Towards a feasible approach to manage cross-cultural collaborations

Progressive Stereotyping – The mindset of tomorrow´s managers?

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Abstract

Contemporary management is challenged in the modern organisations through several challenges. Research has shown the severe effects of cultural differences if managed poorly or overlooked. Previous research of cross-cultural management research can be divided into three streams of research. This field of research is highlighted as paradigmatic where each field is organized with its own assumptions, definitions and methodologies. Previous studies have called for less paradigmatic studies, this study strives to fill the need of a less paradigmatic study by combining a positivist paradigm and an interpretive paradigm into one feasible approach to help managers manage cross-cultural collaborations. The research question asked was therefore:

*How can managers benefit from both a generic and a non-generic approach in order to manage cultural differences in cross-cultural collaborations?*

In order to understand the problem theories of culture, the positivist paradigm, the interpretive paradigm and stereotypes or generalisations were used. A multi-paradigm approach was used in this study with 14 international managers where a process of interplay was applied, as an interaction between ontology/epistemology and interpretive/positivist paradigms. The study used both an inductive and a deductive approach in a combination when performing the research analysis. The key finding consists of the discovery of the concept named *progressive stereotypes*. This concept combines the benefits of a positivist research paradigm together with the benefits of an interpretive research paradigm. The key implications of this study first imply improved feasibility by combining research paradigms instead of treating them as inherently distant from each other. Secondly, the study highlights need importance of using stereotypes on an abstract level and as an initial knowledge base.
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Chapter 1 - Introduction

“Culture eats Strategy for breakfast” - Peter Drucker

The on-going globalization and the rise of China and India as economic superpowers have led to huge global changes of economic, political, social and cultural nature. These changes call for an increased importance of reciprocal knowledge exchange. The impacts of global collaborations affect virtually everyone in every organisation and on different levels. Individuals that do not travel can still be affected through virtual collaborations between different business departments around the world. This implies that an increasing number of individuals require a sensitivity to different cultural perspectives in order to complete their tasks and to navigate through a complex global organisation. There are several challenges that derive from this development. One managerial challenge is the demanding task of establishing global practices and developing a shared cultural platform for the entire organisation. To have a common cultural platform can especially work as a unifying force for an organisation. However, in order to achieve a common cultural platform, the cultural values must not only be communicated to the workforce, they must also be understood, accepted and put into practice. Another challenge is the new forms of cross-cultural collaborations since organisations to a large extent have teams that include several cultures and work virtually. Virtual collaborations are not only present in large organisations but also in smaller and medium sized organisations (Cardel Gertsen, Søderberg & Zølner, 2012).

As an illustrative example of the severe effects of cultural differences is the merger between Daimler-Benz and Chrysler Corporation. The DaimlerChrysler Corporation (1998-2007) did not succeed to rationalize the two companies into one unit. In a sense, the managers of the both companies failed to integrate the culture and unify it into one company culture. The companies had two challenges to overcome; differences in national culture and the differences in business culture. The two parties were dissident of how the new mega-corporation should be managed. For instance, the German executives at Daimler-Benz had assistants who investigated and prepared papers on any issue. A decision worked its way through the entire hierarchy to seek approval from the top managers before it was put into action. Several of the Daimler-Benz employees smoked, drank wine at work hours, regularly worked late and ordered in pizza and beers. In order to uphold the Daimler-Benz luxury image, the entire company staff flew first-class. Chrysler had a completely different approach, here only the executive managers could fly first class and the managers did not have any assistance. Instead, managers involved the engineers and other specialists by directly discussing issues before a decision. They also empowered the mid-level employees to take their own decisions in some questions. Chrysler had also banned smoking and alcohol in their facilities and the employees did not work late as a routine, and only stayed late if they had a deadline (Bower, 2001). The executives at DaimlerChrysler did not recognize or did foresee the importance of culture, as the cultural differences caused gaps between the organisation and its business (Salah, 2010). According to several articles and management consulting firms proclamation,
“culture is a key factor to organisational and business success”, (Myatt, 2014; Simoneaux & Stroud, 2014; Zhang & Wu, 2014). Therefore, it seemed the merger between the two giant corporations was only a vision of something great and in the end an impossible mission to become a success story, as the two companies had difficulties to change and adapt to a unified organisational platform. The era of DaimlerChrysler ended in 2007 when Daimler sold Chrysler to Cerberus.

1.1 Different streams of cross-cultural management
Primecz, Romani & Sackmann (2009) follows Sackmann and Phillips (2004) by dividing previous cross-cultural management research into three streams. Through these segments of research streams the authors highlight the paradigmatic state of cross-cultural management research, as organized with its own assumptions, definitions and methodologies.

The first stream of research is characterized by adopting a cross-national comparison which investigates the variety of different values across nations. Burell & Morgan (1979) describe this stream of research as grounded in the positivist\(^1\) paradigm or the functionalist paradigm. The body of work created by Hofstede is a good example of this perspective. According to Primecz et al. (2009) this paradigm is also represented by further interpretive\(^2\) approaches which explore the different national management models. The positivist paradigm generally dominates today’s scholarly research, publications and educational materials of cross-cultural management.

The second stream of research according to Primecz et al. (2009) is focused on intercultural interactions. The perspective investigates practices and processes associated to culture on a national level within an organisational setting. Culture is viewed as a dynamic and creative process and is considered as a social construction. This perspective can be said to be inspired by an anthropological approach and consists of both a positivist and an interpretive paradigm.

The third stream of research according to Primecz et al. (2009) focuses on a multiple cultural perspective which tries to highlight the various cultural influences that exist on different levels of analysis. Those levels include nations, industry, organisation and crosscutting groups such as ethnicity and profession. The interactions between these levels can affect the

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\(^1\) The positivist approach on cross-cultural management is built on connections between social phenomena and searching for regularities. By using “natural science” as a role model and viewing things from a distance and from above, the research comparing culture and seeking out to generalise rules, such as the correlation between certain behaviours and the dimensions of national culture. The results have often resulted in predictive models (Collings, Wood & Caliguiri, 2015).

\(^2\) Interpretive research approach on cross-cultural management; focus on the human interaction and the interpersonal management practice and methods that are available for managers. The centre of the interpretive analysis in studies, is the embodiment of people’s social-cultural reality; such as their experience, way of thinking, sense-making and how they talk about it” (Primecz, Romani & Sackmann, 2011, pp.3-4).
behaviour of individuals in crosscutting groups. This perspective is similar to the second stream of research and is a mix of a positivist and an interpretive paradigm.

Moreover, Primecz et al. (2009, p.267) declares a need for less paradigmatic studies in “research and practices of cross-cultural management, which is focused on culture at national, organisational, and the subnational level”. Primecz et al. (2009, p.268) also stressed the previous research within cross-culture management as “imbalance among the paradigms”, due to the field’s inherent multi-paradigmatic nature. In additional, the majority of previous research has been centred in positivistic paradigms, such as Hofstede’s research. Primecz et al. (2009) suggest, therefore, that contemporary research should extend its perspectives. These perspectives should expand; to the understanding of different paradigms and apply these paradigms within the same study; by applying an interplay paradigm” (Primecz et al., 2009, p.272).

Furthermore, the problematisation of Hofstede’s (1991;2001) theories, or actually how the academic world misinterprets his theories, and how managers of tomorrow are educated need to be addressed. According to Myers & Tan (2002) and Kirkman, Lowe & Gibson (2006) Hofstede’s research has repeatedly been applied and exercised in academic research and scientific articles. The Hofstede research has deficiencies. Thus, Hofstede himself points out the inadequacy of his research and has further advised not to apply the national culture dimensions on sub-national levels (Hofstede, 1991, p.253). A study by Kirkman et al. (2006) that analysed 180 empirical studies, clearly showed that the majority of these studies had misinterpreted Hofstede’s theories, when applying it to individuals, groups and companies (Egan & Bendick, 2008).

To conclude this introduction, culture strongly influences organisational success and there is a need for less paradigmatic studies. Hence, this study strives to investigate how a positivist approach, widely used by practitioners, can be developed through an inter-paradigmatic lens where generalizations are only applied to an abstract or national level.

1.2 The research aim and objectives
This study strives to fill the need of a less paradigmatic study by combining a positivist paradigm and an interpretive paradigm into one feasible approach to help managers manage different cross-cultural collaborations. In this study the definition cross-cultural collaborations and a feasible approach are defined as:

- The collaborations between different business units within a company and collaborations between different organisations within a project, both which include people with different cultural backgrounds.
- The feasible approach is an effective and flexible approach to diminish conflicts based on cultural differences which apply in multifold of settings and situations.

In particular, this study is interested in exploring if generalizations stemming from positivistic research can be used in a constructive and none negatively simplifying manner. The aim of
this research is, therefore, to propose a highly flexible approach to managing cross-cultural collaborations which do not impose subnational generalizations. Accordingly, the study has the following objectives:

- To explore how cultural differences can be simplified enough in order to be utilized by managers in practice on an organizational level.
- To explore what actions managers take in order to manage cross-cultural collaborations.

Therefore, we want to comprehend these theories, models or principles and approaches, which is applied by Multinational Corporations\(^3\) (MNC). In this sense, the research seeks to clarify what managers and companies, apply in practice in order to obtain effective collaboration within and between groups with cultural differences. Further, from the empirical material and formerly presented theories, the study endeavours to design a concept that managers can apply when collaborating across national/cultural borders. Hence, this research seeks to answer the following research question:

- *How can managers benefit from both a generic and a non-generic\(^4\) approach in order to manage cultural differences in cross-cultural collaborations?*

The study first explores culture and its relation to organizational culture, the positivistic and the interpretive paradigm and their relation to each other, and finally, how stereotypes, in fact, can be useful in a context among cultural differences. The empirical study strives to gain a practical understanding by interviewing 14 managers about how they manage cultural differences.

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\(^3\) Multinational Corporation - is an organization that owns or controls production of goods or services in one or more countries other than their home country (Wikipedia, 2015b).

