible boundary" a little too much, the respondents seem to revert back to playing the "female card", e.g. use their gender and smile a little extra and try to repair their mistake that way, and a lot of times it works.

A couple of the women had actively adopted the strategy of distancing themselves from "being" women to avoid typical gender stereotyping, e.g. consciously making sure to prioritize the company's interests over their own personal interests to come across as "less" female (Fernando, 2012), or "gender-neutral" as Respondent #3 (2014) said. None of the women responded to having "adopted an anti-woman approach" e.g. being less supportive of other women, and/or back-stabbing of others [females] albeit some mentioned that they had seen it in their companies, and that they do not wish to become those "she-devils", as one woman said "*I want to be able to look myself in the mirror every morning.*" [translated from Swedish] Respondent #5, 2014). However, the use of the strategy would be hard to determine, since most respondents would most probably not admit to portraying an unpleasant or unfriendly behaviour. For this we would have to extend our research to include co-workers and compare if there are differences in how the co-workers perceive the respondents, and how the respondents perceive themselves.

Many of our respondents spoke about their personal decisions as the "barrier" of not getting a higher-level job: with a higher level job there will be more demands – not only in a higher work-load but maybe also on an "always reachable" basis, and a lot of the women had made the [current] decision that they valued the time with their family higher than the demands on a senior level for the time being, i.e. it wasn't an external barrier per se that had stopped them, but rather an internal – and actively chosen – path. One respondent spoke about the change she felt she had to implement in her appearance in order to conform to the "old boys club" that prevailed in her company on the highest level (e.g. C-level), and she was questioning whether she would like to change in order to "fit in" so she could be offered one of these roles.

To conclude, the attitudinal barriers these [foreign] women face or have faced are not much different from the barriers women generally face in the corporate world. We believe that our findings somewhat confirm that women who take the step and move abroad to pursue a career often can take advantage of their cultural background, and actively use it as a strategy to overcome traditional gender/attitudinal barriers, especially in lower-middle management levels. We however see that as women are promoted to the highest levels (i.e. C-suites) the external forces to conform to the [male]

norm gets stronger, and the previous advantage of being a foreigner and “different” fades away and the traditional attitudinal/gender barriers gets in the way again. This coincides with the executive levels where the number of female executives also fades away – they get scarcer and scarcer the further up we get into the work force funnel, as presented in the initial problem discussion.

6 CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Our main purpose with this study has been to gain a better understanding of how senior female managers, working and living in a country that they were not born in, have navigated attitudinal and cultural barriers throughout their careers, by addressing the research question “*How do successful female managers overcome attitudinal and cultural barriers in a foreign country? What strategies have they used?*”

As our empirical findings and subsequent analysis shows, a majority of the eleven interviewed women have experienced a positive response to being from another culture, allowing them additional lee-way in both decision making and their leadership. They are “allowed” to make decisions that are considered to be non-stereotypical or non-norm “because-she-is-not-from-around-here”. They also use the same argument for their management/leadership styles – the majority of our respondents identifying their leadership style as “very typical Swedish with an open door policy, and soliciting feedback” and non-hierarchical – something that is not the norm in the countries they currently work in. Many also – very consciously – use the excuse “this-is-the-way-we-do-it-in-my-home-country” in order to justify the way they act as leaders as well as manage and overcome attitudinal (gender) barriers.

Most respondents also acknowledged that being a woman – in a male dominated environment such as higher management positions – differentiates them from the “crowd”, and it can be utilized as an advantage – providing that you want to stand in the spotlight, and can handle that the limelight might come with the negative aspects of being more scrutinised. However, the higher the women climb on the corporate ladder, the less advantage they have from being a foreigner and a woman, and the more they have to conform to the “norm” that in many places still is an “old boys club”.

