Female Expatriate Managers - Why so Few?

Dual-Perspective Case Studies of Three Swedish MNCs

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For the second time in less than a year, we have been able to squeeze out a lot of words, put them on paper, and hopefully make some sense out of them. The subject is in itself interesting and inspiring for us as (possibly) expatriates-to-be. Therefore, the easy part has been to find commitment to the work, while the more tricky part has been to mediate all the information that we have found and received during the writing of the thesis. Besides the lingering feeling of exhaustion, we feel proud and pleased with the result, and we hope that this study will be of some value to any interested reader – companies, female future expatriates, or other students.

There have been a lot of people involved in the writing of this thesis, both directly and indirectly. Even though there is not enough space here to mention all of them personally, we would like to express our gratitude. First, we would like to give a deep and heartfelt thank you to our respondents, who kindly gave us some of their limited time. Without them, this thesis would not exist in its current form. Thanks also to LuleKraft AB for the generous loan of speakerphones and conference rooms. Finally, thanks to our supervisor Manucher Farhang for good advice and some cheering up when needed.

We would also like to thank each other and ourselves for keeping the necessary speed and discipline – AND all this without getting sick of each other! It can be concluded that a thesis can be built on many things besides a conceptual framework and empirical data. Coffee, for example. And ice-cream boats. Most importantly, compassionate friends and loved ones. Writing a thesis is equal to being one of those hermit crabs that comes out of its little cave once a year or so. Except that in our case, it’s not to mate, it’s just to get some more coffee...

Now for some personalised thank yous, just as the boybands do in their CD booklets:

**Patricia:** I would like to thank my beloved sister and the rest of the family, who have supported me during this period even though they have not had the slightest clue what I have been talking about! My friends also deserve a big thank you for their tolerance of my invisibility.

**Maria:** I would like to thank the sweetest sambo and furriest cat for enduring this period of total egocentricity. Björn, thanks for your support and lemon cake! Finally, I would really like to thank my friends – who hopefully still are my friends – and my mother for being there even when I haven’t been there...

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*Patricia Meijer & Maria Styvén*
The purpose of this study is to gain a deeper understanding of the reasons behind the low ratio of women among expatriate managers of Swedish multinational corporations. It deals with the reasons for the low ratio of women among Swedish MNC expatriates, as described from a corporate perspective and female expatriates’ perspective. The study, which has a qualitative approach, was conducted with a mainly descriptive purpose. The chosen research strategy was three case studies, and the primary data was collected through telephone interviews with three human resource managers and three female expatriates. Secondary data was collected in the form of documentation. Results show that reasons for the low ratio of female expatriates, as described from a corporate perspective, are mainly related to the usage of an array of informal factors. Such factors include an unconscious tendency of men choosing other men, male networks, and the fact that expatriate candidates are well known to selectors. Reasons from the female expatriates’ perspective are primarily connected to dual-career and family issues, but a lack of female role models, mentoring and networking also seems to contribute to the low ratio of women among expatriate managers of Swedish multinational corporations. In addition, there are tendencies toward differences in perspectives between corporations and female expatriates.
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION .............................................................................................................................................1

1.1 BACKGROUND ................................................................................................................................................1

1.1.1 Human Resource Management ..................................................................................................................1

1.1.2 International Human Resource Management .............................................................................................1

1.1.3 Expatriate Management ................................................................................................................................2

1.1.4 Women’s Participation in Management ....................................................................................................3

1.1.5 Women’s Participation in International Management ...........................................................................4

1.2 PROBLEM DISCUSSION ...................................................................................................................................5

1.2.1 Why is the Low Participation of Women in International Management a Problem? ..................................5

1.2.2 Women in International Management: Corporate Perspective ...............................................................6

1.2.3 Women in International Management: Female Expatriates’ Perspective ..............................................7

1.2.4 Swedish Women in International Management ..........................................................................................8

1.3 PURPOSE ..........................................................................................................................................................9

1.4 OUTLINE OF THE STUDY ................................................................................................................................10

2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE ................................................................................................................................11

2.1 WOMEN IN INTERNATIONAL MANAGEMENT: CORPORATE PERSPECTIVE ...............................................11

2.1.1 Women in Management ................................................................................................................................11

2.1.2 Companies’ Hesitations to Send Women on International Assignments ...................................................13

2.1.3 Reasons for Selecting Males Over Females ...............................................................................................15

2.1.4 Selection Processes for Expatriate Assignments .......................................................................................16

2.1.5 The Glass Border ........................................................................................................................................18

2.1.6 Informal Perceptions Regarding Women’s Suitability ..............................................................................20

2.1.7 Dual-Career Couples and Family Issues ..................................................................................................21

2.2 WOMEN IN INTERNATIONAL MANAGEMENT: FEMALE EXPATRIATES’ PERSPECTIVE ..................................22

2.2.1 Women’s Willingness to Take Expatriate Assignments ...........................................................................22

2.2.2 The Supervisor-Subordinate Relationship and Their Different Perspectives ..........................................23

2.2.3 Dual-Career Couples and Family Issues ..................................................................................................24

2.2.4 Role Models in International Management ...............................................................................................26

2.2.5 Lack of Mentoring ......................................................................................................................................27

2.2.6 Lack of Networking ...................................................................................................................................28

3 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK ................................................................................................................................30

3.1 INTRODUCTION TO CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK ................................................................................30

3.2 RESEARCH QUESTION 1 – CORPORATE PERSPECTIVE ...........................................................................30

3.3 RESEARCH QUESTION 2 – FEMALE EXPATRIATES’ PERSPECTIVE .............................................................33

3.4 FRAME OF REFERENCE ................................................................................................................................34

4 METHODOLOGY ..................................................................................................................................................36

4.1 PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH .........................................................................................................................36

4.2 RESEARCH APPROACH ..................................................................................................................................37

4.3 RESEARCH STRATEGY .......................................................................................................................................38

4.4 DATA COLLECTION ...........................................................................................................................................39

4.4.1 Limited Pilot Study ......................................................................................................................................39

4.4.2 Data Collection Methods ...........................................................................................................................40

4.5 SAMPLE SELECTION ........................................................................................................................................42

4.6 GENERAL ANALYTICAL STRATEGY ...............................................................................................................44

4.7 QUALITY STANDARDS – VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY ..............................................................................45
5 EMPIRICAL DATA ................................................................................................................................. 48

5.1 CASE 1 – SCANIA ................................................................................................................................... 48
  5.1.1 Company Presentation ....................................................................................................................... 48
  5.1.2 Company Respondent – Roland Lagerström ..................................................................................... 49
  5.1.3 Female Expatriate Respondent – Inge Persson .................................................................................. 53

5.2 CASE 2 – SCA ......................................................................................................................................... 59
  5.2.1 Company Presentation ....................................................................................................................... 59
  5.2.2 Company Respondent – Jan Lindahl ................................................................................................ 60
  5.2.3 Female Expatriate Respondent – Annika Nordin ............................................................................. 64

5.3 CASE 3 – VOLVO CAR CORPORATION .............................................................................................. 70
  5.3.1 Company Presentation ....................................................................................................................... 70
  5.3.2 Company Respondent – Sven Eckerstein ......................................................................................... 70
  5.3.3 Female Expatriate Respondent – Britt Ålvsäter-Thomasson ............................................................... 74

6 ANALYSIS ............................................................................................................................................ 79

6.1 WITHIN-CASE ANALYSIS OF SCANIA ............................................................................................. 80
  6.1.1 Company Respondent – Roland Lagerström ..................................................................................... 80
  6.1.2 Female Expatriate Respondent – Inge Persson ................................................................................ 83

6.2 WITHIN-CASE ANALYSIS OF SCA ..................................................................................................... 86
  6.2.1 Company Respondent – Jan Lindahl ................................................................................................ 86
  6.2.2 Female Expatriate Respondent – Annika Nordin ........................................................................... 89

6.3 WITHIN-CASE ANALYSIS OF VOLVO CAR CORPORATION .............................................................. 92
  6.3.1 Company Respondent – Sven Eckerstein ......................................................................................... 92
  6.3.2 Female Expatriate Respondent – Britt Ålvsäter-Thomasson ............................................................... 95

6.4 CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS .................................................................................................................. 99
  6.4.1 Corporate Perspective ....................................................................................................................... 100
  6.4.2 Female Expatriates’ Perspective ..................................................................................................... 103

7 FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS ............................................................................................................. 108

7.1 GENERAL DISCUSSION ....................................................................................................................... 108

7.2 HOW ARE THE REASONS FOR THE LOW RATIO OF WOMEN AMONG SWEDISH MNC EXPATRIATES DESCRIBED FROM A CORPORATE PERSPECTIVE? ................................................................. 110

7.3 HOW ARE THE REASONS FOR THE LOW RATIO OF WOMEN AMONG SWEDISH MNC EXPATRIATES DESCRIBED FROM THE FEMALE EXPATRIATES’ PERSPECTIVE? ................................................................. 113

7.4 IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTITIONERS .............................................................................................. 116
  7.4.1 Implications for Companies ............................................................................................................. 116
  7.4.2 Implications for Female Managers .................................................................................................. 117

7.5 IMPLICATIONS FOR THEORY ........................................................................................................... 117

7.6 IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH ................................................................................... 118

REFERENCES ........................................................................................................................................... 119

APPENDICES A – B
LISTS OF FIGURES AND TABLES

List of Figures

Figure 1.1 Outline of the Study ................................................................. 10
Figure 3.1 Frame of Reference ................................................................. 35
Figure 5.1 Structure of Empirical Data Chapter ........................................ 48
Figure 6.1 Structure of Within-Case Analysis ........................................... 79

List of Tables

Table 4.1 Relevant Situations for Different Research Strategies ................. 38
Table 4.2 Six Sources of Evidence: Strengths and Weaknesses ................ 40
Table 4.3 Case Study Tactics for Four Design Tests ................................. 46
Table 6.1 Basic Company and Expatriate Data .......................................... 99
Table 6.2 Cross-Case Analysis of Research Question 1 ............................. 100
Table 6.3 Overview of Support and Rejection – Research Question 1 .......... 103
Table 6.4 Cross-Case Analysis of Research Question 2 ............................. 104
Table 6.5 Overview of Support and Rejection – Research Question 2 .......... 107
“In the era of globalisation, it is indispensable to enable firms worldwide to use and develop women’s talents and potential to the fullest.”

- International Labour Organization
1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter starts by providing a background to the subject of the thesis. Then, a problem discussion about female expatriate managers is presented in order to introduce the reader to the studied problem area. This is followed by the purpose, as well as the research questions. Finally, an outline of the thesis is presented.

1.1 Background

This section will give an introduction to some concepts and research areas that are necessary to understand, as they make up the broad background from which the subject of our study is derived.