\(^4\) In this research, the non-generic method is represented by the interpretive paradigm inspired by anthropology.
Chapter 2 - Literature Review

2.1 Management in perspective of culture differences

The differences between nations and cultures are established as how people behave and believe differently in these environments (Graen & Hui, 1996). These kinds of occurring phenomena are defined as nominal differences or systematic differences. The nominal difference factors are behaviours, language and institutions. For instance, in language, a single construction can differ and have a completely different connotation across cultures. Managing within an environment of these language differences, the perception of how objects and events are defined in other cultures is a necessary ability. The systematic different factors involve nations and culture differences in values, beliefs and the regulatory of “how humans play” the social game.

According to Graen & Hui (1996), managing cross-culture/national effectively, managers are obliged to understand the nominal and systematic differences in the partnership. Unfortunately, these differences are not always considered and can end in costly consequences. For instance, Electrolux’s ad-campaign in Britain and America - “Nothing sucks like an Electrolux” is likely a reason why Electrolux nowadays sells their vacuums in Great Britain by their other brand Zanussi.

The research on cultural differences in organisations mirrors several different perspectives. For instance, diversity in an organisation as a different cultural background can create a competitive advantage argued Cox & Blake (1991). Their findings suggested that cultural diversity in work-groups may result in organisations achieving a competitive advantage in “creativity, problem solving, and flexible adaption to change” (Cox & Blake, 1991, p.54). In another study, the diversity in national culture shows its significance with managerial delicacy; how this affects the organisational performance and survival, and therefore influences the corporate risk-taking (Li, Griffin, Yue & Zhao, 2013). According to Gratchev (2001), the successful MNCs are those companies which have the ability to turn the heterogeneity into opportunities. In three different situations, Honda and Rovers strategic alliance, Daimler-Chrysler merger and the Russian Airline company Aeroflot attempt to form a strategic alliance with Delta Airlines. In total, these partnerships either failed or succeeded. However, these different outcomes depended on how the companies involved handled cultural differences (Gratchev, 2001). For instance, as the allegiance of Honda and Rover did not achieve the expected results promptly, they investigated and established that the problematization was the divergence in organisational culture and technology. However, it acquired seven years of emphasising mutual trust and commitment to understanding the differences of the company’s core values and cultures, in order to create a cultural cohesion between the companies. According to Gratchev (2001) and Bower (2001), the key to success in a partnership is the ability to integrate the diversity of organisational culture and core values into a common establishment, which all the employees can agree on. Further, a study of organisations, which sought to improve the company’s competitive position through organisational changes identified culture as the essential factor of success in changing organisational behaviours (Hanson & Mylnek, 2014).
2.2 Culture

According to Deresky (2011) managers have in several cases underestimated the importance of cultural differences which can be associated to serious mistakes in international operations since a cultural sensitivity was missing. Both management studies and company reports have shown that the lack of cultural sensitivity has resulted in a financial loss and missed opportunities. The cultural differences make it necessary for managers to develop an international expertise to manage the host-country environment on a contingency basis. In short, cultural knowledge is a critical skill set for managers in order to handle people and processes in a different cultural environment. Further, cultural sensitivity or empathy can be classified as awareness and honest caring of another individual’s culture, which requires the ability to understand the perspective of other individuals living in other and different societies. This means, a manager with a cultural perspective enables them to plan, organize, lead, and control in a specific setting which is necessary in order to successfully implement a strategy.

The term culture is in this research study equal to societal culture. According to Deresky (2011) the elements of societal culture can be divided into three different dimensions, as culture is something that is shared, learned, systematic and organised. The culture of a society includes shared values, understandings, assumptions and goals, which derives from previous generations, imposed by members of the present society and passed on to coming generations. The result is generally shared attitudes, codes of conduct and expectations that subconsciously guide and control certain norms of behaviour. Culture is something that is learned, which means that it is not something that is congenital. A cultural behaviour is learned over time and the subtle effects are a result of the socialization process. Culture results in shared communication, standards, codes of conduct and expectations. A Culture can change over time as a result of the adaptation process in a society to external and internal environments and relationships. Furthermore, the culture within a society can vary between its members and, therefore, managers must expect to find both diminutive and large differences in the behaviour of different members of a culture. These differences stem from sociocultural variables of a culture; such aspects include e.g. religion and language and from national variables, such as legal, political, and economic aspects. Together, both national and sociocultural variables lay the foundation of societal culture (Deresky, 2011).

Shein (1985) in Thomas (2008) describes the culture from three levels; artefacts and creations, values, and basic consumptions. At the top, artefacts include the visible features in a culture such as technology, clothing, manners and so forth. Values represent the social principles, goals and standards. These characteristics are implicit, consequently “the effects of culture are often not apparent and therefore are often overlooked by global managers” (Thomas, 2008, p.30).

Hannerz (1996) further examines the concept of culture, as a tradition of social anthropology, which can be viewed in terms of interactions, relationship and networks. Further, Hannerz (1996) emphasises culture as something that is taught and acquired in our social life. Even if anthropology was against the assumption that culture is integrated and should be observed
through a holistic lens for several years. Furthermore, Hannerz (1996) describes the problem of defining culture in our way of thinking through the arrangement of culture in coherent patterns, as a result of when people interconnect themselves with the world, the culture occasionally becomes organized and can be defined as “culture”.

2.3 The relationship between Organisational and National culture
Organisational culture is often seen as values an organisation’s employees share in the form of strategies, goals and philosophies (Ott, 1989). However, this study does separate the different levels of a company’s employees, where the top manager does not share the same cultural values as the majority of the company. These values are developed and shaped by top managers and thereafter shared as a culture of its members, which will be affected through organisational procedures. These practices are later passed on to the following generation and continues, to form the culture of the company (Thomas, 2008). The adaptation of an organisational culture is selectable (Feldman, 1976). According to Hannerz (1996) national culture is also taught and acquired in our social life. However, “organisational culture focuses on behavioural norms as the fundamental element which amplifies the distinction between organisational culture and societal culture” (Thomas, 2008,p.41).

According to Frenkel (2008) the transfer of management knowledge, technologies and practices across national boundaries is a mechanism of globalization. Such a transfer of management practices in a different social setting may reshape technological, economic, political and cultural characteristics within the receiving society. Frenkel refers to Homi Bhabha, the Bhabahian analysis of the transfer process aims at understanding the embodiment of power relations between the dominating and the dominated forces. The term “post” in post colonialism in accordance with Bhabha’s description does not refer to a time after colonialism, instead it refers to ideological discourses of colonialism. Bhabha seeks to understand colonial knowledge as something emerging from the encounter between the colonizers and the colonized and as a mean to legitimize the colonizer’s dominance. Bhabha uses a series of theories to describe the transfer effect; one of these is “The third space”. According to Frenkel (2008) the third space refers to colonial encounters as a space of contradiction, repetition, ambiguity and rejection of colonial authority. Bhabha argues that we are all located on intercultural boundaries which mean that we all encounter a wide range of cultures. An MNC is a concrete example of “The third space” metaphor due to repeated encounters between members of an organisation and what they perceive as different cultures and state institutions. Other contributing factors to this development are the displacement of ideas, practices, techniques and people across political and historical borders.

2.4 Hofstede’s cultural dimensions and its opponents
Hofstede represents the positivist paradigm and created originally four dimensions that can be used to explain cultural differences between nations; power distance, individualism versus collectivism, uncertainty avoidance and masculinity versus femininity. These dimensions are used as a framework to develop hypotheses in cross-cultural organisational studies. The four dimensions can be used to understand how different societies have handled fundamental societal problems. They describe different ways of structuring an organisation, different
motives for people within organisations and different issues people and organisations face in a society. The countries studied in Hofstede’s study can be grouped into cultural clusters by combining the dimensions. The dimensions can be used to represent universal categories that characterize national societies (Hofstede, 1983). Following his early work Hofstede has added two other dimensions to his framework. These two dimensions are long-term orientation (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005) and indulgence versus restraint (The Hofstede centre, 2015).

Long before Hofstede’s survey and his proclamation of ideas about culture and its classification anthropology have discussed, argued and debated on cultural diversities and its concepts, in the search of explanations to define culture as a theory. For instance, Geertz (1993, p.89) suggested that culture is “an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life”. Kuper (1999, p.227) defined culture as “a matter of ideas and values, a collective cast of mind”. Even before Hofstede increased the dimension to five different dimensions, Sahlin (1976, p.211) had identified that the diversity of culture is emphasized by the representations of different institutional integrations of symbols, in such the identification of dualism. Baskerville (2003, p.2) states that culture is observed as “an integrated pattern of symbols and meanings”, and not as a system or different quantity values.

2.5 The discussion against Hofstede dimensions

The essential reason to criticize Hofstede’s research was to enlighten the fundamental difference of assumptions of those who apply the dimensions and to those who challenge these isolated assumptions (Baskerville, 2003; McSweeney, 2002a,2002b; Myers & Tan, 2002). McSweeney (2002) evaluated the Hofstede research methodology in further detail. McSweeney identified four characteristics of Hofstede’s concepts of culture, which was challenged by handle culture implicit, core, distributed and systematic causal. Moreover, the critics of Hofstede’s dimensions can be compartmentalized as four different categories; empirical weakness, theoretical weakness, methodology weakness and contribution of knowledge. McSweeney argues that Hofstede’s reasoning about the IBM culture appears as a national culture. McSweeney (2002b) pointed out that a company as IBM is not represented as a representation of the different cultures of the world. As the sample was only collected from employees from IBM, which has a single uniform organisational culture. The data in this study, which formed the basis of Hofstede’s analysis was not intended for this purpose from the beginning. The data in the research had already been collected by IBM, as an employee attitude survey.