A common thread among the interviewed women was that they *themselves* are their own worst enemies – they often create their own internal barriers that prevent them from advancing their careers because the “fear of failure” is in many instances hard to overcome. The double standard for assessing competence, where women tend to underestimate their competence, could feed this fear, making it a “self-sustaining system” of gender/stereotyping/overachieving. This “system” is hard to break out of unless you consciously are aware of it, and make an effort to trust yourself, knowing what you are capable of and making sure *you* give your own efforts the respect they deserve. As Respondent #1 (2014) summarises it: “*Own it. Be proud of it. Get the respect you deserve.*”

What we found interesting is that the interviewed women in many instances have made conscious decisions to turn some of the possible “barriers” into advantages by utilizing certain strategies (playing the cultural card, use their femininity etc.) whereas they also consciously chose not to focus on the negative barriers – or as some of the respondents said “the energy thieves”. This would generally indicate a more secure and self-assured personality which we consider all of the interviewed women portraits. Further research could be conducted to identify if there are specific characteristics or “life-stories” from an earlier age (before starting a professional career) that these women share. This could be done by using different personality tests but also by looking at what role models have been present in their life, how they behaved and acted in school, what they studied etc. etc.

The sample size for this study was very small, and has been identified through the authors' professional networks, which implies that it is not randomised, not representative, and any generalisations for the "female foreigner manager" population as a whole can therefore not be drawn.

6.1 ADDITIONAL REFLECTIONS

6.1.1 Mentorship

Albeit outside the scope of this study, we also asked the respondents of their experiences with mentorship, and the responses are enclosed below.

More than a handful of the respondents have had official corporate program mentors, but most of them had not found that it worked out for them – lack of time, lack of interest, and not worth the time were some of the reasons given.

Two of respondents said it had been a positive experience to have a mentor. One had gone through a (corporate) mentor program, and even though she no longer had a "formal" mentor she credited her former mentor with giving her valuable insights and directions that she was currently still using.

The one respondent that found it *very* valuable to have a mentor had directly approached her mentors – i.e. they were not formally part of a program that assigned them to her. She currently had two mentors, both men and external i.e. not working for the same company that she is. This respondent did not see any issues with both mentors being men but said that if she would ever experience that she was treated in a negative way just because she was a woman, she would probably search for a female mentor for support.

Even if a formal mentorship didn't work, or never had been attempted, all respondents had some kind of "sounding board" that they used in various degrees - whether it being a peer, a manager, a former colleague, a spouse, a friends etc. with whom they can discuss any professional issues with.

"Make sure you always get new input – never stagnate in your thoughts and how you are as a person – always evolve."
[translated from Swedish] (Respondent #10, 2014)

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Respondent #1 (2014) Semi-structured Interview [Skype Phone, Online]. *Navigating the Labyrinth*, Interview by Camilla Podowski & Malin Sundin, Friday 2 May 2014, 11.15AM PDT

Respondent #2 (2014) Semi-structured Interview [Skype Phone, Online]. *Navigating the Labyrinth*, Interview by Camilla Podowski, Friday 2 May 2014, 3.00PM PDT

Respondent #3 (2014) Semi-structured Interview [Skype Phone, Online]. *Navigating the Labyrinth*, Interview by Camilla Podowski & Malin Sundin, Saturday 3 May 2014, 9.00AM PDT

Respondent #4 (2014) Semi-structured Interview [Skype Phone, Online]. *Navigating the Labyrinth*, Interview by Camilla Podowski & Malin Sundin, Thursday 8 May 2014, 9.00AM PDT

Respondent #5 (2014) Semi-structured Interview [Skype Phone, Online]. *Navigating the Labyrinth*, Interview by Camilla Podowski & Malin Sundin, Thursday 8 May 2014, 11.15AM PDT

Respondent #6 (2014) Semi-structured Interview [Skype Phone, Online]. *Navigating the Labyrinth*, Interview by Camilla Podowski, Monday 12 May 2014, 6.00 PM PDT

Respondent #7 (2014) Semi-structured Interview [Skype Phone, Online]. *Navigating the Labyrinth*, Interview by Camilla Podowski & Malin Sundin, Friday 16 May 2014, 8.30AM PDT

Respondent #8 (2014) Semi-structured Interview [Skype Phone, Online]. *Navigating the Labyrinth*, Interview by Camilla Podowski & Malin Sundin, Friday 16 May 2014, 12noon PDT

Respondent #9 (2014) Semi-structured Interview [Skype Phone, Online]. *Navigating the Labyrinth*, Interview by Camilla Podowski & Malin Sundin, Saturday 17 May 2014, 8.30AM PDT