1.1.1 Human Resource Management

The strengths and weaknesses of a firm are found in its resources. These include human resources, which consist of the experience, capabilities, knowledge, skills, and judgment of all employees, as well as organisational (e.g. structure, culture, and financial base) and physical (e.g. plants, raw material, and technology) resources. Access to the best organisational and physical resources is useless unless it is combined with a competent work force of managers and employees. It is evident that this makes the management of human resources a very important issue for the firm. (Wright, Kroll & Parnell, 1998)

Human resource management (HRM) as such is a fairly new managerial practice. It has been developed since the late 1970s, driven by changes of mainly economic and technological nature. These changes led to an increased importance of human contribution, which required a different management approach. (Dowling & Schuler, 1990) Currently, trends such as work force diversity, technological trends, globalisation, and changes in the nature of jobs and work, require HRM to play an ever more crucial role in organisations (Dessler, 1997).

In general, HRM refers to “those functions undertaken by an organisation to utilize its human resources effectively” (Dowling, Welch & Schuler, 1999, p. 2). These functions would include human resource planning, staffing, performance management, training and development, compensation and benefits, and labour relations (ibid.). According to Daniels and Radebaugh (1998), the need to have highly qualified people to staff the organisation cannot be overemphasized. Moreover, effective management of human resources is necessary if the organisation’s corporate goals are to be achieved (Palmer, 1998).

1.1.2 International Human Resource Management

Today, companies increasingly compete on a worldwide basis, and few firms have the luxury of competing primarily on domestic markets (Adler, 1994a). As a result of the internationalisation of business, companies must to an increasing extent be managed globally. The addition of an international aspect to organisational functions also means that HRM functions will change. (Dessler, 1997) In broad terms, international HRM involves the same functions as domestic HRM. International human resource management (IHRM) has been defined as the interplay among three dimensions – human resource functions (as described above), countries of operation, and types of employees. (Dowling et al., 1999)
The employees in international organisations are traditionally categorized as one of three types: parent company national (PCN) or expatriate (the latter term will be consistently used in this study), which means that the employee’s nationality is the same as the firm’s; host country national (HCN), which is an employee with the same nationality as the location of the subsidiary; and third country national (TCN), which is the term used for employees from countries other than the country of the headquarters or the subsidiary (Francesco & Gold, 1998). The complexities of operating in different countries and employing different national categories of workers are acknowledged by Dowling et al. (1999) as a key variable that differentiates domestic and international HRM, rather than any major differences between the actual HRM activities performed.

On an individual level, the activities of an international human resource manager differ in six basic points from the activities of a domestic HR manager. Thus, the international HR manager has to deal with the following issues: more functions that also are more heterogeneous, more involvement in employees’ personal lives, a shift in emphasis from expatriates to host-country nationals when the foreign operations grow, more external influences, and finally exposure to various risks, such as political and financial risks. (Dowling & Schuler, 1990)

The effective management of international human resources is increasingly being recognized as a major determinant of success or failure. Other factors of production (capital, technology, raw materials, and information) can often be duplicated, which means that human resources are becoming an even more important asset. As Alan Halcrow, editor of Personnel Journal, puts it: “The caliber of the people in an organisation will be the only source of sustainable competitive advantage”. (Deresky, 2000, p. 346) In this context, the quality of management seems to be a critical success factor (Linehan & Scullion, 2001b). Research shows that the emphasis on management of human resources is three times more powerful than all other factors combined in predicting profitability (Ruhe & Allen, 1997).

1.1.3 Expatriate Management

A major part of IHRM involves the management of expatriates. The company takes greater responsibility for them than for domestic employees, as they are asked to work outside their home countries. (Francesco & Gold, 1998) There is a clear link between globalisation and increasing levels of expatriation amongst managers (Richardson & McKenna, 2000). In practice, the choice of using expatriates often depends on the availability of qualified managers in the host country. Usually, multinational companies\(^1\) (MNCs) staff top management positions with expatriates, while host-country nationals often are selected for middle and lower management positions. (Deresky, 2000) Even though the term “expatriate” simply refers to employees who work outside their home countries (e.g. Deresky, 2000; Francesco & Gold, 1998), it must be noted that the majority of expatriates are placed in managerial positions. For example, in a study conducted by Selmer and Leung (2001a), only 4 percent of the researched expatriate population were in non-managerial positions.

MNCs have for a long time been using expatriation as a means of maintaining control by enforcing and protecting company interests (Tsang, 1999; Selmer & Leung, 2001a). Other benefits of using expatriates include the facilitation of communication between the parent organisation and operations abroad, and the enhancement of the firm’s international knowledge base. This implies that expatriation could lead to a competitive advantage, as it creates a pool

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\(^1\) Multinational company/corporation = A corporation that engages in production or service activities through its own affiliates in several countries (Deresky, 2000, p. 560).
of international managers who are attentive to international opportunities and threats. (Selmer & Leung, 2001a) In the knowledge society, expatriates become exporters, importers, and local traders of expertise, which are the most valuable resources of all (Inkson & Arthur, 1997). Studies have shown that the number of expatriates MNCs are sending on global assignments is growing steadily (e.g. Caligiuri & Cascio, 1998; Richardson & McKenna, 2000). This is not a passing trend – there are forecasts of increasing international mobility over the next decade and well into the third millennium, which means that expatriation will be an increasingly common work experience (Richardson & McKenna, 2000).

A profile of the ideal expatriate does not exist, but certainly the vast majority of expatriate managers are male (Linehan, 2000). Research suggests that the number of female managers pursuing international management careers remains considerably lower than those in domestic management (Linehan & Scullion, 2001a). Despite the increasing change in equal opportunity legislation, including the European Union’s social protocol, it has taken over 20 years for women to make up a more significant – although still a minority – proportion of the expatriate workforce. Still, their representation at the most senior levels is scarce. (Linehan & Scullion, 2001a; Altman & Shortland, 2001; Linehan, 2000)

1.1.4 Women’s Participation in Management

According to Linehan and Walsh (1999b), women face barriers to career advancement within organisations also domestically. Among the most cited barriers are those found within recruitment and selection, as well as within organisational policies and structure (Linehan, 2000). Barriers are more evident in countries where the social role of women is linked to their role in the family. In countries with more flexible social roles, the ratio of female managers is higher; e.g., about 40 percent of U.S. managers and 27 percent of UK managers are female. (Linehan & Walsh, 1999b) However, the more senior position, the larger gender gap. In the largest and most powerful companies worldwide, women’s share in top positions is limited to 2-3 percent. (ILO, 2001) Sweden, which was the first country appointing a Minister of Equality (Phillips-Martinsson, 1985), shows a total ratio of female managers of 22 percent (SCB, 2000). At the most senior levels, the number is much lower. 5.4 percent of all members of the boards in companies listed on the Swedish stock exchange are women, and 8.5 percent of all managing directors in member companies of the Swedish employers’ organisation Svenskt Näringsliv are women. (Karlsson, 2001) An international comparison shows that Sweden has the lowest ratio of female senior managers among the European countries (Thorngren, 2001a).

According to an investigation conducted at the request of the Department of Industry in 1998, Swedish men and women seem to be in different labour markets, where the men’s labour market is characterised by the existence of possibilities to career advancement, while the women’s is characterised by the lack of such possibilities. The study also found that there are no female managers at all in 43 percent of workplaces, while only 5 percent of all workplaces have no male managers. (Betänkande från Kvinnomaktutredningen, 1998) Leif Johansson, CEO of Volvo, says that women have to take the chance when they are nominated to leading positions. “I think that women sometimes ’shoot themselves in the foot’ when they do not accept an assignment because they think that they are just there to fill up a female quota. (…) To choose a woman because we need her competence (…) shouldn’t be strange”, says Johansson. (Thorngren, 2001b, p. 30)

2 Statistics Sweden uses the term “manager” according to the following definition: "A person with administrative management work, and political work within the private and public sector. The work involves, among other things, to make decisions, plan, control, and coordinate” (SCB, 2000. Authors’ translation)
1.1.5 Women’s Participation in International Management

The fact that greater barriers exist for women in international\(^3\) than in domestic management is reflected by a comparison of the number of female managers domestically with the number of female expatriate managers (Linehan and Walsh, 1999b). The figures shown in the previous section should be compared to recent estimations that 10-15 percent of expatriates from Western organisations are women (Caligiuri & Cascio, 1998; Windham International, 1998). It seems like men are moving into an international arena where key decisions are made, while women function in “second best” domestic positions (Inkson & Arthur, 1997). Despite the fact that the number of female expatriates has increased since Nancy Adler’s groundbreaking studies in the 1980s, when they constituted only 3 percent of the North American expatriate population, the under-representation of women in global assignments is still obvious (Linehan & Scullion, 2001a; Caligiuri & Cascio, 1998).

Moreover, the intentional or incidental practice of selecting only small numbers of women for international assignments may be contributing to the already existing workplace phenomenon known as the “glass ceiling” (Stroh, Varma & Valy-Durbin, 2000). The term “glass ceiling” is used to describe a barrier that is so subtle that it is transparent, yet so strong that it prevents women from moving up the managerial hierarchy (Linehan, 2000; Davidson & Cooper, 1992). In fact, researchers have suggested that only exceptional expatriate women could succeed in senior managerial positions at MNCs, since outstanding competence is necessary to overcome the additional barriers faced by women (Linehan, Scullion & Walsh, 2001).

However, according to Selmer and Leung (2001b), companies are starting to re-examine their reluctance to send women on expatriate assignments in order to gain a major competitive advantage. This is consistent with Caligiuri and Cascio (1998), who state that an expansion of the talent pool to include women provides a tactical advantage for MNCs. By hiring women, multinational companies taking a global approach can act as role models for firms in many countries that have not seriously considered promoting significant numbers of women into managerial positions. In addition, the more expatriates companies involve in foreign affiliates, the less likely they are to follow local human resource practices, including being less likely to restrict the number of women managers. Since MNCs use expatriates as well as local managers, they can also benefit from the greater flexibility that many cultures allow foreign women. (Adler, 1994a) According to Adler (1994a), most countries do not hold foreign women to the same professionally limiting roles that restrict local women.

Moreover, female managers bring needed collaborative and participative skills to the workplace. It is also important to note that well-managed diversity, including gender diversity, is an inherent source of innovation, which has been identified as a key factor in global competitiveness. Women bring diversity to MNCs that have been primarily male. (Adler, 1994a) According to a large study referred to by Harris and Moran (1996), management’s handling of diversity will be the most significant factor affecting corporate success in North America and Europe. Adler (1994a) concludes that global MNCs benefit organisationally from women’s professional contributions in new ways – both from women’s increased participation at all organisational levels and from their unique ways, complementing those of men, of contributing to the organisation.

\(^3\) Throughout the thesis, “women in international management” refers to women who are stationed abroad as expatriate managers
1.2 Problem Discussion

A background to the subject of the thesis has been given. The following problem discussion will deal more specifically with the issue of women’s low degree of participation in international management, in order to increase the understanding of this topic and justify the choice of research.

The increasing globalisation and the repeated question as to why the number of females in international assignments is so low enhances the importance of research within this area (Varma & Stroh, 2001). In addition, the need to develop increasing numbers of global leaders has led to that many corporations are beginning to question the low number of female expatriates (Stroh et al., 2000). According to Linehan and Scullion (2001b), international human resource management literature has given very little attention to women as expatriates, probably because international assignments have long remained a male preserve. Until the early 1980s, research on women in international management concerned primarily the role of the expatriate wife, especially the wife of a Western manager, in facilitating or hindering her husband’s performance abroad (ibid.). Brewster (as cited by Linehan, Scullion & Walsh, 2001) means that female expatriate managers are an under-researched group. Another significant issue is the lack of data about the human resources managers – usually men – who determine whether women will be considered for international assignments and who are critical in choosing who will be sent (Stroh et al., 2000).