“The data consisted of answers to questionnaires about employee values and perceptions of the work situation that were collected in the context of two worldwide rounds of employee attitude surveys. Their use for studying differences in national cultures was an unintended, serendipitous by-product, for which the corporation opened its files of 116000 survey questionnaires collected between 1967 and 1973” (Hofstede, Neuijen & Ohavy, 1990, p.287).
Therefore, the research data is not legitimate to represent the people of these countries and their culture (Myers & Tan, 2002; Baskerville, 2003). Furthermore, Baskerville (2003) addressed the same matter, by pointing out that only nations are studied and declared as one “national culture”. McSweeney (2002) considers the national state as dynamic, where the older states have an extensive development in ethnic composition and population. The nation state cannot therefore be viewed as a singularity in defining the nation's culture; several nation states have additional ethnicity than an organisation (Myers & Tan, 2002; Baskerville, 2003).

“The nation-state has continued to change in its form and makeup. For example, a host of new nation-states have been formed in recent years, such as those that were formed as a result of the breakup of the Soviet Union after the Cold War, or those that we formed as a result of the Balkan wars” (Tan, 2003, p.20).

Further, Myers & Tan (2002) expressed the mismatch between nation-state and culture, thus the establishment of nations are reasonably a new phenomenon, while the culture has been recognized for a millennium. Moreover, Hofstede’s model does not comprehend the abundance and precision of a culture (Baskerville, 2003; McSweeney, 2002b). It also does not provide the possibility of allowing the complex relationship between culture and economic indicators (Myers & Tan, 2002). McSweeney’s critique focuses on the questionnaire and specifically the statistical analysis and arithmetic’s of the responses. According to Baskerville (2003) and McSweeney (2002b) the methodology is questionable; thus the statistical measurement and questionnaires are not applicable as an individual method in order to advise on the contents of culture and its practices. McSweeney (2002b) emphasized that Hofstede’s model stressed its conclusion based on an inaccurate and incomplete questionnaire; the questionnaire was not to designed to identify national cultures and, therefore, it is likely that the questions were not adequate for that purpose (McSweeney, 2000b). Hence, the conclusion has a scarcity of the reliability (Baskerville, 2003; McSweeney, 2002).

Myers & Tan (2002, p.30) disapprove Hofstede’s views of culture - “that culture is something which identifies and differentiates one group or category of people from another” as it is not recognizable with contemporary anthropological research. According to Billing (1994) this behaviour of conceptualizing culture is described as obsolete from the anthropological perspective.

“The view of culture expressed by the new culture determinists tends to be static, synchronic beyond which anthropologist has largely progressed” (Billing 1994, p.661).

The opposing approach known as the interpretive paradigm, to understand culture proposed by McSweeney (2002a, 2002b) and Baskerville (2003, 2005) is concluded by Joannides, Wickramasinghe & Berland (2012). The proposal highlights the importance for scholars not to rely on Hofstede’s framework since they will not study national culture, nevertheless, ethnicity in under-explored and unknown groups. Instead, frameworks from anthropology should be borrowed, which can lead researchers to develop contextualised theories. Such approach should present how culture operates in day-to-day operations instead of using a
questionnaire that scores culture. The following quote exemplifies the faults in Hofstede’s framework:

“Rather, standardising culture leads to predictable and non-workable conclusions: practices differ because cultural scores are different. This ultimately does not help in understanding why practices can vary from one group to another” (Joannides et al., 2012, p. 6).

As the theories of culture previously presented show, there is an apparent schematic approach represented by researchers like Hofstede, on the other hand, there is also the interpretive approach that tends to describe national culture more in-depth. These opposing approaches were the original inspiration for this study. The purpose with this report is to merge the positivist and interpretive paradigm in order to find a feasible approach to help managers handle cultural differences. This includes the use of generalizations and stereotypes, which in divers ways is controversial. There are a large number of critiques against positivist authors such as Hofstede as described above. However, are generalizations or stereotypes always something negative? The next section will review how a stereotype, in fact, can be useful.

2.6 Stereotyping
A stereotype according to McFarlane’s description is a “common simplifying device in perception” (McFarlane, 2014, p.158). Are stereotypes always something negative or can it be used in the process of handling cultural diversity? Osland, Bird, Delano & Jacob (2000) conduct a similar discussion based on Hofstede's value dimensions. According to the authors, stereotypes can be grouped into different categories. On one hand, there are the low-level stereotypes which include generic stereotypes of such as a disliked neighbouring ethnic group. This type of stereotypes is often based on lack of personal contact and irrational dislike of individuals with a different background. Based on this crude type of stereotypes there is a common view that stereotypes cannot be useful in any sense. However, on the other hand, the authors give an example of how Israelis can be perceived using Hofstede’s cultural dimensions. The result could be that Israelis have a diminutive level of power distance, strong uncertainty avoidance, moderate femininity and moderate individualism. The purpose of such a stereotype is to reduce a complex culture into a shorthand description. This type of stereotype is called sophisticated stereotypes since they are based on theoretical concepts and lacks the negative attributions that can be associated as low-level stereotypes. Even though the second stereotype can be said to be sophisticated it is still limiting since it limits the perception of another culture. Still Osland et al. (2000) recommends teaching sophisticated stereotypes since dimensions such as those created by Hofstede are helpful tools in explaining cultural behaviour. They are helpful if the limitations are acknowledged. Furthermore, cultural generalizations are helpful in comparing cultures with each other, but less helpful when explaining the wide variety of behaviour within a culture (Osland et al., 2000).

McFarlane (2014) also investigates the topic of stereotypes by asking the question if stereotypes can be useful. The author states that stereotypes are useful in guiding and shaping our attitudes and behaviours toward other people, races and cultures by providing a conscious awareness of differences. They are helpful in highlighting the need to understand that different norms and values exist. Then in social interactions stereotypes are sought to be
verified. When new cultures are approached, stereotypes can be helpful since they provide individuals with a restrained state of mind which can prevent social and cultural mistakes. Furthermore, stereotypes are also helpful in organizing individuals’ impressions by in a meaningful way classify other individuals, events and situations. By organizing such impressions they can be remembered, identified and related to. In plenty of cases, stereotypes are insufficient. However, McFarlane argues that we would not be better off without them or even making them more credible. Since stereotypes prove that humans have incomplete knowledge and understanding of people, events and situations and, therefore, must depend on generalizations and assumptions to fill the knowledge gap while seeking knowledge (McFarlane, 2014).

Another useful term that was introduced by Spivak was essentialism or strategic essentialism, which in some situations can be used to justify stereotypes or generalizations. According to Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin (2000) essentialism is the assumption that members of groups, classes and categories of objects have unique features connected to them. This concept meets a lot of criticism, for instance, on the basis of national liberation movements which argued for the need to develop a local identity and sense of distinction. This can be said to be a negative interpretation of the concept and Spivak responded by embracing the need for a strategic essentialism as a tool for liberating the effects of colonial and neo-colonial oppression. The argument for such generalizations was that in different periods of time different groups need a sense of value and dignity (Ashcroft et al., 2000).

Based on the theories of stereotypes it can be said that stereotypes can be useful in handling cultural diversity. However, one question remains, when do stereotypes transform from being something useful into something negative? McFarlane (2014) describes that several of the negative aspects of stereotyping occur when the stereotype remains after the learning phase has taken place. In the modern society, the general situation can be described through the lenses of unlimited wants and limited means. Thus, stereotypes can be used as a weapon in the war of scarce resources. In other words, stereotypes can be problematic for those who are being stereotyped. The dangerous stereotypes are those which on purpose inflicts harm and it is those stereotypes, which are being feared in a democratic and open society since they oppose the ideals of freedom and equality. McFarlane describes the Positive-Negative Model of stereotypes which shows negative and positive outcomes in relation to certain factors.
In this study, there will be occasions when stereotypes will be included in the development of a feasible approach in order to handle cultural diversity. But as the discussion of positive stereotyping has shown; stereotypes can be used to facilitate a cultural competence. As the discussion also shows there is a risk for negative effects for those that are being stereotyped and for deliberate negative stereotypes.
Chapter 3 - Research Methodology

This study has its origin from several different research paradigms. The study has its root from the realist perspective, where Hofstede's research of national culture is positioned in the positivistic paradigm. It also contains research from the anthropological perspective – the interpretive paradigm research, which depicts the specific aspect of human interaction in cross-cultural management approaches.

“In contrast to positivist social science, which assumes there is only one ‘reality’, interpretive social science takes seriously the possibility that there may be different realities depending on people’s circumstances” (Chantler & Durand, 2014, p.45).

The purpose of the literature review was to establish a theoretical understanding and thus describe the context of the phenomena. Furthermore, the literature review is extracted in a small section; as we emanate from it to formulate our interview questions, and it is attentive as we present our findings in the analysis section. The content of the literature review is primarily based on the Positivism and Interpretivism paradigm. However, as our study cumulates empirical information and approaches the analytical phase and further presenting our result, the study applies an interpretive approach. Therefore, our approach constitutes a multiparadigm research, thus it “advocates possible connections and exchanges between paradigms” (Pimecz, Romani & Topcu, 2011, p.434). In Figure 2- The multiparadigm approach, shows the relationship between the data and different paradigm in the study.
Moreover, in this multi-paradigm research, a process of “interplay” is applied, as an interaction between ontology/epistemology and interpretive/positivist research in a combination and adaptation as a “framework”; the interpretivism is the essential approach together with the inductive and the deductive paradigm in a mixed combination when performing the research analysis (cf. Primecz, Romani & Topcu, 2011, pp.433-434).

Consequently, this methodological approach could be considered as an *abductive* approach (cf. (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012, p.147). However, abduction “begins with the observation of a ‘surprising fact’ and then works out a plausible theory of how this could have occurred” (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012, p.147). This study does not try to explain a phenomenon, instead we are trying to investigate the topic of multiple paradigms in cross-cultural management and develop this theoretically.

Formulating the interview questions from the previous research, our approach could appear deductive - as it seems to be “theoretically positioned and test former theories through collected data and theory-driven” (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012, p.48). In addition, the argumentation does not undermine that our approach is deductive, as we apply previous research to our findings, in the purpose of strengthening our findings. However, the fundamental purpose of this research, is not to confirm or reject any hypothesis in the analysis with this stance. Instead, the aim is to “explore a topic and develop a theoretical explanation”, and when it also is data driven, the research adopts an inductive approach” (Saunders et al. 2012, p.48). Therefore, the steps of a deductive approach, “formulate hypothesis and confirmation” is overridden in our approach. See figure 3 - The *deductive and inductive framework*, which depicts the steps of the deductive and inductive approach.