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8 APPENDICES

8.1 APPENDIX A – ADS POSTED ON SWEA FACEBOOK PAGES/GROUPS

The screenshot shows a Facebook browser window with the address bar displaying <https://www.facebook.com/groups/157908582263/>. The page title is "SWEA San Francisco med vänner". A post by Camilla Podowski, dated April 28 at 9:01pm, is visible. The post text reads: "SWEA Professionals (och andra :-)): Jag och en svensk tjej i Sydafrika skriver vår MBA uppsats om kvinnor som valt att göra karriär i utlandet, vad för slags hinder de stött på under vägen och hur de tagit sig runt/över dessa. Vi skulle gärna komma i kontakt med utländska (t ex svenska) kvinnor som är lokalt anställda här i USA (d v s inte på kontrakt) och som är på manager/director/VP/C nivå i företag. Vill du vara med eller känner du någon som du tror skulle vara intresserad/skulle passa bra in på beskrivningen? Kontakta mig gärna via facebook eller via epost på camilla.podowski@gmail.com så berättar jag mer!". Below the post are "Like" and "Comment" options.

The screenshot shows a Facebook browser window with the address bar displaying <https://www.facebook.com/groups/SWEAvarld/>. The page title is "SWEA Världen". A post by Camilla Podowski, dated April 29 at 8:13am, is visible. The post text reads: "Gör du karriär utomlands? Jag och en annan (svensk) tjej skriver vårt (MBA) exjobb och har valt att studera hur framgångsrika kvinnliga ingenjörer/ekonomer, som gör karriär utomlands, upplever "barriärer" eller hinder och hur de gjort för att överkomma (eller ta sig runt) dessa. Vårt fokus är på lokala anställda och alltså inte på "expats" och (helst) på medelstora/större företag. Vi söker kvinnor som skulle kunna ställa upp för en telefonintervju på 1-1.5hr för att delge oss sina erfarenheter. Skulle du vilja vara med, eller känner du någon som du tycker skulle kunna passa? Skicka mig ett meddelande på FB eller via emejl (camilla.podowski (at) gmail.com) så berättar jag/vi gärna mer. Kram från ett soligt San Francisco! Camilla". Below the post are "Like" and "Comment" options.

8.2 APPENDIX B – INITIAL E-MAIL TO POTENTIAL CANDIDATES

This is Malin Sundin and Camilla Podowski calling...We are currently doing research for our master thesis, completing an MBA through Blekinge Tekniska Högskola.

We have, as many before us, been intrigued by the lack of female managers in private companies, especially since we have more and more women potentially filling the pipeline (the number of women achieving higher academic degrees are actually larger than men according to the latest statistics^{8,9}). But somewhere there still seems to be a leak in the managerial pipeline, since we definitely lack those kinds of numbers in the upper ranks of management?

Both of us are Swedish women living and working abroad since several years, and we are especially interested in any barriers facing foreign women while they pursue a career abroad. Our chosen research question is ***How do successful female managers overcome attitudinal and cultural barriers in a foreign country?*** And the follow up question is ***What strategies have they used?***

You have been identified by us as a foreign woman who has pursued a successful career in a new country. If you would like, and your time allows, we would like to conduct informal, qualitative interview with you that would take about 1-1.5hrs. In order to keep the interview time effective, we will also email you some questions to collect some background information in advance. Both the background questions and the interview questions that we would like to discuss with you are enclosed below.

We would prefer to conduct the interviews face to face where feasible, and also record the conversation if you permit. All conversations will of course be held strictly confidential between the parties, and if we at a later stage would like to utilize any part of our conversation in our thesis text, we will not do so without your review and formal permission. We will also of course submit our final thesis to anyone who would like a copy.

We hope that you are able to dedicate some time to help us with this research, and that you will agree to be interviewed! Our time window for interviews is fairly short, so we would prefer to conduct them between now and May 14, 2014.