1.2.1 Why is the Low Participation of Women in International Management a Problem?

The situation hitherto described has become increasingly significant since international experience to an increasing extent is considered as a prerequisite for promotion to the top of the organisational hierarchy (Linehan & Scullion, 2001a). Harris (1995) concludes that restricting the option of international assignments to men, either consciously or unconsciously, is likely to have long-term negative implications for women’s overall career progress. Moreover, changing trends suggest that fewer men will be willing to take up international assignments as a result of dual-career couples’ considerations. (Ibid.) MNCs report that one of their greatest international human resource concerns is finding enough of the right people with the requisite skills and knowledge to operate in a competitive global environment (Caligiuri & Cascio, 1998; Selmer & Leung, 2001b).

At the same time, the extremely competitive business environment forces MNCs to select the very best people available. The cost of rejecting women and limiting selection to men is much higher than in previous economic environments. (Adler, 1994a) Fortune magazine has stated that “(…) no company can afford to waste valuable brainpower simply because it’s wearing a skirt” (Adler, 1994a, p. 25). Women are a key resource in the race to create new products and services – competitive companies cannot afford to lose out on women’s talent (ILO, 2001).

Demographic changes in the workforce also support a need to widen the pool from which potential international managers are selected, especially since the number of women in junior and middle management positions is increasing. Most international managers are selected from these positions. This implies either that organisations are not making use of their total available pool of talent when selecting people for international assignments, or that women are deselecting themselves in some way for such positions. (Harris, 1995) In addition, even if companies do not really want to send women on foreign assignments, legislation in some countries might make such attitudes untenable (Selmer & Leung, 2001b).
1.2.2 Women in International Management: Corporate Perspective

One might view the reasons to the low ratio of women in international management from a corporate perspective or from the perspective of the female expatriate managers themselves. From a corporate perspective, there is a clear pattern of organisations sticking to career development frameworks based on traditional male career paths. Key features of such frameworks include chronological career timetables and a separation between work and family life. These policies raise several concerns for women, since they often have difficulties in following progressive, linear career models due to their characteristically interrupted career patterns. Women’s tendency to choose a “job” instead of a “career” may also preclude them from consideration, since organisations often identify potential international managers at an early stage within their organisational career. (Harris, 1995) According to Selmer and Leung (2001b), organisational career ladders show blockages for women at much earlier stages than men. This gender-based difference in domestic career experience might become even more pronounced in international assignments. There seems to be a corporate distrust of the ability of female expatriates. (Ibid.)

There is also a considerable uncertainty regarding what an international manager should do and what qualifications are required for getting the job done. This uncertainty might be a disadvantage for women, since managers have a tendency to select others who are very similar to themselves (“cloning”) in an (subconscious) attempt to ensure trustworthiness and predictability. (Harris, 1995) Possibly, qualified female employees are overlooked because men make most of the decisions about whom to send abroad, and they hold many traditional views and stereotypes about women in international managerial positions. (Stroh et al., 2000) Flanders (as cited in Linehan, 2000, p. 40) suggests the following as typical employer attitudes: “When it comes to promotion and career development, women are judged not so much on their abilities and achievements, but on assumptions about their family life, responsibilities, and future intentions.” According to Izraeli and Zeira (1993), marital status becomes an issue when women’s suitability for international assignments is discussed. Whether single or married, the female expatriate’s family status is presumed to be problematic (ibid.). In addition, the assumption by home-country management that the women’s male partner is more likely to be the main careerist causes women who actually attain expatriate positions to experience greater stress than their male counterparts (Linehan & Walsh, 2000). All in all, female managers aiming for international careers are clearly becoming discouraged by the barriers found in corporate cultures and environments that continue to block their advancement (Linehan & Walsh, 1999b).

Adler’s (1994b) research revealed that firms resist assigning women abroad because they assume certain things about female managers’ characteristics and about the competitive conditions that women managers face when they go abroad. More than half of the companies in Adler’s study cited such beliefs as the reasons to their hesitation to send women on expatriate assignments, although many of the firms do not have any problems in promoting women into domestic management positions (ibid.). Adler (1994a) labelled these beliefs “myths” since their accuracy never had been tested, even though they were widely held by both men and women. Stroh et al. (2000) found that managers claim that their companies are not hesitant to send females on international assignments but behave in ways that are inconsistent with this claim. This is evident by the low number of female expatriates and the high acceptance rate of

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4 Corporate/organisational culture = The common values shared by employees and managers in an organisation, which form a control mechanism that is implicit and helps enforce other explicit control mechanisms (Daniels & Radebaugh, 1998, p. G-3).
those females who are asked to go (ibid.). Varma and Stroh (2001) actually found that 90 percent of women and 92 percent of men who were asked to go on expatriate assignments accepted the offer.

When it comes to the selection process, Harris (2001) questions the employer’s ability to remain objective in assessing appropriate personality and/or behavioural traits when selecting managers for expatriate assignments. Although women may well be seen as suitable in terms of technical and professional skills, there are many forces – formal and informal – that can act to prevent women being seen as acceptable (ibid.). Stroh et al. (2000) have found that female expatriates and their immediate supervisor view the female international experience very differently. These differences appear to be a result of differing perspectives of men and women regarding female expatriate assignments (ibid.).

1.2.3 Women in International Management: Female Expatriates’ Perspective

From the perspective of the female expatriate, practices such as the use of networks to promote career advancement and foster conformity with organisational norms may work to exclude women from career opportunities (Harris, 2001). Research by Linehan, Scullion and Walsh (2001) revealed that female managers perceived that formal organisational policies reinforce informal factors, which may affect the participation of female managers in international management. Among the most important of these informal factors are the influences of networking and mentoring (ibid.). Even if mentoring relationships are important for men, they may actually be essential for women’s career development, as female international managers face greater organisational, interpersonal, and individual barriers to advancement (Linehan & Walsh, 1999a; Selmer & Leung, 2001b). In addition, Stroh et al. (2000) suggest that there are limited role models for women interested in pursuing international careers. The reason for this is the low number of women who are and have been on expatriate assignments. This, together with traditional views and stereotypes held by men, might result in qualified female candidates forming negative attitudes about the likelihood of their being selected. As a consequence, they do not actively pursue international positions. Thus, it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. (Ibid.)

Moreover, life-style choices being considered by female expatriate managers seem to be more difficult than the choices considered by domestic female managers. The extra strains and guilt feelings that many women experience in balancing an international career with child-rearing responsibilities may result in a majority of female managers choosing between family and a career in international management. Research suggests that issues relating to dual-career couples should be highlighted as a major expatriate concern. One study revealed that 80 per cent of employees who refused international positions did so for family reasons, particularly because of their spouses’ careers. (Linehan & Walsh, 2000) Beaverstock (2001) points out that all research within international human resource management that have been focusing on the impact of dual-career couples on international assignments recognise that it is a very complex problem that is often very difficult to solve. For those women who do go on expatriate assignments with a male trailing spouse, the difficulties are further compounded when there are children involved in the international move. Unmarried female managers suggest that it is more beneficial to the career to remain unmarried, especially when partaking in international management, since they then have only themselves to think about when moving abroad. (Linehan & Walsh, 2000) Mavin (2001) points out that corporations look less favourably on married women when it comes to promotion – even married women themselves are less likely to expect advancement than those who are single.
1.2.4 Swedish Women in International Management

Despite the rich availability of studies and statistics concerning women in Swedish management, as referred to in section 1.1.4, we have not been able to find any studies or statistics dealing with the ratio of Swedish women’s participation in international management. Statistics Sweden (SCB), which was the first source where we searched for secondary data regarding this, does not have any statistics at all on Swedish expatriates. It is very difficult to find any official figures revealing how many Swedes (men and women) that actually are sent on expatriate assignments by their firms. It has been estimated that about 2,400 Swedes annually accept foreign assignments (Askman, 1996). One example of the ratio of women among Swedish MNC expatriates is found in an article about Electrolux’s Global Expatriate Policy. According to Barbro von Bahr, who has been working with expatriate management at Electrolux for 25 years, about 10 percent of the company’s expatriates are women. (Sundmark, 1998)

As discussed in the Background section, the ratio of women in Swedish management is low in comparison with other Western countries, especially in senior management, where Sweden shows the lowest ratio of female senior managers among the European countries. In addition, Sweden was recently criticised for inadequate equality by the United Nations’ CEDAW committee (FN kritiserar svensk jämställdhet, 2001). Considering these secondary data about women in Swedish management and the example of Electrolux, we did not find any reason to believe that the participation of Swedish women in international management would be any higher than in other Western countries.

However, due to the lack of adequate official data, we wanted to further investigate whether the situation previously described in the problem discussion actually is applicable to Swedish conditions. Therefore, we conducted a limited pilot study in order to be able to support (or reject) our perception that the participation of Swedish women in international management is low. This study is described in more detail in Chapter 4. A few of the findings from this preliminary investigation support the current problem discussion. Firstly, an equality expert at the Swedish employers’ organisation Svenskt Näringsliv had the impression that there are few women among Swedish expatriates. Secondly, a consultant who has been working with pre-departure training for Swedish expatriates from many different companies for several years, stated that “almost none” of the expatriates are women. Finally, an inquiry at a global Swedish MNC revealed that this company only had one female expatriate currently on an assignment. In summary, the results of this preliminary investigation give some indication that the participation of Swedish women in international management is not higher than in other Western countries.

Considering previous research, we have found that those who have studied the reasons behind the low participation of women in international management are almost exclusively from North America, Great Britain and Ireland. Therefore, we feel that it would be very worthwhile to investigate whether the results of these studies are applicable to Swedish conditions. In addition, the apparent lack of studies comparing the corporate perspective with the female expatriates’ perspective emphasises the need for this line of research.

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5 CEDAW = Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
1.3 Purpose

With the basis in the problem discussion, the following purpose is formulated:

The purpose of this study is to gain a deeper understanding of the reasons behind the low ratio of women among expatriate managers of Swedish multinational corporations.

Two research questions have been derived from the issues raised in the problem discussion. When answered, they will help to reach the stated purpose of the thesis.

- How are the reasons for the low ratio of women among Swedish MNC expatriates described from a corporate perspective?
- How are the reasons for the low ratio of women among Swedish MNC expatriates described from the female expatriates’ perspective?
1.4 Outline of the Study

As shown in Figure 1.1 below, this thesis consists of seven chapters. *Chapter one* started with a background to the subject of the thesis, and then moved on to a discussion of the more specifically studied problem area. This problem discussion ended in a statement of the purpose of the study. Two research questions were outlined in order to help the researchers fulfil this purpose. *Chapter two* will provide the reader with an overview of previous studies relevant to the purpose of this thesis. Then, the reviewed literature is narrowed down into a conceptual framework in *Chapter three*. How the research was conducted and which methodological choices that were made, is described in *Chapter four*. Then, the empirical data that were collected are presented in *Chapter five*. The collected data are then compared with the concepts outlined in the conceptual framework by making an analysis, which is presented in *Chapter six*. Finally, *Chapter seven* consists of the findings and conclusions, as well as some implications, which we have been able to derive from our research.