![The deductive and inductive framework. Revised from the model by Trochim (2006).](image)

This research aims is to explore how managers can benefit from both a generic and a non-generic approach in order to manage cultural differences in cross-cultural collaborations. It is, therefore, essential to seek answers from a manager’s perspective on reality. Our objective is thus to collect data from the managers, so we can design a method or principles that managers
can apply. Therefore, this study takes an inductive approach, by using the empirical data to theorising the findings (Jacobsen, 2002, p.35).

In the inductive approach, the idealistic approach would be if we as researchers could approach the reality without any expectations and preconceptions. However, since the study first contains a literature study, to explore what the previous research has discovered, it became difficult for us as a researcher does not develop preconceptions. On the contrary, it was necessary to develop an understanding of what kind of relationship the phenomena has in academic studies and research. Saunders et al. (2012, p.74) believes that an inductive approach cannot be applied “without the competent knowledge of the subject area”. Therefore, this became our starting point, as we sought to gain an understanding of the subject and further formulate the interview questions from the collected data. Saunders et al. (2012, p.48) describe this procedure as “identify patterns” as we are collecting data using existing theories to formulate the research question and are trying to “identify concepts”. To answer the research question and to fulfil our aim and objectives, is derived through collecting empirical data from the informants. The aim of the approach is not to set any limitations on the collected information. In this sense, we are open minded when collecting the relevant data before it is analysed and theorised (Jacobsen, 2002, p.35).

To make sense of the meanings that others have on the world - as we explore managers experience and their views on cross-cultural collaborations, we are interpreting manager’s action and trying to understand their social world from their point of view, an interpretivist approach is applied (Bryman & Bell, 2013, p.30). In this consideration, the researcher takes an “empathetic stance”, which is the challenge with interpretivism (cf. Saunders et al. 2012, p.137). The meaning of this approach is located in interpretation and is subjectively influenced by the values and intention of the researcher (Bryman & Bell, 2013, p.30). Further, the level of interpretation is on different levels, as we interpret concepts, theories and literature of the discipline, and conducting a literature review. The second level is the interpretation of managers’ interpretation of their world – interpretation of other’s interpretations (Bryman & Bell, 2013, p.31).

Since this research seeks to a) discover, b) understand, and c) describe, it is difficult to apply a specific research strategy. Furthermore, we endeavour to design a model or principles that can be used by managers in order to benefit from both a generic and a non-generic approach, in order to manage cultural differences in cross-cultural collaborations. To accomplish these targets, we first need to seek an understanding and discover the relationship between managers and cross-cultural collaborations, regarding generic and non-generic approaches. The research seeks therefore to discover managers behaviours, beliefs and their realizations in a cross cultural context. Subsequently, we first interpret the managers’ knowledge by analysing the data. Second, we describe the dissimilarity and resemblance by comparing the empirical data with the previous research in the literature review. Lastly, it is juxtaposed and finalized into a result.

In the empirical part of this study, the qualitative approach is applied. The main reasons for using qualitative approach are of its exploratory ability (Creswell, 2009). According to
Jacobsen (2002), the qualitative approach will create clarity to concepts and phenomenon in regards to what the research seeks to interpret and understand. Another reason for this choice is the method flexibility and its adaptability along the research journey. On the contrary, it is difficult to prove generalizability since the respondents’ base their answers out of their own experiences, which are difficult to compare with others. Our aim here is thus not directed at finding a high level of generalizability, but investigating how a multiparadigm approach to cultural differences could provide benefits to managers.

3.1 Data collection
The data collection method chosen in this research project is interviews, which result in deepening insights of the phenomenon. The positive aspects of interviews are the depth of information, requires only simple equipment, its flexibility and high validity (Denscombe, 2010). Additional strength is the ability to hear people's reflections on a social phenomenon from their perspective (Ahrne & Svensson, 2011). The researcher can collect the respondent's use of language, norms, and emotions, which can provide a vivid picture of the reality. Just as it can be seen as an advantage, it can also be seen as disadvantageous. Ahrne and Svensson (2011) argue that the information which respondents provide may be vague and lack meaning. “Researchers cannot take for granted that people do what they say, that the dictum has a bearing on people's actions“(Ahrne & Svensson 2011, p.56).

In this study, we have adopted a semi-structured interviews (Kothari, 2004). By applying a semi-structured approach, we have the opportunity to ask follow-up questions in order to let the interviewees explain and build on their responses (Saunders et al., 2012).

3.2 Methodological problems
Kothari (2004) describes a number of weaknesses with interviews as a method, for example the following factors could have an effect on this report:

- Some groups of respondents such as executives can be difficult to approach which can cause the collected data to be inadequate
- An effective interview requires a respondent that is free and frank which several times is not the case.
- This method is time-consuming, especially when recalls are necessary.

The first factor is highly important for this report since the requirements of this study demand the respondents have a high rank position such as an international manager. The fact that we are aware of these kinds of difficulties allows us to take into account that some difficulties can occur. One step that can be viewed as a countermeasure we conducted was, in detail, to prepare for the interview so that we received all the information needed which resulted in that we did not need to get additional information in later stages. If we should need to get additional information, the risk is that we would have difficulties getting a new appointment since the respondents have a busy schedule. Since we have a limited time frame to conduct this study combined with the time-consuming nature of this method, well prepared questions are necessary in order manage the time frame. We also needed to be aware that the answers
we got may be influenced by the restraints of the respondent which makes it very important to have a critical approach to the data collected. Kothari (2004) points out the importance of selecting and briefing respondents to successfully implement the interview method. The selected respondents should be hardworking, honest, impartial, sincere and must have the technical competence and practical experience needed. In practice, we will of course never know if this requirement is fulfilled, in the line with the theoretical perspective of the interpretive paradigm, is that the interviewees may be influenced by a number of “irrational” factors such as: pressure from the company or other managers; the person trying to beautify their or the company situation and appearance. Furthermore, some scientific principles should be taken into account when performing an interview. The atmosphere should be friendly and efforts to achieve such an atmosphere should be taken. The purpose is to make the respondent feel comfortable when discussing with the interviewer. The interviewer also needs to be able to provide answers in order to clear any doubts the respondent may have. The interviewer’s approach also needs to be impartial and any surprise or disapproval cannot be shown towards the respondents. But the interviewer still needs to control the direction of the interview to avoid irrelevant information and to keep the respondent on track.

3.3 Research Sample
The research has the interest to seek answers from managers with experience from cross-cultural collaborations. Hence, a non-probability sample was applied (Denscombe, 2010). We selected companies in different branches, which is located in Stockholm, that we thought had managers with experience from cross-cultural collaborations. We contacted the company by either by phone or email, The companies HR-department, then suggested whom we could contact to set up an interview. In some cases, the respondent contacted us directly.

Furthermore, an exploratory sample was also applied due to the study aim, to provide the research with the means for producing “insights and information” and provide a deeper knowledge in a certain topic (Denscombe, 2010).

3.4 Sampling frame and size of sample
The respondents in this study were selected due to its attributes as purposive sampling. The selection of the individuals is based on relevance and knowledge of the topic (cf. Denscombe, 2010:34-35). Furthermore, the entities of this study are anonymous and the sample of the population was selected managers within different corporations primarily located in Stockholm. In the end, the study collected data from 14 managers, which added up to 14 hours of raw material.

3.5 Data analysis
The analysis aims is to describe and interpret how managers practice cross-cultural collaborations (cf. Denscombe, 2010, p.235). We interpret the empirical data to search for patterns, which can herein be specified as a standardised approach to manage cross-cultural collaborations. In this process, we also describe, the clarification of managers apprehensions regarding cross-cultural collaborations.
As this is a qualitative study, the analysis was made out of words (Denscombe, 2010). Further, the analysis is based on involvement, concerning the researcher’s background, values, identity and beliefs, as the analysis is not performed with a standardized research instrument (cf. Denscombe, 2010, p.237).

The data from the interviews is recorded speech (cf. Denscombe, 2010, p.273). The raw data from the interview was processed and filed, thus it is “difficult to compare an aspect of data and find recurrent themes”, in its raw condition (Denscombe, 2010, p.273). To protect the data from unintentional corruption or damage, it was copied as a backup to cloud storage. The data were also catalogued and indexed (cf. Denscombe, 2010, p.274).

The recorded speech was transcribed and annotated. This enabled us to make a comparison of the data and detailed searches (Denscombe, 2010, p.275). The transcript were however not entirely transcribed; the silent parts were not reported; the intonation, emphasis, accents used in speech could not be taken into account (cf.Denscombe, 2010, pp.275,277). The consequence of this procedure is that the data could be interpreted otherwise, as it was “stripped of some of its meaning” (Denscombe, 2010, p.277). However, this is a general approach, when conducting a small-scale research study (cf. Denscombe, 2010, p.277).

After the data preparation stage, the data analysis entered the initial exploration of data; the study was examining the text for recurrent themes or issues. As this occurs, we were adding notes to the data and writing memos to capture ideas (cf. Table III. 1. in Denscombe, 2010, p.240).

Moreover, this study applied the data analysis spiral (Figure 4) developed by Creswell (2009) and described by Randolph (2008, p.85). The model consist of different loops where we are in the process of moving in analytic circles, as the process of collecting data, data analysis and report writing is not a linear process. Instead, the process is “interrelated and often go on simultaneously in a research project (Creswell 2009, p.150).