Best regards,

Malin (Durban, South Africa) and Camilla (San Francisco, US)

⁸ AP2 (2013). *Andra AP-fondens index över andel kvinnor i börsbolagen: styrelser, ledningar och anställda*. [online]. Available at: <http://www.ap2.se/sv/ap2-som-agare/kvinnoindex-2010/> [Accessed: 26 January 2014]

⁹ Catalyst (2014), *First step: women in the world*. New York: Catalyst, March 3, 2014. [online]. Available at: <http://www.catalyst.org/knowledge/first-step-women-world> [Accessed: 10 March 2014]

8.3 APPENDIX C - BACKGROUND & INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- Basic information (for research database purposes):
 - Name
 - Age (range is fine)
 - 28-35
 - 36-45
 - 46-55
 - Marital status (married/in a relationship/single/divorced/widow)
 - Children (if Yes: number and age(s)?)
 - Educational background
 - Company, Position/Role
 - Years with the company
 - Previously held positions/roles
 - Nationality
 - Years in current country
 - Did you arrive as an expatriate (with a company) and transferred to a local company?
 - Did you arrive as a “spousal support” and pursued your career once the family was established?
 - Other ways of arriving, please specify.
 - Have you actively pursued an international career?

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS (PLEASE EXEMPLIFY ALL ANSWERS)

1. What are the main obstacles you have encountered while working in [foreign country]?
2. Thinking about your career in [foreign and/or home country] country, have you encountered any barriers due to gender or culture in your career? If yes:
 - If you overcame a barrier (or went around it), what did you do?
 - Are you aware of anything you did to avoid getting “trapped” behind any barriers?
 - What barriers do you perceive as currently holding you back? Are you taking any active steps in mitigating these?
3. Have you experienced any advantages by being foreign, i.e. have you used your nationality as a tool for overcoming barriers?
4. Have you experienced any advantages by being female, i.e. have you used your gender as a tool for overcoming barriers?
5. Have you adjusted your leadership/managerial style due to any perceived cultural differences?
6. Have you adjusted your leadership/managerial style due to any perceived gender differences?
7. Are you a member of any professional networks? If yes, are these “female only” or mixed?
8. Do you think additional support would have helped you to progress faster? If yes, please exemplify and also explain at what level in your career and why.
9. If you could go back and re-start your career, anything you would have done differently? If Yes/No, please give reason to why/why not.
10. What advice would you give young females starting out a career today?

8.4 APPENDIX D – OVERVIEW OF RESPONDENTS

Respondent	Title/Role	Size of company	Years in current company	Nationality	Country currently working in	Years in country	Age	Marital status
Respondent 1	VP Production	Medium	9	Swedish	USA	16	41	Married, 2 children
Respondent 2	Senior Product and Project Manager	Medium	2	Swedish	USA	2	40	Married, 2 children
Respondent 3	Marketing Communications Manager	Medium	7	Swedish	USA	14	45	Single, 1 child
Respondent 4	R&D Director	Medium	Just started	Brasilian	Sweden	21	39	Married, 2 children
Respondent 5	Head Regional Regulatory Affairs	Large	1	Swedish	Germany	1	45	Married, no children
Respondent 6	Assistant VP	Large	4	Swedish	USA	17	46-55	Married, 3 children
Respondent 7	CMO	Large	6 months	Swedish	USA	12	41	Married, 2 children
Respondent 8	Director Consumer Insights & Analytics	Large	11	Swedish	USA	15	44	Married, 2 children
Respondent 9	CIO/COO	Large	4	Swedish	Hungary	4	46	Married, no children
Respondent 10	Director, Quality & Value Engineering	Large	20	Swedish	USA	7	46	Married, 2 children
Respondent 11	Senior Principal Engineer	Large	9	Swedish	USA	34	60	Divorced, 1 child (adult)