![Figure 1.1: Outline of the study](image)

*Source: Authors’ own construction*
2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter will present studies relevant to the research questions outlined in Chapter 1. First, previous studies regarding women in international management from a corporate perspective are described. These are connected to the first research question concerning the reasons for the low ratio of women among Swedish MNC expatriates, as described from a corporate perspective. Then, research discussing factors from the perspective of female expatriates will be presented, in order to connect literature to the second research question.

2.1 Women in International Management: Corporate Perspective

In this section, previous studies related to the reasons for the low ratio of women among expatriates, as seen from a corporate perspective, are reviewed. Section 2.2 will then focus on issues from the female expatriates’ perspective. However, many of the studied concepts are intertwined; that is, one might view them from both a corporate and a female expatriate perspective. We have therefore made the choice to look at different dual-career and family issues from both perspectives, while other issues, which we see as mainly related to the corporate or the female expatriate perspective, are ranged into one section only. This also means that the literature reviewed in the corporate perspective section includes studies concerning factors that are seen as primarily connected to the organisation, regardless of how these studies were originally conducted. Moreover, the issue of the low number of women in international management is closely related to questions concerning women in management in general, as indicated in the first chapter. Therefore, the reviewed literature concerns primarily female expatriates, but a few studies regarding women’s participation in management in general are also included in the beginning of the review.

2.1.1 Women in Management

Adler (1994a) discusses two possible approaches that global MNCs might use in order to affect the potential of female managers, called the equity approach and the complementary contribution approach. Basically, firms have traditionally made one of two fundamentally different assumptions about the ideal role of women in management. The first assumption, the equity approach, is based on assumed similarity between men and women, while the second defines a complementary contribution approach based on assumed difference between genders. The equity approach has been used to a large extent in the U.S. Firms taking this approach assume that women as professionals are identical to men, and therefore equally capable of contributing in ways similar to those of men. This implies that the primary question concerns entry into and representation within management: Is the firm hiring and promoting sufficient numbers of female managers? (Ibid.)

Strategies adopted by these companies include affirmative action programmes, equal rights legislation, and structural changes designed to train women in managerial skills traditionally neglected during their formal education and informal socialization, and to avoid tokenism (Adler, 1994a). Tokenism is defined as “the policy or practice of making only a symbolic effort (as to desegregate)” (Tokenism, 2001). This often leads to higher visibility, more stereotypical responses from colleagues, and strong performance pressure on the token woman (Izraeli & Adler, 1994). Caligiuri and Cascio (1998) contend that in most global contexts female expatriates would be categorized as tokens since they are not likely to have other female counterparts at their level.
The implicit goal of the equity approach is assimilation of female managers, which according to Adler (1994a) means that firms expect women to dress, think, and act like the men who had traditionally held the aspired-to management positions. This leads to that these firms measure effectiveness against male norms: “Could she do what he had been doing as well as he had been doing it?” (Ibid., p. 27).

The complementary contribution approach, while based on the assumption of difference, not similarity, does not aim for equal statistical representation. Rather, the goal is equivalent recognition of and benefit from women’s and men’s differing patterns and styles of contribution of all levels at the organisation. The approach was originally used to describe Swedish managers, but has since then been pervasive throughout Europe and Japan, and evident in most other areas of the world. Firms taking the complementary contribution approach assume that women and men differ and therefore are capable of making different, but equally valuable, contributions to the organisation. Change strategies focus first on identifying the unique contributions of female and male managers, then, on creating enabling conditions to encourage and reward both types of contribution; and finally on creating synergy. The creation of synergy implies combining women’s and men’s contributions to form more innovative and powerful organisational solutions to business challenges. When adopting the complementary contribution approach, firms expect female managers to dress, think, and act like women. Though female managers’ thinking and behaviour is similar in many ways to that of their male colleagues, it is seen to differ in important respects. (Adler, 1994a)

Progress is measured quantitatively when using the equity approach – a statistical accounting of the proportion of female managers in the organisation by rank, salary, and status. In contrast, progress is qualitative when it is measured by the complementary contribution approach. This means an assessment of the organisation’s track record in encouraging and rewarding women and men for making unique contributions and for building organisationally effective combinations of those contributions, which ultimately means increasing innovation and organisational learning. In order to predict what role women will have in international management, it is important to understand the underlying assumptions that firms make in each country about the role of women in management. These assumptions can be revealed by answering questions such as to what extent difference is viewed as a false doctrine, versus a potential resource, and to what extent uniqueness is seen as a constraint rather than a valuable asset. (Adler, 1994a)

The views of Swedish managers on the reasons for the low representation of women at senior level management level have been studied by Franzén (1995). Regarding the issue if the low representation of women is a problem, six of the eleven male managers in the study stated that they did feel that this was a problem. Among those who did not perceive this as a problem, some comments were made as follows:

“It’s not a problem. It’s natural for things to be the way they are.”

“Women don’t want to, they don’t dare to take the step. They are away from work at home with their children. They are quite simply out of circulation. They just have to accept that.” (Ibid.)

According to the men, a frequent explanation for the low representation of women was that “women themselves” were responsible. As reasons, they mentioned lack of competence in some respect, that women have not studied subjects that lead to management posts, that women have opted not to make a career, that women are unaware of the “rules of the game”, and that women do not have a contact network. Reasons mentioned by men regarding
women’s domestic situation included that women plan families, women give birth to children, women bear the major responsibility for children and the home, and that women cannot combine the home and family with a career. (Franzén, 1995)

2.1.2 Companies’ Hesitations to Send Women on International Assignments

Many companies seem to hold some common beliefs, which work as reasons to their hesitation to send women on expatriate assignments (Adler, 1994a). These beliefs were labelled “myths” by Adler (1994a), since their accuracy never had been tested, even though they were widely held by both men and women. She tested the myth of corporate resistance to sending women on international assignments by surveying human resource vice-presidents and managers from 60 of the largest North American MNCs. Over half of the companies answered that they do hesitate to send women abroad. Almost four times as many companies reported being reluctant to select women for expatriate assignments than for domestic management positions. Reasons for hesitation included beliefs that foreigners were so prejudiced against women that female managers could not succeed; that dual-career issues were insuperable; and concern about the woman’s physical safety, the hazards involved in travelling in underdeveloped countries, and the isolation and loneliness that might be connected to an expatriate assignment. (Ibid.)

According to Adler (1994a), many women who actually were sent on expatriate assignments report that they had confronted some form of corporate resistance before being sent; a few women even experienced severe resistance from their companies to send any female managers abroad. Their firms seemed to offer them an expatriate position only after all potential male candidates had rejected it. Some companies also showed their hesitation by offering temporary or travel assignments rather than regular expatriate positions. (Ibid.)

Stroh, Varma and Valy-Durbin (2000) tested Adler’s (1994a) findings in a study where respondents were asked how strongly they agreed or disagreed with the following statement: “In general, companies are hesitant to send women on international assignments” (p. 245). Data indicate that significant differences exist between the female expatriates and their supervisors. The supervisors appeared to believe more strongly than the female expatriates that companies do not hesitate to send women on international assignments. (Stroh et al., 2000) In this case, the authors’ findings seem to contradict those of Adler (1994a). Stroh et al. (2000) further state that supervisors claim that their companies are not hesitant to send females on international assignments but behave in ways that are inconsistent with this claim. The evidence for this can be found in the low numbers of female expatriates. It is therefore not unreasonable to assume that supervisors also discourage women from pursuing careers that require accepting international assignments. However, this is probably done in a tacit way. (Ibid.)

A frequently mentioned reason for companies’ hesitation to send female managers on international assignments is that foreigners’ prejudice against women makes them ineffective as expatriate managers. This assumption was tested by Adler (1994a) through a survey including more than 100 female expatriate managers from major North American firms. Most of the women, out of whom approximately half were on assignments in Asia, held regional responsibility, which meant that they had experience from multiple countries. A majority of the female managers described themselves as needing to encourage their companies to consider the possibility of assigning international positions to women in general and to themselves in particular. Most respondents meant that their companies had failed to recognize the possibility of
selecting women for expatriate assignments, rather than having thoroughly considered the idea and then having rejected it. (Ibid.)

Adler’s (1994a) “myth” about foreigners’ prejudice also suggests that female expatriate managers would be expected to experience a series of difficulties caused by their gender. However, findings reveal that this was not the case (ibid.). Only 20 percent of the female expatriate managers in Adler’s (1994a) study found it primarily negative to be a woman abroad. In contrast, they reported professional advantages of being female; for example, a high visibility and curiosity about them that made foreign clients remember them after the first encounter. This in turn resulted in that it was easier for the women than for their male colleagues to gain access to foreign clients’ time and attention. The female managers also discovered advantages based on their interpersonal skills. They also often received special treatment, which their male counterparts did not. In addition, a majority of the female managers described benefiting from a “halo effect”, referring to that local managers assumed that the women would not have been sent unless they were the best, and therefore expected them to be very, very good. Other respondents found being female to have no impact at all on their professional life. (Ibid.)

The majority of the disadvantages experienced by the women involved their relationship with their home companies, not with their foreign colleagues and clients. Such disadvantages included the difficulty to obtain an international position in the first place; or home companies limiting the duration of the assignments to six months or a year, thus communicating the firm’s lack of confidence to foreign colleagues and clients as a lack of commitment. In addition, more than half of the female expatriates experienced limitations on their professional opportunities and job scope once they was abroad. A few companies also limited the women to working only internally with company employees, rather than externally with clients, implicitly assuming that their own employees would be less prejudiced than “outsiders”. In reality, women often found the opposite to be true, since they faced more problems internally from home country nationals than externally from local clients and colleagues. (Adler, 1994a)

Adler (1994a) concludes that one pattern is particularly clear, namely that female foreigners in Asia are seen as foreigners first and women second. A woman who is a foreigner is not expected to act like the local women, which means that the societal and cultural roles governing the behaviour of local women and limiting their access to managerial positions do not apply to foreign women. In summary, it appears that foreigners are not as prejudiced as many North American managers had assumed. (Ibid.) In contrast, respondents in a study conducted by Ruhe and Allen (1997) suggested that the number one obstacle facing women on international assignments is the bias of other cultures against women in the workplace. A majority of the respondents were of the opinion that understanding other cultures and being accepted by them were overriding problems (ibid.).

Stroh et al. (2000) also tested if host country cultures disadvantage women. The researchers asked their respondents the following questions: (1) being female makes it very difficult to adapt to the host country’s culture; and (2) in general, host country nationals both inside and outside the company are prejudiced against female expatriates. Results show that there are significant differences between female international assignees and their supervisors. Women believed more strongly than their supervisors that prejudice did not stand in the way of their success on international assignments, while their supervisors were more likely than the female international assignees to think that prejudice was an issue related to female international assignees’ success. This was seen as an especially important finding since all the women in the sample had firsthand international experience and three-quarters of their supervisors did as
well. Findings seem to suggest that sex-role stereotyping may still be a problem for women on international assignments, thus limiting their participation in international management. From the perspectives of the female expatriates, the result suggests that host country prejudice may be less of a problem for females on international assignments than past research has claimed. (Ibid.)