In the first loop - Data Management, we segmented, documented, and organized the collected data (Randolph 2008, p.85). Thenceforth, in the Reading - Memoing loop, the documents were read and memos written. This step is where we reflect and get an understanding of the content. The process helps us to clarify the phenomena, by capturing the comparison and connections that we make (Birks, Chapman & Francis, 2008). Thirdly, in the Describing, Classifying and Interpreting loop, we initially began to code the data to reduce it into meaningful segments for interpretation. As the described data were divided into sets of categories, the following step was to interpret the data (Randolph, 2008, p.88). In this process, we sought to identify themes, which are the building blocks to build theory and to design the concept of progressive stereotypes that managers can apply when collaborating over national/cultural borders. Before writing the analysis result in the research report, we elaborated in the Representing – Visualizing procedure, how we should present our analysis result (Randolph, 2008, p.88)
As emphasized in the analysis of this study, representations of the data take the form of themes as text and models. Other representations that were used extensively was the quotes from our respondents. Due to the fact that the raw data was made out of words, quotes enabled us to present data and put that quote in context and/or analyse its meaning. By doing so, it was possible to posit hypotheses in relation to the research question. This procedure has not only simplified to skim through managed data, it also allows future readers to efficiently grasp what was presented, and its purpose. It is furthermore an approach to strengthening and support the analysis (Randolph, 2008, p.88).

Software, used for the analysis of qualitative data is known as computer assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS). The advantages of using such software enable the researcher to manage storage-, coding-, as well as the retrieval of data (Denscombe, 2010, p.278). These features offer means to conduct studies more efficiently in relation to the old school pen and paper.

The CAQDAS used for this thesis was therefore Atlas TI. It is a qualitative data analysis program, which, according to Wikipedia (2015a), is used by researchers and practitioners in several fields, for instance in anthropology. As this study was analysed by Creswell (2009) “data spiral”, functionalities such as data organization, writing tools, linking and visualizing were useful.

3.6 Ethics
The following Swedish ethics rules are applied in this study;
• "Information (individuals participating in a research project should be familiar with the purpose and the involved elements and that their participation is voluntary).
• Confidentiality (the data on a person’s involvement in the investigation is treated with the utmost confidentiality and stored in a secure manner).

• The utilization (the information collected about individuals may be used only for research purpose)” (Repstad, 1999, p.68).

These formalities of ethics are applied when formatting the Informed consent form (Appendix 1).
Chapter 4 – Results

The data gathered from the interviews was first transcribed and then structured using the software tool Atlas.TI which allowed us to structure all information and create connections between them. This was helpful in order to find reoccurring themes in the extensive material we collected. The first step in this process was to break down the data into segments. This was done using the coding and quotation functions in Atlas.Ti where different segments of interest were sorted and highlighted. Atlas.TI also allows commenting the segments at the same time, which was useful in order to structure the data. The next step after the coding process was finished; the process of making quotations began. After the codes and quotations were chosen different codes and quotations were connected with each other.

Based on the aim of the study, we were interested in collecting information that provided an insight into different managers’ view on how they approach a cross-cultural collaboration, especially in an unknown setting where they do not know much about the participants and their respective culture.

The first part of the result section will focus on what managers must do in order to handle cultural differences in cross-cultural collaborations. The second part of the result section will focus on how managers can grasp a cultural setting in order to take appropriate actions.

4.1 Preparations

One of the first questions we asked our respondents was how they prepared for an upcoming cross-cultural collaboration, if they had any special preparations. The answers showed that almost none of them had any special preparations, however, they tried to enter a special mindset.

“I have no special procedures, but instead I use my experience when people come from other countries, people have very different ideas and they mean different things by what they say.

Instead of preparing, themselves, the focus lies in the individuals involved in the collaboration.

“It’s all about the individuals [...] show respect for other individuals [...] the emanate of your action is dependable on the individual [...] you need to have an understanding of each individual”

Another pattern that emerged was the need to clearly state ones expectations and intentions and the need to be able to adapt to new settings.

“I cannot come and say, this is how we do in Sweden and this is the best way and there are many who do it this way. I need to pay respect for your knowledge of your country and that is why you are here. How do you do it and how can we support you?”
Hence, the need to focus on the mutual goal. The mutual goal has to be the starting point for the collaboration combined with the realization that people are different. There was no united response from the managers’ regarding if their approach differed when they approached a group with different cultural background. However, they all had one thing in common which was the realization of the new circumstances which argued for a cultural sensitivity.

“The greater the cultural difference is the more cautious you become because you know that you cannot know everything”.

“First of all, it is about not assuming too much, not taking anything for granted.”

“I always approach by trying to understand my counterpart regarding their core values and culture and what they think is important”

Through the interviews, a pattern emerged showing that very few companies provided any resources in order to prepare their employees for an upcoming cross-cultural collaboration. Almost only large MNCs’, out of the participants experience, had some kind of guidelines in order to prepare their employees. Hence, our respondents were in general on their own in deciding how to approach a cross-cultural collaboration.

4.2 Management influences
It seems like it is up to managers, to a large extent to determine how to approach a cross-cultural collaboration. However, several of the respondents described that they are influenced in leadership, both by their background and by the organizational culture.

“To be Swedish means that we are taught to take other individuals view into account so it comes quite natural”

Another respondent supported this statement, however, focused on other benefits of Scandinavian leadership such as the practice to involve employees and to distribute responsibility. Furthermore, all respondents stated that they have been influenced by the organisational culture in the organisations they are or have been employed.

“Its influence us rather much. [...] We are very proud of our culture, where the foundation of the leadership principles and our culture is developed based on our employees’ opinions - we asked them; how would you prefer your manager/colleagues to behave towards you and how would you like to be towards your manager/colleagues.”

Hence, organizational culture may have a greater impact than expected on managers’ management behaviour.

“I believe organizational culture has a bigger impact than you think, because in some way you get used to it very quickly regarding that things work in a certain way. If you are in a big
company they have very specialized departments. Then to get to a small company where one is expected to do 7-8 different kinds of tasks, it is those things that require conversion.”

Another factor that is related to the organisational culture is to which degree individuals are expected to take their own initiative. It requires additional efforts of the individual if the person is required to take their own initiatives instead of waiting on being told what to do. More specifically, the organisational culture may not explicitly affect how a manager manages a cross-cultural team; it rather affects how managers manage teams in general.

Almost none of the respondents stated that they used specific theories or methods as they approached cross-cultural collaborations. Nevertheless, one factor that was mentioned by almost all of the respondents was the importance of personal encounters. Physical distance was mentioned as a hindrance, however, if a personal encounter has occurred there exists a foundation on which the parties can rely on.

“That you actually sit in the same room helps immensely. One can see the body language and you can point and so-so”.

Management techniques also have an effect on those who are being managed, according to the majority of the respondents.

“Absolutely crucial! I believe regardless of the context and whatever you live, or whatever culture you come from, I think that leadership is absolutely critical for performance. It is also true like in every other aspect, to figure out what type of person I have in front of me and what motivates them and what are their brake pads.”

Participants can also get confused if a certain leadership style is used which can result in participants’ not knowing what to do or how to act. The key to success, in that case, is to show humbleness and establish a dialogue, according to our respondents. Participants may also experience conflicts of loyalty to their local management. In that case, it is essential to have a dialogue with the participants’ local management team. The most important thing is to avoid creating frustration, which can create friction and lower performance. One way of doing that is to be honest.

“It is better to be more open about failures than lie about the real progress.”

4.3 Establishing a shared cultural platform
According to our respondents, there are situations where the impacts of cultural differences are diminished. One strongly emerging factor was the importance of a common goal or target.

“... if you have a clear vision within the group, team or whatever you choose to call it, that you are working towards you barely touch on cultural differences. Because you have to set a goal and that goal should have no relation to politics or religion, which in my experience never has occurred, then you do not notice that we are actually sitting in different countries.”
Another respondent provided a similar description:

“If there is a common goal and everyone understands it, then I think the cultural differences will be even lesser. Since there is something you agree about.”

Another factor that in the experience of the respondents could unite a project group was crisis situations or when the project group was successful. If there is a sense of urgency present things can get done and cultural differences can be pushed to the side. In the same way, if a project group is riding on the waves of success, it does not matter if someone is acting out of the ordinary or saying strange things.

However, there are several factors, according to our respondents that can complicate the settings of a project group. Individuals in different cultures may not define different factors in the same way. One such concept that emerged from the interviews was the time dimension. For example, to act quickly can have different meanings in different cultures.

“If something should go quickly, it's a certain speed in the US and a certain speed in Germany and a certain speed in Turkey.”

Different ways of communicating were another factor that emerged which can affect cross-cultural collaborations.

“In Sweden we say "can you take a peek at this," but between the lines it means "do this". If you say this to a Finnish person. "Yes, I can take a peek at it" and then it means that this person will not do it.”

According to our respondents, managers have to understand this kind of subtle differences. The purpose is not to get the individuals to operate in the same way since it can be counter-beneficial to the value of having dissidents. The challenge is to build upon these differences in order to maximize the value.

“The global practice is that there are some basic values and there are some basic ways that you might have to implement, but you have to allow that process and working methods are a little different in the different countries to take advantage of the organization that are there in the best way.”

In order to have the same definitions and concepts, the importance of facilitating communication, emerged as an important factor.

“Facilitating communication is extremely important. It is noticeable when you are trying to get cross-functional teams to work well, it is extremely important to work very much on feedback and understanding of differences. To have a clear communication, and what I mean by being clear, is to ask questions, ask additional questions, check in, and allow space to ensure that we are fairly on the same level so we understand each other.”
The result so far has focused on what managers must do in order to handle cultural differences in cross-cultural collaborations. But how can managers grasp a culture in order to take proper actions? The next sections of the result show our respondents view on the use of stereotypes and generalizations as well as using an in-depth and profound analysis to grasp a cultural setting.

4.4 The positivist paradigm: useful stereotypes

All the managers in this study found generalizations or stereotypes useful in order to understand different cultures. They differed in their perception regarding how useful stereotypes really are, however, they had one thing in common, all respondents agreed that stereotypes should not be applied at a sub-national or even personal level. The use of stereotypes in the mind of our respondents is just a way to gain an initial understanding of unfamiliar settings and to gain knowledge.