8.5 APPENDIX E – DATA ANALYSIS SHEET –TABS

	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
	Respondent	Double Binds/Communication	Stereotyping	Gender Discrimination	Lack of Networks	Blocked Out from Networks	Nationality/Cultural	Internal Barriers
2	Respondent 1	would not survive in a bigger corporate organization - too outspoken. Straightforward, almost "manly", not like a giggly little girl	Automatically becomes the note-taker in VP meetings - NOTE: she did this automatically, but later thought to break the barrier	Salary negotiation. My current boss is reacting differently to me than my (male) co-workers: took it him about two years before he could look me in the eyes in a meeting - he doesn't know how to deal with women in general.	No time for networks, down-prioritized due to working fulltime, travelling husband, taking care of kids - MALIN: Is this a barrier for her? Didn't think it has been, she has been able to move up the corporate ladder anyways? it's an interesting fact that it's down prioritized, but I		Plays culture board for "net-ten around here" - could be Sweden or Mars. Get more leeway in how to behave. MALIN: Moved the previous sentences to the barrier, right? I don't think she experienced barriers? I would say. Not really any negative aspects being	"The law of Jante", fear of failure. Lack of self-confidence. Almost opted for not trying, the fear of failure was greater than the possibilities. Had other [co-workers] convince her that she should take on a larger role/position, and do well. First time was hardest, then self-
3	Respondent 2	Honest, straightforward. Not sure this is a barrier for her.	Men generally is better to push themselves, more competitive, and also is willing to take more risks ("I don't know this but I think it will work out") - while women are more risk-averse, and also need some persuasion to "jump on a challenge"	Not really: You are your gender BUT you are also a personality. It depends on how you react to certain comments. So far no disadvantage of being a woman; but if I was going to stay and advance, it is (probably) harder - very male dominated on higher levels. But also said "I have noted that the HR is stricter here in the US. [men] cannot be as plump as they are allowed to be in Sweden (e.g. "dra grova skämt" wouldn't be possible in the US). "I have not been discouraged due to my			Feedback from CEO - "well, at least we know we always will get a straight answer from XX" respondent always will speak her mind, even if it is controversial. "Personal contacts and networks are really important when you are a foreigner - they (in the hiring company) don't understand your background, your education etc. Unless you are a perfect match, you will be put into the "limbo" pile."	Didn't "jump" on the two chances I got because I was going to move and I didn't want to only do six months - maybe it is a
4								

Chart1 Respondents Barriers Strategies Barriers and Strategies Leadership Quotes + : <

B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
Respondent	Demonstrating expertise	Manipulation	Accepting	Avoiding	Adopting an anti-woman approach	Performing masculinity	Explaining	Playing the female	Playing the Cultural	Personal Choice
Respondent 1	Using my position in order to ensure that my time is not worth less	The respondent and a group of "trusted co-workers" to the boss strategized, came up with the position, convinced respondent to take it on, and then [they] brought the idea to the boss				Part of my personality is to be (stereotypical manly, and by using "male behavior" it was definitely easier for me to move up the career ladder.	Explaining the value of her time to manager	Plays cultural card (or "not from around here" - could be Sweden or Mars). Get more leeway in how to behave. Swedish women are more feisty - hide the fact that not everyone [in Sweden] is just take it for granted, playing female card of "oppps" if Respondent has gone too far [in playing cultural card], and want to "save face". Smile a little extra wide	Advantage of being a Swede: I can "ya ut svängarna" by being Swedish, allowed to be a little unorthodox, direct communication attributed to "not being from around here". I get away with being more frank and direct in my communication style because I am stating I am Swedish (while I am necessarily true for Swedes in general). I use it consciously - but I play a female card if I feel that	
Respondent 2	My personal observation, and also based on the interviews and resume, is that Respondent is very knowledgeable and uses this in order to gain trust within an organization. Shows effort and competence, let's her actions speak for her.				I have not done this, but seen that some women also under-mine other women; instead of helping each other, you get "khen-fighting" - as soon as a woman get some advantage (e.g. salary increase), the others are picking her to bits; instead of being happy for her.			Clearly you can use your gender to an advantage (e.g. dress feminine). Telecom, IT, development etc. - I have only positive experience being "an odd bird" and you can get more personal relations with customers etc., [are allowed to be more	Got two job-offers, both was in relation to being Swedish (through networking), think she might be excused speaking her mind "since I don't know better"	NOT SURE WHERE TO FIT IN: The product manager in my team ("20 people) is an extremely aggressive, male "alpha" (as the single woman (a the leader?)) - I have a much easier time to thank him - I am not perceived as a "threat" to him.
	Delivery was the most important - the one who will not be done, will be				I make sure I become "gender neutral" - I avoid to do, sit, make	But I am also pretty good for "stand up for myself", I don't have a problem to				I believe it is an advantage to be European and Swedish.

Respondents | Chart1 | Barriers | Strategies | Barriers and Strategies | Leadership | Quotes

⏪ | ⏩