Stroh et al. (2000) further separated the female respondents into groups of more or less culturally tough assignments in order to examine the effectiveness of female international assignees working in more culturally tough countries. The purpose was to assess whether the findings related to host country prejudice would differ between groups. Each female assignee was assigned a “toughness” rating based on the difference between her culture of origin and the toughness of the country to which she was assigned. Findings reveal that women assigned to more culturally tough countries were more likely to perceive host country prejudice as a barrier to their effectiveness. (Ibid.) Stroh et al. (2000) also found that the longer women stayed on in more culturally tough countries, the less likely they were to think that the tough culture inhibited their effectiveness. The authors speculate that these same attitudes would be true for men as well; culturally tough countries are tough working conditions for both men and women. Whether the supervisors believed that prejudice inhibited the women’s success on the job did not appear to correlate with whether their subordinates were assigned to culturally tough or less tough countries. The results suggest that female international assignees are effective regardless of the cultural toughness of the host country. (Ibid.)

2.1.3 Reasons for Selecting Males Over Females

According to Vance and Paik (2001), the major reasons for selecting males over females have been connected to business necessity, namely to avoid costly failure and to promote and optimise the competitive viability of business abroad. More specifically, the most common reasons cited for selecting males over females for international assignments include the following: (1) the presence of heavy cultural restrictions on the role of women in business in the international setting, (2) the predominance of males for international business interactions, (3) greater qualifications of males for international assignments, and (4) the relative inability of females to adapt to the challenging requirements of foreign assignments, and in particular the greater vulnerability of females to the aggressive nature of the foreign business environment dominated by males. (Ibid.) However, Vance and Paik (2001) suggest that instead, the biggest obstacle that women have to overcome might not be found within the foreign business environment but rather “in their own corporate backyard”.

In order to examine these issues, Vance and Paik (2001) did a survey among 323 returned female and male managers. The study, which was conducted in three different countries, investigated two hypotheses: (1) Managers in the host country would not hold expatriate women to their own countries’ culturally-driven norms and expectations that restrict female involvement in business interactions. (2) Managers at corporate headquarters tend to hold lower expectations about the potential career success of female expatriates than do managers in the host countries. (Ibid.)

The primary comparison of interest in Vance and Paik’s (2001) study was to discern any similarities or differences between home country managers and foreign business managers in their perception about the foreign assignment viability of female expatriates. General support was found for previous evidence that point to an unfounded selection bias against women. The results provide strong support to the authors’ initial assumption that in reality there exists
a more favourable foreign business environment for female expatriates than exists in the minds of home country managers. (Ibid.) Vance and Paik (2001) also found that foreign cultural differences do not present as large an obstacle to female expatriates as supposed by home country managers. This supports the notion that, contrary to what home country managers believe, business managers in assigned countries do not hold women to the same gender role norms and expectations as they do for women in their own home country (ibid.).

The notion that female managers tend to be less successful in extended foreign assignments than their male counterparts is likely to have a great influence on expatriate candidate selection decisions. Managerial decisions are often based on general “gut-level” feelings from a generalised consideration of a range of facts and choices. This finding is consistent with past research, which claims that attitudes of unfounded bias and discrimination are typically based more upon generalised beliefs and perceptions than upon specific reasoning and factual information. The respondents in all three countries did not question the technical competence of female managers and did not show any significant differences in assessing adaptability of female expatriates to foreign business environments. Moreover, neither age nor position seems to affect the perception of the respondents regarding female expatriates’ ability to succeed in their overseas assignment. (Vance & Paik, 2001)

2.1.4 Selection Processes for Expatriate Assignments

Harris (2001) points out that there is a lack of acknowledgement of the role of organisational processes in the home country as determinants of women’s participation rates. The author refers to Adler’s 1980s study in which it was concluded that companies were reluctant to send women on foreign assignments. This could be seen as a major barrier as 53.8 per cent of the companies were reluctant. (Ibid.) According to Harris (2001), this finding has not been developed further at organisational level. Actually, the nature of many assessment procedures designed by organisations to increase “fairness” and “sophistication” in selection serves to reinforce the discriminations they are supposedly attempting to reduce. In addition, managers may employ a variety of recruitment practices as a means of control. (Ibid.)

Selectors’ ability to remain objective in assessing appropriate personality and/or behavioural traits should be seriously questioned, according to Harris (2001). Suitability and acceptability are different components of selection decisions. Acceptability is both deriving from the immediate organisation, the home country socio-cultural background, and the host country organisational and wider socio-cultural context. This demonstrates that although women may well be seen as suitable in terms of technical and professional skills, a powerful array of forces can act to prevent women being seen as acceptable. For example, the use of informal networks might contribute to exclude women from opportunities to career advancement. (Ibid.) In order to explain the lack of representation of women in international management, Harris (2001) suggests that one must look beyond formal organisational systems and consider the impact of personal judgements among organisational selectors. Also, variations in selection processes have to be considered, since these may provide greater or lesser opportunities for the selection decisions to be the result of objective, formalised procedures (ibid.).

Furthermore, Harris (2001) identifies “open” and “closed” selection procedures among organisations. An “open” system is one in which all vacancies are advertised and anyone with appropriate qualifications and experience may apply. In “open” systems, the candidates are interviewed with a greater or lesser degree of formalised testing. Selection decisions are taken by consensus among selectors. In “closed” systems, headquarters nominate “suitable” candi-
dates to line managers who have the option of accepting or rejecting them. The candidate is only informed once agreement about acceptability has been reached between head office personnel and the line manager. The interview consists of a negotiation about the terms and conditions of the assignment. In addition to these “open” and “closed” systems there are also formal and informal systems operating at organisational level. Together these four categories combine to provide a typology of international management selection processes. (Ibid.)

According to Harris (2001), an open/formal system will be the most likely combination to produce equality of opportunity within international management selection. This is partly due to the fact that employees have access to the selection process, and partly due to the necessity for selectors to assess candidates against formalised criteria and to determine the best “fit” through continual comparison of their own assessment against other selectors’ assessments. This method will constrain the use of subjective judgements. In a combination of closed/formal systems, selectors are assessing candidates against formal criteria, but there is a lack of personal contact with the candidate. The field of applicants is determined by the selector (-s) with the risk of missing potential suitable candidates. An open/informal system means that even though employees have access to vacancies; decisions as who should be selected are usually arranged between managers based on personal recommendation and reputation. In such cases, the selection decision is already made even if candidates are interviewed. In this combination, there is a tendency for managers to select “clones”⁶. If the candidate is a woman, the possibility to be selected would clearly be affected. The last combination, closed/informal system, is seen to be the worst situation for equality of opportunity. Personal judgements will determine who is seen to be acceptable due to the lack of influence of formal systems and a lack of open debate about selection criteria. In addition, there is a lack of responsibility among selectors caused by employees’ unawareness that the process is actually taking place. (Ibid.)

Harris and Brewster (1999) conclude that the “coffee machine system” still is one of the most common forms of identifying potential expatriates for assignments. This system is described by a scene where a senior line manager (usually a man) is standing by the coffee machine when he is joined by a colleague. The two starts to chat, and it turns out that there is a need to replace an expatriate who has fallen ill and been forced to return home. One of the men then tips the other about “Simon on the fifth floor”, and what happens next is that the organisation’s processes are used to legitimise the decision that essentially already has been taken. (Ibid.) Beaverstock (2001) states that such systems reinforce the closed and informal nature of decision-making processes. The “coffee machine system” reproduces the restrictive nature of the networked pool of potential expatriate candidates, and it also continues to sustain the gender bias in expatriate selection (ibid.). Beaverstock (2001) concludes that subjective factors are most significant when considering why women still are under-recruited as expatriate managers.

Linehan and Scullion (2001b) also discuss the impact of informal selection. They state that literature about expatriate selection often includes lists of criteria, which assume that the selection process is formal, rational and professional. However, according to empirical studies, these criteria have little impact on selection in practice. (Ibid.) In reality, formal organisational policies seem to be formed by wider gender-based societal assumptions regarding the suitability of men or women for international managerial assignments (Linehan, Scullion & Walsh, 2001). The stereotypical attitudes, which associate successful management with men, might be detrimental to women’s’ career advancement (Linehan & Walsh, 1999b). Female

⁶ Clone = Someone or something that seems to be an exact copy of someone or something else (Clone, 1995).
managers believe that they have to overcome formal organisational discrimination in their home countries when seeking international assignments. Also, even if companies have formal criteria that do not disadvantage women, the decisions on expatriate selection are usually taken by line managers who often ignore the selection criteria established by human resources department. (Linehan et al., 2001)

Selmer (1995) contends that foreign assignment selection processes have not been subject to the same consideration and rigor as similar decisions at home. Companies also frequently ignore the fact that different selection criteria must be used for international and domestic assignments. Firms often select technically qualified candidates with little regard for their cross-cultural communication or adjustment skills. (Ibid.) Women may be further disadvantaged from the selection process as widespread reliance on personal recommendation from specialist personnel staff members or line managers results in predetermined selection interviews. These interviews, then, consist more of negotiating the terms of the offer than determining the suitability of the candidate. (Linehan & Scullion, 2001b)

Studies have found that the pool of potential expatriate candidates is limited to employees who are well known to the selectors. This makes the situation particularly difficult for female managers, since between 85 and 95 percent of international managers are currently men. (Linehan & Scullion, 2001b) The reality of the “informal” mechanisms through which most expatriates are selected is likely to continue to reinforce prejudice in many organisations. (Linehan et al., 2001)

2.1.5 The Glass Border

The term “glass border” describes stereotypical assumptions by home-country senior management about women as managers and about their availability, suitability and preferences for international assignments. Research shows that women face barriers to progression within organisations, barriers that their male counterparts are not facing. It has been estimated that attaining full economic integration for women at every organisational level would take 75 to 100 years at the current rate of change. Many women experience that they hit the “glass ceiling” as they move up the managerial hierarchy. (Linehan & Walsh, 1999b) Or as a female manager on an expatriate assignment in Ireland puts it: “As far as the term is concerned, every time I hear it I think you’ve got to be kidding; we’re talking concrete here. Sometimes we are talking plywood, but, don’t minimise it, it is not glass, it is not a glass ceiling” (Linehan & Walsh, 1999b, p. 266).