“I definitely use generalizations to know where the worst traps are and what patience I should have. There is a huge difference. However, you have to be careful and realize that they are just generalizations and use them with caution and common sense.”

“I really find it useful to use stereotypes. If you do not have any knowledge or understanding at all, then it is better to use a generalization and have a very generalizing, but OPEN attitude. Then you learn more and more, all people are different, however, culture matters more or less, some generalizing knowledge is good to have”.

Another respondent described the necessity of using stereotypes:

“I believe that we are forced to generalize, I think it is necessary to do so. As people pervert, distort, generalize reality and interpret it so we can understand it. I think that if we would not generalize in any aspect things would be far too detailed, detail-oriented. One would take into account every little aspect of things, and you would build in such a sluggishness in everything so you would never progress, if we had not used generalizations. It is better to hit 80% in six months than to hit 100% in three years.”

Our respondents’ assessment of a group is based on more profound knowledge than stereotypes, nonetheless, stereotyping are part of the preparation for an upcoming collaboration. Furthermore, it has to exist a clear distinction between individuals and stereotypes. Stereotypes have to be drawn on an abstract level. There will always exist greater individual differences than peremptory differences.

“It is interesting to show that there are large differences between different organizations or between different project groups when they work together, but after all the individuals you meet may be very different.”
Another aspect of stereotypes that emerged, as the quote illustrates, is that they manifest that our respondents think there is a difference between cultures which is more or less well captured by stereotypes. Our respondents provided further insight on how stereotypes can be balanced to prevent negative stereotyping.

“You cannot generalise too coarse. One can generalize to a certain level, but do it too rough, then you will end up being wrong in certain sections or parts.”

Furthermore, there has to exist humility before that fact that there is always an explanation for the cultural differences and that there are individual differences. It can seem senseless from one perspective, nevertheless there is always an explanation. One tangible management technique that emerged was the collective responsibility of the project group and the manager. The manager has to take action when stereotyping gets out of hands, which include unpleasant discussions.

“What are you saying? Why do you say that? And how do you think they are not doing their job when they have actually engaged in the same way as we in this project? It is very easy to agree with generalizations, but it is difficult to say that this is not acceptable.”

According to our respondents, managers have to set boundaries by challenging their subordinates view when stereotypes are applied at a sub-national or personal level. Since it is a necessity to keep the stereotyping on an abstract level in order to achieve positive stereotypes and raise cultural competence.

4.5 The Interpretive paradigm: going beyond stereotypes
In our study, the respondents had a differentiated view regarding the interpretive paradigm. One interesting view that emerged was that this non-generic approach actually can be counterproductive. Counterproductive in the sense that a profound analysis does not render enough information in order to provide a holistic view of the entire situation. Therefore, according to some of our respondents there is an apparent risk to categorize and classify certain individuals early on.

“If you look at all the individuals I have encountered, would all of them have been categorized early on without being able to show what they could do, it would have been everybody’s loss.”

Other respondents also expressed the difficulty of making decisions based on the deficient information.

“If you are to carry out a project in Egypt and make an analysis prior to the collaboration you will not comprehend one hundredth of the real situation.”
In other words, there is a risk of establishing decisions on deficient information which can cause misunderstandings within the collaboration. Other respondents had a more positive view of this approach and pointed out that one cannot really trust every source of information. One needs to be sure that information regarding generic descriptions really can be trusted. One respondent described a course leader who strongly opposed that Chinese organizations’ had a VHS (Video Home System) equipment to show presentations. However, the respondent’s colleague who had experience of working in China had the information that was not the case at all. This example highlights the necessity of local knowledge.

“You have to have someone on site and you need to talk to people there.”

Another perspective emerged regarding having staff on site also emerged from other respondents. This view emphasized the size of the project.

“The larger the project is, then more overhead costs have to be put on this kind of... but otherwise, no.”

Furthermore, an assessment has to take place in order to justify the analysis.

“Are there reasons, so absolutely, one must weigh at the time in order to defend the results that you will achieve.”

To summarize the information provided by our respondents, it is coherent that stereotypes, in fact, can be used in a constructive manner if applied at an abstract level and that stereotyping can be seen as a necessity. It is also coherent that a profound analysis has several drawbacks, yet, highlights the need of personal and national encounters.
Chapter 5 – Analysis

This study tries to investigate how international managers handle cultural differences in cross-cultural collaborations. The study tries to answer the following question: *How can managers benefit from both a generic and a non-generic approach in order to manage cultural differences in cross-cultural collaborations?*

We found similar results as Deresky (2011) and Thomas (2008) regarding that several of the organizations underestimate the importance of cultural differences. This can be seen through the limited amount of resources provided by organisations. In our study only big MNCs’ provided resources to facilitate the understanding of cultural differences. The lack of resources can be interpreted as an underestimation of the effects of cultural differences in cross-cultural collaborations in different organisations. However, the majority of managers pointed out several advantages of having working groups with diversity in the organisation.

Regarding organisational culture, as described in the literature review there is a clear distinction between societal culture and organisational culture. “Organisational culture focuses on behavioural norms as the fundamental element which amplifies the distinction between organisational culture and societal culture” (Thomas, 2008, p.41). This distinction became even more apparent through our study since organisational culture appeared to be a behaviourist construction to benefit the organisation in focus. According to Hannerz (1996) social culture is also thought and acquired in our social life, however, the focus on organisational culture lies on selectable norms in order to reach organisational goals. Hanson & Mylnek (2014) identified culture as the essential factor of success in changing organisational behaviours. Furthermore, organizational culture had a strong impact on our respondents’ way of working. Not only in cross-cultural collaborations, but overall. Both nominal and systematic differences due to cultural differences, described by Graen & Hui (1996), were found to affect our respondents’ way of working. Managers cannot rely on that their definitions’ of different concepts will be uniform with the definitions’ of other individuals in other cultures. It can also provide great value to the group if the members are able to share their experiences in a constructive way. If all members of a group have the same definitions and the same way of thinking it would halt development. This was one of the emergent sources of value provided by having dissidents in a project constellation. However, in order to benefit from the different perspectives the group has to share the same definitions and be sure that they are discussing the same subject. In order to ensure such a common understanding, the study respondents’ highlighted the importance of applying a cultural sensitivity. Li, Griffin, Yue & Zhao (2013) also emphasizes such an approach as they call a managerial delicacy. Cultural differences can in some situations be diminished, for example, if there is a coherent vision or goal. Overall the result of our study shows, in order to establish a common practice and a shared cultural platform, managers have to understand the conditions of a host country. The settings that affect the behaviour of the individuals from a different cultural background.
The use of generalisations or stereotypes is one way to initially understand a cultural setting. As described by Hofstede (1991) all the managers agreed on that stereotypes should not be applied at a sub-national or even personal level. The use of stereotypes in the mind of our respondents is just to gain an initial understanding of unfamiliar settings and to gain knowledge, accordingly with McFarlane’s (2014) description of positive stereotyping. The positive use of stereotypes includes, for example, the use of stereotypes as an information gathering method which can increase cultural competence. Negative stereotyping include the use of discrimination, favouritism and racism and can also lead to ignorance, misunderstandings and oppression.

There is a vast amount of criticism against cultural stereotypes in general and against Hofstede in particular (Baskerville, 2003; McSweeney, 2002; Billing, 1994; Myers & Tan, 2002). This study is not in accordance with authors such as Hofstede, as this study strives to prove how managers’ can benefit from the use of positive stereotyping combined with a profound analysis. The interpretive paradigm is inspired by anthropology and offers a more qualitative way of understanding cultural differences (Joannides, Wickramasinghe & Berland, 2012).

5.1 The use of multiple paradigms
As our results show there are both benefits and drawbacks with positivist and interpretive approaches. Hence, none of the paradigms can be said to be effective on their own. According to our respondents, generalizations have to be applied to an abstract or national level in order not to be misleading or counterproductive. Regarding the interpretive approach, it became apparent that it requires extensive resources and risks a deficient result on its own. In total, the findings imply that stereotypes are a useful tool if used in an appropriate way through applying it on an abstract level and a profound analysis should be applied when managers are within the cross-cultural setting. Through the result of our study, we are now going to introduce the concept of progressive stereotypes. This concept incorporates a process in which generalizations are used as a starting point for managers’ in a cross-cultural collaboration, in accordance with our respondents responses. Figure 5 shows the process in which managers can benefit from both a generic and non-generic approach.

This model introduces the highly flexible concept of progressive stereotypes which connects two, otherwise opposing, paradigms into one feasible approach in order to understand cultural differences in the context of a cross-cultural collaboration. Since the flexibility stems from the nature of progressive stereotypes; it can be described more as a mindset than a hands-on management technique.
First, stereotypes are used as a starting point for an international collaboration and progressively transform into profound knowledge. Through the concept of progressive stereotypes managers’ can enter a cross cultural collaboration with a starting point in a feasible way. Hence, in the first section of the model the Positivist national paradigm is applied, this implies that the mindset of a manager presupposes that all the individuals or a group of people from one specific country have the same specific values and behaviours. As a managerial approach, a group or individual the manager sets his/her mindset to an open state, thus the manager does not know what type of persons he or she will encounter. However, the generalisation is still active in the mind and will act as a starting point of information that the manager will utilise to evaluate the situation when approaching an individual or group and are trying to bridge the cultural differences between the two partners. Depending on the level of stereotyping the manager use, the outcome will be one of the categories Positive or Negative Stereotyping. The positive effects of stereotyping are dependent on the attitude of the user when approaching the phenomenon. Whereas humility and a more open-minded approach in the treatment of national differences can result in increased cultural competence. If the manager assesses the situation, by taking a step back and realize that the formation does not match the information that was available from the beginning. By curiosity begin to ask questions and add one thing to another, by assuming which information is correct and which
is not in that situation, and then supplement the information which does not match. By applying this approach, the person starts from a point where some of the information was initially truthful, and thus collects new and adequate details of the reality and the situation. This approach can hypothetically contribute to more efficient interconnections and a faster understanding of the interactions between cultural differences. On the contrary, if the person is determined that a certain group or individuals will act in a certain way, it is probable that the effects such an assumption will result in negative stereotyping which can result in ignorance, misunderstandings and oppression.