Studies have suggested that the metaphor of the glass ceiling is misleading, as counterproductive layers of influence on women, such as tradition, socialisation and negative stereotypes, hinder their progression to senior managerial positions. (Ibid.) Feltes and Steinhaus (1998) refer to a report designed to identify potential glass ceilings, where it was found that women are frequently passed over for high-visibility projects that could have helped them to gain visibility for future advancement. A foreign assignment could actually be viewed as an ideal way to develop a competitive career advantage (ibid.). According to Linehan and Walsh (1999b), many of the barriers that prevent female managers from reaching senior managerial positions in their home organisations are similar to those experienced by female expatriate managers. These barriers might come in the form of isolation and loneliness, lack of mentoring, exclusion from formal and informal networking groups, lack of female role models and work-family conflict (ibid.).
Respondents in a study of European female senior expatriate managers suggested that many jobs are still seen as “men’s” or “women’s” jobs, and this attitude influences the initial intake of a particular gender to organisations. The female managers in the study perceived that they are judged on basis of the male model of career development regarding the appropriateness of their “fit” in organisations. Overly or covertly, they are assessed on the male model with respect to selection, promotion and career development. According to the respondents, it is currently much more difficult for female managers to be selected for an international assignment than for their male counterparts. The interviewees actually felt that the main obstacle they encountered in the selection process for an international assignment was their gender. Because of the barriers experienced at all levels of the managers’ careers, career planning and management development is more difficult for female managers. Moreover, women with equal qualifications to men seem to be extended fewer job offers, receive lower salaries, and are seen as less desirable for managerial positions. (Linehan et al., 2001)

The respondents in the above-mentioned European study perceived that companies believe that there are additional risks involved when sending women on expatriate assignments. (Linehan et al., 2001) Participants had persistently asked for their next career move instead of waiting to be offered the next move. Their opinion was that if they had not asked to be included in the selection process, they would not have been considered. (Ibid.) This suggestion is consistent with those of Feltes and Steinhaus (1998) as well as Selmer and Leung (2001b), who state that women who are interested in a foreign assignment should take the initiative and clearly communicate their interest and qualifications. Management may need to be reminded of women’s interest for international assignments (Feltes & Steinhaus, 1998). The respondents in the European study actually felt that they needed to be more qualified, more ambitious and more mobile than male managers in order to be selected for expatriate assignments (Linehan & Walsh, 1999b). Through their persistent requirements for career moves, and their being better than their male counterparts at balancing a number of functions simultaneously, they first broke through the glass ceiling and then through the glass border (ibid.).

Female expatriate managers suggest that traditions, practices and views that reinforce patriarchal systems and male operating procedures in organisations are embedded in all cultures (Linehan et al., 2001). Gender can still be a problem in countries that are perceived to be more enlightened, for example Sweden: “In Sweden, generally in the big international companies, there is not equality at all. There are very, very few women and I found this difficult at board meetings because I don’t accept the behaviour and structure that men have created” (Linehan et al., 2001, p. 13). The participating managers believed that discrimination and prejudices against them as a group affected their promotional prospects, which suggests that the most significant problems facing women seeking international careers can be found within the organisational culture (Linehan & Walsh, 1999b). A survey referred to by Adler (1993) supports this notion, as the responding American female managers saw the male dominated corporate culture as an obstacle to their success.
2.1.6 Informal Perceptions Regarding Women’s Suitability

Informal perceptions regarding the suitability of women in management positions have a potentially negative effect on women’s opportunities in international management. For example, there is a tendency for “good” management styles to be equated with masculine qualities, which can affect managers’ perceptions of women’s ability to hold managerial positions in general. In addition, apparently unbiased organisational policies may suffer from the effect of informal perceptual processes on gender stereotypes, which affect selection and appraisal processes. An example of this type of perceptual process is managers’ tendency to “clone” themselves. (Harris, 1995) Adler (1993) cites the CEO of an American corporation, who says “It shouldn’t be this way, but too many senior managers, and particularly CEOs, tend to want to pass their jobs along to someone who’s the image and likeness of themselves” (p. 12).

According to Linehan et al. (2001), men hold most upper level management positions, which means that they do most hiring, including sending people on expatriate assignments, and they may not be willing to offer career opportunities to women subordinates. This implies that male managers in these positions have a tendency, though it might be unconscious, to choose other men for expatriate assignments (ibid.). Adler (1993) further points to stereotyping and preconceptions of women managers as a primary factor hindering women to attain top positions in their corporations. Therefore, many women fail both to aspire to and to apply for managerial positions, while many men fail to allow them to pursue career aspirations. This pattern creates a self-fulfilling prophecy that eliminates women and at the same time leads only men to apply. (Ibid.)

Evidently, women’s career progress does not depend purely on their individual investment in education, training etc. to improve their capabilities and future careers, but also on organisational practices that are used to estimate people’s ability and allocate jobs and training. Since managers often do not possess full information about employees, they also use structural indicators of abilities. These indicators include past education and job achievement (in terms of perceived status) as well as evaluation of career velocity. Individuals who are judged most successful under these criteria will have the most investment made in them by the organisation in terms of training and development. Such practices are likely to disadvantage women considering their differing career patterns and initial choice of job. This is particularly problematic since these processes are rarely acknowledged by organisations. (Harris, 1995) Wahl (1995) points out that organisations are structured as if only working life exists, which suits men but makes women’s position in working life problematic. Linehan and Walsh (1999b) suggest that if future female managers would be given the opportunity to develop their careers based on a female model of career development, then perhaps more women would reach senior managerial levels.
2.1.7 Dual-Career Couples and Family Issues

The participants in a European study of female expatriate managers that were married at the time of interviewing noted that home-country senior management presumed that they would not be interested in being selected for an international assignment because of their domestic responsibilities. They suggested that when senior management assumes that married women do not want international careers, it is unlikely that these companies will invest in the development of their female managers and provide assignments that mean power and opportunity (Linehan et al., 2001). Assumptions and generalisations regarding women with families are frequently made, which is revealed through comments such as “We don’t know if you would be interested because you are married” (Linehan & Scullion, 2001b, p. 319). Female managers with children might be asked if travelling in the job would be a problem. A female director at a manufacturing company who got this question said: “I don’t think I would have been asked this if I were a man, because a husband knows that most of the time he has a wife at home who can take care of all the household and family things” (Linehan & Scullion, 2001b, p. 319). The social role of women seem to be linked to their role in the family; whereas for men time spent at work is of prime importance. Women’s family ties are seen as obstacles for promotion because these ties stand in the way of their availability at work, and being available is seen as essential for promotion. (Linehan & Walsh, 2000)

Harris (1995) also addresses the issue of problems resulting from female international managers’ family status. It seems like it might be more problematic for a female going abroad then a male assignee. Single females are seen to be more vulnerable to harassment and social isolation, but when it comes to married women, more serious problems may arise concerning spouse-related issues. (Ibid.) In many organisations, it is assumed that international assignments are only a problem for dual-career couples when it is the female partner who is sent abroad (Harris, 1995; Selmer & Leung, 2001b). Often, career-minded women are pressured to conform to certain organisational career patterns to the same extent as men. Past job achievement and implicit “career timetables” are used to signal ability and create pressure on both men and women not to take career breaks to follow their partners abroad. (Harris, 1995) Respondents in Linehan’s study believed that if they included extended maternity leaves and career breaks in a career or management development plan, it would not be looked upon favourably by senior management (Linehan & Scullion, 2001b). This pressure causes a fear of falling behind or a fear of the organisation interpreting the career break as a lack of commitment (Harris, 1995).

However, empirical studies indicate that the problems connected to dual-career couples on international assignments are not affecting male expatriates to the same extent as female. The traditional profile of an international manager is still a man, married with a trailing spouse, mobile and committed. In this case, women are seen as non-typical and therefore risky. (Harris, 1995) Another more hidden aspect is that many firms that offer family-oriented benefits such as day care, family leave, and flex time have some of the worst records for promoting women. In such cases, there are unwritten rules that punish employees who actually use family-friendly benefits. Often, organisational culture is a more important consideration than administrative policies or benefits, which points to the need for women with families to choose companies that actively seek solutions to the hardships imposed by international, dual-career marriages. (Ruhe & Allen, 1997)
2.2 Women in International Management: Female Expatriates’ Perspective

Previous research related to the perspective of female expatriates will be reviewed in this section. The focus is, according to the purpose, to identify reasons for the low ratio of female expatriates.

2.2.1 Women’s Willingness to Take Expatriate Assignments

One of the “myths” frequently used as an explanation for the low number of female expatriates, is that women simply are less interested than men in pursuing international careers (Adler, 1994a). Adler (1994a) tested this myth by surveying more than 1,000 graduating MBAs from seven top management schools in the U.S., Canada and Europe. The results showed clearly that there was no significant difference – both female and male MBAs had equal interest or disinterest in pursuing international careers. However, male as well as female MBAs agree that firms offer fewer opportunities to women than to men, and significantly fewer opportunities to women who want careers in international management than to those pursuing domestic careers. (Ibid.) Adler (1994a) concludes that even though there might have been a difference in the past, women and men today are equally interested in international assignments. Similarly, Varma and Stroh (2001) found that women actually accept offers for expatriate assignments at about the same rate as men.

Westwood and Leung (1994) report a “not very proactive” approach towards an international career. Very few women in their study had actually decided upon an international career and taken steps to achieve it. This specific finding does not however necessarily contradict Adler’s (1994a), since there is a difference between declaring willingness or expressing an interest in expatriate assignments, and actually actively pursue it (Westwood & Leung, 1994). The number of men who expressly and persistently set out to pursue international careers may also be small (Westwood & Leung, 1994), even if Yurkiewicz and Rosen (1995) actually found male managers to be more receptive than female managers to foreign assignments. Linehan and Scullion (2001a) refer to recent research showing that men and women consistently differ in their willingness to work in specific locations. This suggests that gender is a significant predictor when specific referent countries are identified (ibid.). Since these findings contradict those of Adler (1994a), they might be of practical value to MNCs that are particularly interested in an individual’s willingness to accept particular assignment destinations (Linehan & Scullion, 2001a). It is however important that organisations do not fall back on sex stereotypes when developing a pool of candidates for international assignments, since a failure to consider women managers would limit the pool of otherwise qualified managers. Moreover, exclusion of women from consideration for international assignments might cause a risk for charges of sex discrimination. (Yurkiewicz & Rosen, 1995)

Stroh, Varma and Valy-Durbin (2000) conducted a study with the purpose to compare the perceptions of female expatriates and their supervisors based on a large sample from a variety of multinational companies. The data was collected from 60 different companies by using detailed surveys, which were sent to international female assignees and their supervisors. Subjects were asked to indicate their answers to each item on a five-point Likert scale. Questions included the following statement: In general, women are not interested in going on international assignments. The findings of the study reveal that both the female international

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7 MBA = Master of Business Administration (MBA, 1993)
assignees and their supervisors strongly disagreed with the statement that women were not interested in going on international assignments. (Ibid.)

Harris (1995) suggests that the low level of women in international management may not be due to a lack of motivation, but rather a response to a blocked opportunity. Once a woman enter the corporate world, her motivation to pursue international management positions will to a great extent depend on perceived probability of success and perceived rewards. Women’s traditional grouping in non-technical and lower ranked occupations as a result of sex-role socialisation leading to occupational segregation will affect women’s perceived probability of success. This also makes it more difficult for them to meet organisations’ main criteria for selection to international assignments, namely rank and specialisation. Anxieties concerning physical safety and social isolation and lack of role models are other reasons for a perception of lowered success probability. In addition, both male and female motivations are impacted by perceived rewards from undertaking international assignments, as well as by linkages to career progress. (Ibid.) Regarding the perceived rewards, Yurkiewicz and Rosen (1995) found that the willingness to accept an expatriate assignment appears to be contingent on the relocation package offered. There seems to be a salary threshold where all employees (men and women) would agree to go on an international assignment. The necessity for a salary increase is accentuated by the finding that the majority of potential expatriates would be reluctant to agree to an assignment involving no increase at all. (Ibid.)