The justification of the use of stereotypes of theoretical perspective can be done using the term “strategic essentialism” as a tool for liberating the effects of colonial and neo-colonial oppression. The argument for such generalizations was that in different periods of time different groups need a sense of value and dignity (Ashcroft et al., 2000). According to Frenkel (2008) a MNC is a concrete example of “The third space” metaphor due to repeated encounters between members of an organization and what they perceive as different cultures and state institutions. McFarlane (2014) describes that numerous of the negative aspects of stereotyping occur when the stereotype remains after the learning phase has taken place. In the modern society the general situation can be described through the lenses of unlimited wants and limited means. In other words, stereotypes can be problematic for those who are being stereotyped. The dangerous stereotypes are the negative stereotypes since they can impose non-democratic and destructive values (McFarlane, 2014). As the discussion has shown the process of progressive stereotypes requires the stereotyping to be positive in accordance with McFarlane’s (2014) description of positive stereotyping.

Secondly, as the manager reach Interpretive/Anthropology paradigm the mindset is balanced between the generic and non-generic approach, as the manager generalise from the beginning, then evaluate the situation; what information is useful in this situation and then finally collect new information by investigating the group or person. By using the gathered information together with the latter information, the manager can establish a profound understanding. Hence, when the actual encounter occurs between the parties the stereotype naturally transforms into a profound analysis of the situation. This concept mirrors our respondent’s call for a sensitive and informed approach. It also meets the requirements of opponents of the positivist paradigm. Joannides et al. (2012) stated that frameworks from anthropology should be borrowed, which lead researchers to develop contextualised theories. The concept of progressive stereotypes incorporates contextualised theories which also can be applied in managerial work.
Chapter 6 - Discussion and critical reflection

Our main goal with this thesis was to propose a highly flexible approach to managing cross-cultural collaborations, which did not impose subnational-level generalisations. In this sense, we explored different managerial approaches by interviewing 14 managers. We asked:

*How can managers benefit from both a generic and a non-generic approach in order to manage cultural differences in cross-cultural collaborations?*

It is easy to generalise. If we discuss generalisations, in general, then it happens time to time humans generalise, to some degree, in some aspects - even if we do not want to admit it. In this study, we have learned that managers generalise and apply “stereotyping” in some aspects and to some degree - in order to help their perception of reality and to assist them to approach new cultural settings. This powerful and sensitive tool has also contributed the development of an organisation culture. As a respondent narrated, their organisational culture was formalised through “generalisations” of the employees notions, which the employees could support and agree on. This aspect of agreeable terms is an interesting aspect. This study revealed that if a group of people can agree on something, as a mutual goal and further share this with other individuals, the national cultural differences seem not to impact the performance of the group and willingness to cooperate. Hence, the common goal in a group gives us a sense of belonging and a common ground that we can share, and strive against. This factor has seemingly become an important factor in order to bridge cultural differences within and between cross a cross-cultural collaboration; as the boundaries of nationalities apparently becomes indistinct, when managers convene a group with a common agenda.

The applicability of the generic and non-generic approach is seemingly the balancing act between life experience and humility in the presence of humanity. Since managers have to be prepared to adjust their view and actions in a new setting. Hofstede and the positivist approach arguably pointed out similarities and differences in national culture. Researchers such as Baskerville (2003; 2005), McSweeney (2002a; 2002b) and Myer & Tan (2002), clearly criticise this approach and the general aspect of generalising national culture. However, culture can be generalised on an abstract or national level to some degree, which this study has supported and that generalisations seem to be a helpful tool for managers. On the other hand, Baskerville (2003;2005), McSweeney (2002a;2002b), Myer & Tan (2002) and the interpretive approach also make a valuable point; we are all individualists and within every group, organisation, society and country there exist distinctness and subculture(s), accordingly it may be wrong to standardise by using generalisations. To generalise the individualistic diversity would seemingly be a loss of essential capability in organisations. As managers of this study clearly point out; dissidence in an organisation is only a beneficial dimension if it can be structured. However, these two counterparts, individualism and the generalisation of people seem to be the interception of contemporary managers´ approaches, as they need to encounter cultural diversity in their everyday work through cross-cultural organisational settings. Further, to successfully approach cultures by applying stereotypes comes with experience. In this sense, you need to be brave, to put yourself out there, as you
might be mistaken in your assumptions. Even if you are not being mistaken in your assumptions, the general approach seemingly is to show humility. Humility, when you are mistaken and also when you are approaching new cultures. In this aspect, humility is not the only term. Instead, it should be translated to a curiosity of other people and showing respect towards other cultures. Therefore, to balance a generic and non-generic approach requires life experience and humility towards other people and cultures.

The concept of progressive stereotypes in its current state has several weaknesses. It has a rather weak empirical foundation, based on a study with 14 participants. Therefore, the result of this study is highly subjective. However, as the study uses an interpretive paradigm as a source when collecting data; thus it only emphasises the view and beliefs from our respondents and our interpretations of the collected data. A question that comes to mind; How do we know if this data is consistent and has applicability in the way we present it? To conclude, the data left a trail of patterns for us to follow. When we collected the data, it was noticed that a majority of the respondents had similar experiences from cross-cultural collaborations. Although the respondent had not worked in the same places in the world or had collaborated with identical nationalities, their answers were surprisingly similar. Therefore, we believe that the high degree of correlations in the data that was collected gives the study´s credibility.

Furthermore, the practical implications have to be tested and observed in order to solidify our findings.

The question is if the progressive stereotyping is applicable to other populations. This study collected data from managers in Sweden and primarily from people living in Stockholm. It is true to a certain point, that managers from Sweden has a formal approach and our organisational decisions are elaborated through “consensus”. As our data from the study has only representativeness from one nationality, it seems to be justifiable to raise the question – does the data have generalisability and can this result be transferred to other populations? The generalisability of research relies on samples from a large population with a quantitative approach. We have full confidence in the progressive stereotyping approach applicability and thus the transferability on other contexts since it mainly consists of a special mindset. Progressive stereotypes are not for most a hands-on management technique, rather it represents the process of using stereotypes in a constructive manner in cross-cultural collaborations. Nevertheless, we suggest prospective research, to test and confirm our theory and the progressive stereotyping approach, with other methods and populations, in order to establish its “generalisability”.

Our findings imply that the positivist and the interpretive paradigm does not have to be seen as opposing approaches to handling cultural differences. As our study shows they can actually complement each other and provide managers with additional beneficial factors than those which can be extracted from one paradigm. Progressive stereotype is a concept that incorporates both qualitative and generic knowledge, leaving managers with a feasible approach to understanding and managing cultural differences. The progressive stereotypes are
flexible since it mainly is to be considered as a mindset and its effectiveness stems from the easily accessed information provided by stereotypes. Furthermore, our findings and the development of the concept of progressive stereotyping answers our initial research question. Through the use of this concept, managers can benefit from both a generic and non-generic approach in order to manage and understand cultural differences in a feasible way. The concept of progressive stereotypes is also a highly flexible approach that can capture several aspects of cultural differences through its multiparadigm construct. Hence, this study has fulfilled its aim and of a less paradigmatic study, which identifies a feasible approach to help managers manage different cross-cultural collaborations. The research objectives have also been achieved by introducing the concept of progressive stereotypes as an answer to how cultural differences can be simplified enough in order to be utilized by managers in practise on an organizational level, by exploring what actions managers take in order to manage cross-cultural collaborations.

We believe that the concept of progressive stereotypes, primarily adds to the theoretical knowledge within the field of cross-cultural research. Since this study is based on practical knowledge from experienced managers who deal with the presence of cultural differences on a daily basis. Within the theoretical field of knowledge, very few studies have dealt with the multiparadigm approach and arguably not with a similar focus as this study. The knowledge within the different paradigms is known and tested by many researchers, however, the combined knowledge contributed by this study is new. This study also adds to the practical knowledge within this field by solidifying a mindset of cultural sensitivity with generic and non-generic elements. The knowledge contributed by this study is especially important in highlighting the constructive use of generalisations or stereotypes within cross-cultural research on an abstract or national level.
Chapter 7 - Conclusion

The majority of research in cross-culture management is represented by the positivist paradigm. Primecz, Romani & Sackmann (2009) reflect that this over-representation of the positivist paradigm within cross-cultural management research has caused a misalignment among paradigms. Therefore, they advocate contemporary cross-cultural management research to apply other research paradigms than the positivist paradigm. Furthermore, authors of several scientific articles, literature and publications in cross-cultural management have misinterpreted the utilisation of Hofstede’s research and theories, as they apply the national culture dimensions on sub-national levels. Although, Professors, researchers and scientists around the world criticise the theories of Hofstede and informs scholars and practitioners, still, the usage of Hofstede’s theories is extensive (Egan & Bendick, 2008)

In the interest to investigate to what extent such theories is applied by the corporate leaders and MNC’s, and secondly to satisfy the need of a less paradigmatic study, we are combining a positivist paradigm and an interpretive paradigm into one feasible approach in the interest of guiding managers when managing different cross-cultural collaborations. Consequently, this study emanates from two objectives;

- To explore how cultural differences can be simplified enough in order to be utilized by managers in practice on an organizational level and
- To explore what actions managers take in order to manage cross cultural collaborations.

Managers in most cases do not prepare themselves as they encounter new cultures or enters cross cultural collaborations. Instead, their focus lies with each individual in the team. Each individual is different, therefore the concept of progressive stereotypes shows respect and is the development of an understanding for the specific individual by not imposing generalisations on a subnational or personal level. To summarise, organisations do not in general provide resources to facilitate the understanding of cultural differences, instead the manager’s in this study apply “humility” when approaching people in cross cultural settings. They operate through applying their previous experiences of encountering people from other cultures and by having an approach that focus on the respectful treatment of each person they encounter. The manager’s in this study tries therefore to find the understanding of other cultures and people by approaching with openness and asking questions such as how can I as a manager help you and how can we help each other to succeed.