2.2.2 The Supervisor-Subordinate Relationship and Their Different Perspectives

The Leader-Member Exchange model (LMX) concerns the hierarchical relationship between a supervisor and his/her subordinates. It suggests that because of time pressures, the leader can develop close relationships with only a few of his/her subordinates, called the “in-group”. A formal relationship is maintained with the rest of the subordinates, who then become members of the “out-group”. These relationships tend to form rather quickly and remain stable over time. High quality relationships, as present between the supervisor and the in-group, may result in higher levels of supervisor support and guidance, higher levels of subordinate satisfaction and performance, lower levels of employee turnover, and better quality of assignments. In contrast, the low quality relationships that might form between the supervisor and the out-group may result in simple contractual relations and an array of negative outcomes. Research has clearly shown that LMX is a strong determinant of how individuals are treated at work. Obviously, supervisors tend to develop different styles of relationships in dealing with each subordinate, rather than using the same style in each interaction. (Varma & Stroh, 2001)

Studies have also found that subordinates with supervisors of the same sex as themselves will develop higher quality LMXs than subordinates with opposite-sex supervisors. Empirical investigations have revealed that members of the same sex were predominantly chosen as in-group and given selective advantages over opposite sex members who had to settle for out-group status. (Ibid.) Varma and Stroh (2001) conclude that it is logical to expect that LMX quality would have a significant impact on the selection of female employees for important assignments, such as international assignments. Thus, it might be useful to investigate the quality of the relationship between female employees and their supervisors as a possible explanation for the low numbers of female expatriates. This could also explain the differences in perceptions between supervisors and female employees regarding the issue of sending women on international assignments; e.g., supervisors argue that companies are not hesitant to send
women as expatriates, while female employees are less likely to think that companies are willing to select women. (Ibid.)

Varma and Stroh (2001) argue that the significant difference in perceptions between supervisors and their female subordinates on the reasons leading to the low number of female international assignees points to the issue of the supervisor’s relationship with the subordinate. This suggestion leads the authors to the statement of four hypotheses: (1) Female subordinates will report significantly different LMX compared to that reported by their supervisors. (2) Female expatriates with high LMX will report significantly higher satisfaction levels with their assignments compared to female expatriates with low LMX. (3) The correlations for subordinate and supervisor ratings of LMX for female subordinates with female supervisors will be significantly higher than that for female subordinates of male supervisors. (4) Female subordinates will believe that their supervisors view their relationship the same as they themselves view the relationship. (Ibid.)

The results of the study provided support for all four hypotheses. Supervisors had a significantly different (much more positive) view of the relationship than the female subordinates. The findings suggests that only women with high LMX are offered international assignments, since the number of women with low LMX is very low in the sample. It is not surprising, then, that nearly every one of the female respondents (98 percent) reported successful and positive assignments. Results also show that female subordinates had significantly higher correlation on LMX scores with their female supervisors than with their male supervisors. The authors suggest that the higher correlations may be an indicator of higher quality relationships. Finally, the female subordinates had a very good notion of how the supervisors perceived their relationship (i.e. LMX quality), even though the subordinates’ own perception differed significantly. This points to the need for better communication between supervisor and subordinate. Varma and Stroh conclude that female employees may need to work at improving their LMX with their supervisors, especially male supervisors, if they are to be included in the pool for international assignments. (Varma & Stroh, 2001)

In their study of female expatriates and their supervisors, Stroh, Varma and Valy-Durbin (2000) re-examined the data by separating male and female supervisors to examine issues more closely. They reran all their analysis to see if the findings were gender-specific. That is, were female supervisors equally as likely as male supervisors to claim that organisations were willing to send female on overseas assignments and to claim that host country nationals were prejudiced against female international assignees? Findings reveal that there was a difference between perspectives of men and women regarding female international assignments. Female expatriates and their female supervisors had similar views related to women on international assignments. In contrast, female expatriates and their male supervisors’ perspectives were significantly different from one another. In addition, it could be shown that in over 70 percent of the cases, the supervisors had been part of the selection decision team and had an obvious impact of the evaluation of the female expatriates’ performance. (Ibid.)

2.2.3 Dual-Career Couples and Family Issues

Research suggests that when a person has been offered an expatriate assignment, family considerations greatly influence the decision to accept it, and this concerns men as well as women. Married managers almost unanimously claim that an enthusiastic spouse greatly increase their receptivity, while a reluctant spouse greatly reduce their receptivity to accept an expatriate assignment. In addition, most potential expatriates with working spouses would not
take assignments that would negatively affect the careers of their spouses. (Yurkiewicz & Rosen, 1995)

There are however additional sacrifices to be made by female managers in international management, as it is much more difficult to balance a career, marriage and childcare from a distance. Additional strains are placed on the female expatriate’s personal relationships when the male partner becomes a trailing spouse. (Linehan & Walsh, 1999b) Male spouses often feel very isolated and vulnerable in new environments, especially where there is no “ready made” community to fit into, since most other spouses typically are women (Beaverstock, 2001; Selmer & Leung, 2001b). In addition, male spouses might have difficulties in coming to terms with societal norms dictating a “bread-winner” role for men (Selmer & Leung, 2001b).

It has been suggested that a lot of women managers in fact choose between career and family because of the extra strains and guilt feelings that women experience in balancing an international career with childrearing responsibilities. Female international managers may have to make this decision partly because of organisations’ tendency towards inflexibility in their demands, which force expatriates and their families to be flexible in responding to organisational demands. Other factors affecting the choice between family and career include the organisational and societal assumptions that a woman’s primary role is that of a mother; and the fact that career success is still based on a male model, which ignores the influence of marriage, pregnancy, children, and household duties. (Linehan & Walsh, 1999b) Harris (1995) suggests that dual-career and family issues often make women feel that they are falling behind the organisational timetable.

By the time a woman reaches her thirties she is often beginning to establish herself in her career, and at the same time she is reaching the older years in terms of child-bearing. Female managers perceive that when male managers are on expatriate assignments, they do not have to take responsibility for housework and childcare arrangements. (Linehan & Walsh, 1999b) In the majority of cases, despite the demands of a new international position, the female expatriate manager takes responsibility for running the home, does most of the shopping, most of the house-cleaning, and raises the children. Usually, the women expatriates who are married have professional partners, which means that more female than male managers must deal with the issues associated with handling two careers and family life. (Linehan & Walsh, 2000; Selmer & Leung, 2001b) Difficulties connected to family management concern role conflict between career and child-rearing, time conflict, not being geographically mobile, feeling of guilt about not being a good wife or mother, lack of emotional and domestic support from husbands, and having to take work home. (Linehan & Walsh, 2000)

It is still generally accepted by organisations and society that the husband is the sole bread-winner and the wife is the homemaker and child-rearer. In social settings, the presumption always seems to be that it is the woman who is the trailing spouse. Usually, people do not know how to deal with the fact that the international move had taken place because of the female’s career, which makes the couple considered an “oddity”. Analysis of the data in the European study of female senior expatriate managers indicated that the image of the successful manager as a male predominates throughout Europe. (Linehan & Walsh, 1999b) It is not the norm for international relocation to take place in order to facilitate the career of a female partner (Linehan & Walsh, 2000).

In a study conducted by Stroh et al. (2000), female assignees as well as their supervisors thought that women in dual-career relationships accepted slightly fewer international assign-
ments than single women or women who lived with nonworking partners. Regarding the issue of whether children influence expatriates’ decisions, female expatriates felt more strongly than their supervisors that women with children were less likely to accept international assignments. In general, female managers are interested in and likely to accept international assignments. Differences in interest and willingness to accept international assignments become apparent only when one evaluates data for women with children, who are perceived as somewhat less likely than women without children to accept international assignments. (Ibid.) Stroh et al. (2000) also point out that organisational stereotyping in connection to dual-career issues could have a negative effect on females’ decision to accept an international assignment, which in turn can become a ”self-fulfilling prophecy’. Qualified female candidates may form negative attitudes about the likelihood of being selected and thus might not actively pursue international positions (ibid.).

According to Wahl (1995), it has been noted that the pressure on female managers is greater than on male. Female managers who are married with children experience a lot of stress and role conflicts, feelings of guilt, excess work, and lack of time. Single females also feel more stress than their male colleagues do because they lack the basic service that their male colleagues enjoy at home. At the same time, those around them regard those who were not married as odd and rather strange, since the norm in organisations is to live as a couple. Females in managerial positions experience, besides the pressure from their work responsibilities, stress from being a token and additional stress from domestic work and bringing up a family. A study of male and female managers found that after the end of a working day the quantity of stress hormones was reduced by half for the men, while it increased for the female managers. Further stress from this minority situation can be derived from the visibility and attention that female managers experience, and that women managers often feel that they have to show that they are as good or better than their male counterparts. (Ibid.) Linehan and Walsh (2000) also conclude that working women experience more stress than working men do, and the sources of that stress are related to the expected and actual roles of women in society, as well as to the fact that women still occupy a minority status in organisations.

2.2.4 Role Models in International Management

Ruhe and Allen (1999) conducted a study with the purpose to investigate the degree to which women were used as role models in case studies in current international textbooks and casebooks. The authors are of the opinion that career opportunity for women as expatriates depend not only on overseas assignments by companies but also on the preparation offered by colleges and universities. Business schools in particular rely heavily on case studies in their educational processes, especially in courses designed to educate students about international issues. Ruhe and Allen state that women make up slightly over 50 percent of U.S. undergraduate students, and therefore one could question whether or not women are being adequately represented in business case studies used as internationally oriented study material. The authors raise questions concerning what role models women might find in their course material that might inspire them and/or to be helpful in preparing them for international assignments. (Ibid.)

In order to investigate the above-mentioned problem, Ruhe and Allen (1999) examined current literature addressing international issues and then compared it with literature written ten years ago. The books the authors focused upon included literature dealing with international marketing, international management, and international business. Overriding, a woman needed to be portrayed in a significant role, relative to the intention of the case study, for the
case to be included in the count. Out of 750 cases, 15.2 per cent reflected the presence of at least one woman in at least one significant role. In literature written ten years earlier, women were present in 2.3 per cent of the cases. (Ibid.) Therefore, Ruhe and Allen (1999) conclude that women to an increasing extent are portrayed by case writers in international business cases in current text- and casebooks. Their roles reflect comparative managerial, functional, and professional levels of women in the corporate world (ibid.).