In addition, the aspect of setting mutual goals, facilitates managers to build an interconnection between people. This interconnection provides a vision for the group to focus on, which gives them comfort, something to pursue and rely on. In this zone of commonality, the openness of sharing experience and knowledge arise. As the group have agreed on mutual goals and are starting to share their life experiences, cultural differences become an intriguing aspect of each individual, instead of being an encumbrance to the group. Even if diversity and dissidence are of benefit, the group need to clarify the differences in the group such as
individualistic cultural aspects. This procedure emphasises cultural comparison, to make their work more efficient and circumvent misunderstandings.

This study endeavours to design a concept that could be applied in cross-cultural management. By seeking the advantages and weakness of both positivist and interpretive paradigms of cross-cultural management theories and how these concepts are applied the manager’s, the study developed a new concept in cross-cultural management - The progressive stereotypes.

Progressive stereotypes are not intended as a hands-on management technique, they are rather to be perceived as a mindset. As a way of using stereotypes as an abstract foundation in order to have an initial base in a cross-cultural collaboration. The stereotype is to be transformed by profound knowledge when the actual collaboration has started. Therefore, the tangible management techniques offered by progressive stereotypes are the procedures, how generalisations and a profound analysis are used and combined.

By introducing the concept of progressive stereotypes the study suggests that managers can benefit from both a generic and a non-generic approach in order to handle and understand cultural differences. However, in what way managers can benefit from both approaches is not fully covered by this study. Primarily, the result of the study indicates that cultural differences can be understood and handled in a more feasible way. In a feasible way we mean an effective and flexible approach that diminishes conflicts based on cultural differences which applies in several settings and situations. Hence, the full range of “how” managers can benefit from the use of both approaches is not fully discovered by this study.

7.1 Further research
First, there is an apparent need of solidifying the concept of progressive stereotypes by conducting a large-scale study with a broad range of nationalities and with a larger sample. This study indicates the implications of a multiparadigm using a generic and a non-generic approach, to understand and handle cultural differences, however, the concept needs to be further examined and tested.

Secondly, there is a need to investigate how managers can benefit fully from a concept such as progressive stereotypes. This study has only focused on the feasibility benefits, nevertheless, further implications need to be discovered.
Chapter 8 – Limitations

The interpretive research approach seems to question the validity of this research. As we approach the social phenomenon by interviewing the social actors, we only collect the respondents subjective meanings; how they interpreted their actions and experience. Furthermore, as we interpret the findings in the analysis, it is arguably the result of this research is seemingly grounded on superficial knowledge. Assume if we had approached the phenomena with an active participation and had become a member of the culture or group that was studied, by participating in their daily practices. This criticism could have been avoided. Nevertheless, the research approach seems set limitations on the validation of the research result. It should, therefore, be questioned. However, the findings clearly demonstrate that managers from different MNC’s in Sweden share equal opinions. In addition, as the empirical data is annotated and further structured with Atlas.TI, the empirical data were subjectively interpreted for the first time in the analysis phase. Seemingly, this research validity accordingly to its approach to compile the data of the findings and finalize the results of the research, should therefore be considered as possible and relevant to its context. Furthermore, as previous research has shown there is severe criticism against the positivist paradigm and the use of generalisations. In this research project we have chosen to focus on the use of generalisations which implies that other points of critic can be directed towards our multiparadigm approach. This is an inherent weakness which we are aware of.
References


Appendices

Appendix 1: Informed Consent Form
Our names are John Fargau Petrini and Mikael Millby and we are currently enrolled in the Master’s program Strategic IT Management at Stockholm’s University. We are currently writing our thesis in the field of Management, where we are conducting a study. The research topic we are focusing on is as follows:

How can managers benefit from both a generic and a non-generic approach in order to manage cultural differences in cross-cultural collaborations?

Background of the assignment:
The main goal of the interview is therefore to explore and analysis how the manager in MNC approach culture differences when managing a group and individuals.

Expectations from the interview
The expectation from the interview is to be able to analysis the managers different perspectives and approaches. To be able to properly do so, we will have a list of already set questions to ask during the interview. To be able to make the interview as time efficient, and smooth as possible, we are sending you the questions 24 hours before the set interview date.

The interview
To ensure that analysis of the material is to be precise, we would like to record the interview. Given that it is approved, you may:
- End the interview at any time for any reason as it is voluntary
- Not respond to a given question

Your participation in this research is confidential. I recommend carrying out the interview at a booked room at your office. If this is not possible, we can do it elsewhere, e.g. at a café, or somewhere else outside the office.

Date, time and length of interview
Proposed dates: somewhere in between 1st and 30th of April 2015
Proposed time: any time.
Length of interview: expected to be around 1 hour.

After the interview
Once we are done with the interview we will not take up more of your precious time. You are of course welcome to contact me at any time. I will also give you an opportunity to go through the paper before it is handed in once finalized. This will provide you a chance to confirm that I have not presented anything inappropriate. If this is not requested, I can send the paper to you once finalized to share my findings with you.

The findings of this study will not be used, or distributed in any way than for the sake of writing this paper. The transcripts and audio files are also to be deleted once the research is finalized.

Contact details:
(Censored)
I have read and understood the written details provided for me about this research, and agree to participate in the study.
Participant Researcher

………………………………..  …………………………………..
Appendix 2: The interview question
1. Could you please state your name and current position?
2. What experiences do you have in working across different cultures at a national and international level?
3. How do you approach a business/collaboration when you working with a person/group, (routines, preparations…)?
   a, National level
   b, International level
4. Is it any difference in the approach when you approaching a cross cultural group or a group which has the same cultural background, or a group that has almost or nearly the same cultural background as you?
5. Does your company provide any resources in order to handle possible difficulties? E.g. training, courses, seminars, documents…?
6. In what way have you encountered difficulties due to cultural differences?
7. In what way do you think national cultures affect the organizational settings?
8. In what way do you think your leadership ability of cross-culture groups affects individuals’ performance?
9. How do you define culture and what theories do you use when you approach/lead these groups/individuals?
10. What methods do you use, in order to facilitate the bridge over cross cultural collaborations?
11. What disadvantages do you think a dissidence approach in an organization could lead to?
    a, When hiring, when working together and so forth.
12. What would be the advantages, do you think, with a dissidence approach in an organization?
13. In what way do you think nominal factors (behaviors, language and institutions) affect you in your approach to manage?
14. In what way do you think systematic factors (values, beliefs and the rules of the social game) affect you in your approach to manage?
15. Are there any situations where you think the effect cultural differences are diminished?
16. In what way do you think the organizational culture reflects in your approach and actions?
17. how do you reflect on new cultures, which aspects do you think is important to consider in order to establish global practices and a shared cultural platform?
18. Do you think it is any difference in your approach towards clients versus business partners?
19. Do you find it useful to use generalizations in order to grasp the mindset of national cultures?
    If yes, in which situations?
    If no, how come?
20. How do you balance generalizations?
21. Do you find it useful to conduct an in-depth analysis?
22. Do you find it feasible to use in-depth analysis?
23. Which tool, method or resource do you find most valuable in order to overcome cultural differences?
Appendix 3: Interview question in Swedish

1. Kan du ange ditt namn och nuvarande position?

2. Vilka erfarenheter har du av att arbeta över olika kulturella gränser på nationell och internationell nivå?

3. Hur du närmar dig en internationell samverkan (rutiner, förberedelser ...)?
   a, Nationell nivå
   b, Internationell nivå

4. Är det någon skillnad i synsätt när du närmar dig en tvärkulturell grupp jämfört med en grupp som har samma kulturella bakgrund, eller en grupp som har nästan samma kulturella bakgrund som du?

5. Har ditt företag några resurser för att hantera eventuella svårigheter i internationella samarbeten? T.ex. utbildning, kurser, seminarier, dokument ...

6. På vilket sätt har ni stött på svårigheter på grund av kulturella skillnader?

7. På vilket sätt tror du att nationella kulturer påverkar organisatoriska förhållanden?

8. Hur definierar du kultur och vilka teorier använder du när du närmar dig/leder internationella grupper/individer?

9. Vilka metoder använder ni, för att underlätta tvärkulturella samarbeten?

10. På vilket sätt tror du att ditt ledarskap inom tvärkulturella grupper påverkar individers prestationer?

11. Vilka nackdelar tror du det innebär att ha många oliktänkande i en organisation kan leda till?
    a, Vid anställning, när man arbetar tillsammans och så vidare.

12. Vad skulle vara fördelarna, tror du, med många oliktänkande i en organisation?

13. På vilket sätt tror du att nominella faktorer (beteenden, språk och institutioner) påverkar dig i ditt sätt att hantera tvärkulturella grupper?

14. På vilket sätt tror du att systematica faktorer (värderingar, övertygelser och reglerna för det sociala spelet) påverkar dig i ditt sätt att hantera tvärkulturella grupper?

15. Finns det situationer där du tror att kulturella skillnader förminska?

16. På vilket sätt tror du att organisationens kultur som du arbetar/arbeitat i speglar i ditt arbetssätt och åtgärder?

17. Hur reflekterar du över nya kulturella möten, vilka aspekter tycker du är viktigt att tänka på för att fastställa en global praxis och en gemensam kulturell plattform?

18. Tror du att det är någon skillnad i ditt förhållningssätt gentemot kunder kontra affärspartners?

19. Tycker du att det är bra att använda generaliseringar för att förstå tankesättet hos nationella kulturer?
    Om ja, i vilka situationer?
    Om nej, hur kommer det sig?

20. Hur balanserar du generaliseringar?
21. Tycker du att det är bra att genomföra en fördjupad analys?

22. Tycker du att det är möjligt/användbart att genomföra en djupgående analys?

23. Vilket verktyg, metod eller resurs anser du mest värdefulla för att överbrygga kulturella skillnader?