However, Ruhe and Allen (1999) also state that the challenge still remains for case writers and text- and casebook authors to look for more opportunities to portray women in significant managerial and professional roles. Moreover, they contend that consideration could be given to modify case writing styles to explicitly include means for identifying gender in both case narratives and graphical case materials. Some case authors may feel that they actually are being fairer to women by not mentioning gender when presenting a case situation, for example by excluding the persons’ first names, or by referring to the individuals by title only (e.g. “the human resource manager”). In fact, this might turn into a disadvantage as opportunities to provide meaningful role models are unintentionally missed. (Ibid.) Finally, Ruhe and Allen (1999) state that if women students interested in international business opportunities are to see themselves as potential international managers and professionals, they need relevant role models in case portrayals as a part of a comprehensive international business education. The mobilization of role models at different organisational levels has been mentioned as one of the most important career support programs for women, together with supervisory support for career interests, provision of mentors, and encouragement of network activities (Ruhe & Allen, 1997). According to Linehan and Walsh (1999b), women may actually miss opportunities for career advancement because they lack female role models.

2.2.5 Lack of Mentoring

Mentors have been defined as higher ranking, influential, senior organisational members with advanced experience and knowledge who are committed to providing upward mobility and support to a protégé’s professional career. Research has shown a positive relationship between female career advancement and mentoring. According to one study, female managers who were included in a mentoring programme felt that they had attained more realistic expectations of their careers. They also had learned the political skills of organisational life faster, and they had matured and increased in self-confidence. (Linehan & Walsh, 1999a) In fact, the influence of mentoring is said to be one of the most important informal organisational processes that may affect the participation of female managers in international management (Linehan et al., 2001). According to Ruhe and Allen (1997), career support through mentoring and guidance programs is essential for expatriate executives.

Previous studies have reported that more women than men who advance to senior management positions have mentors, and women who fail to reach these levels cite the absence of mentors as critical to their failure. One reason for the low number of female expatriates might therefore be that there is a smaller supply of mentors available to women than to men. Possible explanations for the infrequency of mentoring relations among women in organisations include that women may not seek mentors, and that mentors may not select female protégées. Research has shown that a key element in the selection process is the degree to which the mentor identifies with the protégé and perceives him or her as a younger version of himself. Therefore, the selection process might be biased by the tendency of male mentors to choose male over female protégées. (Linehan & Walsh, 1999a)
It has been argued that women need female mentors who can act as role models. Women may actually miss opportunities for career advancement because they lack female role models. Probably, this lack results in responses that mirror the behaviour of successful male executives. This may further isolate women, as their lifestyle does not easily adapt to the male managerial model. Where a female mentor is available to act as a role model, it is likely that the aspiration levels of women managers are raised, even for work traditionally done by men. However, female executives may encounter barriers to becoming mentors to other women in organisations. Obstacles include non-supportive environments and time pressures – female executives are likely to have less time available to be a mentor. (Linehan & Walsh, 1999a)

Findings from a study of 50 European female senior international managers confirm that there are not yet enough women in senior international managerial positions to act as mentors for other women (Linehan et al., 2001). Respondents who had been mentored by females only thought that their female mentors acted as role models and helped them to maintain a female managerial style. In addition, those of the participants who had re-entered their organisations at home had themselves become role models for future female international managers by providing mentoring relationships to encourage younger female managers to take part in international assignments. (Linehan & Walsh, 1999a) It is common for female managers to feel isolated without role models in organisations. This in turn creates a particular kind of stress since women have to make greater efforts than men to come into groups and networks, which are important in an organisation. (Wahl, 1995)

Of those interviewees in the European study who had been mentored by men, none had experienced any difficulties in cross-gender mentoring (Linehan et al., 2001). They all believed that their mentors did not view them as females, but saw their mentoring roles as aiding the career advancement of their managerial protégées (Linehan & Walsh, 1999a). All respondents who had mentors believed that the benefits provided by mentors, regardless of their respective gender, had undoubtedly facilitated their career advancement (Linehan et al., 2001). Generally, mentors were perceived to provide information, training, advice, and career direction, and to be important for introducing women managers to the informal networks that exist in organisations. (Linehan & Walsh, 1999a) All of the interviewees who did not have any mentors thought that they would have benefited from such a relationship, especially in the early stages of their careers. A mentoring relationship is seen to be even more important in an international management context than in domestic management. Respondents believed that the opportunities for them to go on international assignments were partly attributed to having mentoring relationships. (Linehan et al., 2001)

2.2.6 Lack of Networking

While mentors are particularly useful at the early stages of career development, networking can be useful at all stages. Such peer relationships often last longer than mentoring, they are not hierarchical, and involve a two-way helping. Since a significant number of women expatriate managers may not have mentors, networking has advantages. (Linehan et al., 2001) Just as with mentoring, the benefits provided by formal and informal networking in international management are perceived to be of greater value than the benefits provided in domestic management. (Ibid.)

The female expatriate managers in the study described by Linehan et al. (2001) were of the opinion that quite an amount of business is discussed, and useful contacts are made, when male managers network informally, but as females they are excluded from access to these
informal situations. For example, there are all-men golf clubs and special days for ladies. In addition, women might be further disadvantaged from networking, as they have less time than their male colleagues due to home and family commitments. Interviewees felt that there are more benefits to be gained for career progression if women can penetrate male networking groups than by setting up own female networks, since men still predominantly hold the power in organisations. (Ibid.) According to Linehan et al. (2001), the “old boy network” is still strong in most organisations throughout Europe, and particularly in established industries such as medicine, accountancy and law. This is consistent with Davidson and Cooper (1992), who suggest that certain established male institutions have developed exclusively male customs and traditions, which, according to the authors, “perpetuate the old boy network and safeguard it from female intrusion” (p. 89).

Gaining access to male networks may in fact be the most significant barrier that women in senior management have to overcome in relation to networking. Participants in the European study also suggested that the exclusion of females from male managerial groups preserves male customs, traditions and negative attitudes towards female managers. Effects of these covert barriers include blocked promotion and blocked career development, discrimination, occupational stress, and lower salaries. Moreover, there is a certain “male bonding” that takes place after work hours, during sporting events, and in clubs and bars, which the female manager respondents felt excluded from. The interviewees thought that if women had more access to networking groups they could be socialised in both the formal and informal norms of the organisation, thus gaining advantages from these. Furthermore, if more females become integrated into informal networks, then perhaps more women will reach senior management positions and in turn take part in international management. (Linehan et al., 2001)

This chapter has provided a review of previous studies concerning factors that may contribute to the low number of female expatriates. Studies connected to the two research questions have been outlined. In Chapter 3, the literature review will be narrowed down into a conceptual framework, which then will represent the main issues to be studied.
In order to be able to answer the two research questions that were stated in Chapter 1, we have to explain what we will collect our data on. Among the studies presented in the review of literature, we will choose the concepts that we perceive to be most relevant for our research. What a conceptual framework is, and how this chapter is structured, is explained in the introduction section below.

3.1 Introduction to Conceptual Framework

The process of choosing the most relevant concepts from the literature review is known as conceptualisation or “building a conceptual framework”. Miles and Huberman (1994) describe the conceptual framework as something that explains, either graphically or in narrative form, the main things to be studied. It is simply the current version of the researcher’s map of the territory being investigated, and it specifies who and what will and will not be studied (ibid.). Therefore, we will start by outlining concepts regarding women in international management from a corporate perspective in order to be able to analyse research question one. Then, concepts concerning the second research question, which deals with women in international management from the female expatriate’s perspective, will be presented. The conceptual framework connected to these two research questions will be covered in separate sections. Finally, the chosen concepts are shown in a more graphic manner, as a frame of reference has emerged. All concepts have been chosen based on their potential strength as topics for data collection.

3.2 Research Question 1 – Corporate Perspective

One reason for the low ratio of women among Swedish MNC expatriates could be that companies hesitate to send female managers due to a corporate assumption that the local culture is prejudiced against women. This variable has been tested in a well-known study by Adler (1994a), and since this study showed that many of the investigated companies actually did have such hesitations, this concept is included in the conceptual framework. Other reasons for companies selecting male managers rather than female have been suggested by Vance and Paik (2001). Two of these are the assumptions that men have greater qualifications for international assignments and that women are relatively unable to adapt to the challenging requirements of foreign assignments. These concepts will be studied in order to see if such assumptions exist among Swedish corporations.

Selection processes for expatriate assignments might be an important factor tied to the corporate perspective of the reasons behind the low ratio of female expatriates. Within these processes, there are variables that can be tied to organisational policies, but there are also more subjective factors that might influence the selection of expatriates. Harris (2001) has identified four variables within companies’ selection procedures that will be included in the conceptual framework – open vs. closed and formal vs. informal processes. Linehan and Scullion (2001b) have also studied the effects of closed selection. Therefore, these authors are added in order to further strengthen the choice of this concept. Moreover, concepts by Linehan and Scullion (2001b) and Linehan, Scullion and Walsh (2001) are added to the framework regarding the selection process, in order to study some variables that are not connected to formal organisational policies but rather to the personal conceptions of selectors within companies. The latter concept (Linehan, Scullion & Walsh, 2001) is found within the section “The
Glass Border” in the literature review, but since this specific statement can be tied to the selection process as well, it is put under that subheading in the conceptual framework.

Linehan and Walsh (1999b) have found that female managers among other things need to be more qualified than male managers in order to be selected for expatriate assignments. This concept, which is presented in the literature review section dealing with the glass border, will also be tested in a Swedish context. Moreover, factors connected to informal perceptions regarding women’s suitability will be included in the conceptual framework, since studies (e.g. Harris, 1995) indicate that the influence of such perceptions might negatively affect women’s participation in international management. Concepts suggested by Linehan, Scullion and Walsh (2001) as well as Harris (1995; 2001) will be included to study if such informal perceptions exist within Swedish MNCs.

As a final category of concepts, dual-career and family issues are included in the conceptual framework in order to study whether such factors, when connected to a corporate perspective, might contribute to the low ratio of female expatriates. These issues include suggestions from Harris (1995) concerning pressure from past job achievements and implicit career timetables, as well as concepts derived from studies by Linehan and Scullion (2001b) and Linehan, Scullion and Walsh (2001). The latter two concern assumptions and attitudes among home-country senior management, which, if present, might discourage women from applying for international assignments.

Thus, the following specific concepts connected to the first research question will be looked at and compared to collected data:

• **Companies’ hesitation:**
  Companies are hesitant to send women on international assignments since they assume that foreigners’ prejudice against women will make them ineffective as expatriate managers (Adler, 1994a)

• **Reasons for companies selecting males over females:**
  Vance and Paik (2001) suggest the following reasons for companies selecting men over women for expatriate assignments:
  - Men have greater qualifications for international assignments
  - Women’s relative inability to adapt to the challenging requirements of foreign assignments

• **Selection processes:**
  Organisations use selection procedures that are either open or closed, and also either formal or informal. These four categories (open/closed, formal/informal) can be combined to a typology of international management selection processes. An open/formal system will be the most likely combination to produce equality of opportunity within international management selection, while a closed/informal system is seen to be the worst situation for equality of opportunity. (Harris, 2001) The categories of selection procedures can be defined in the following way:
  - In an open system, all vacancies are advertised and anyone with appropriate qualifications and experience may apply. Selection decisions are taken by consensus among the selectors. (Harris, 2001)
  - In a closed system, headquarters nominate suitable candidates to line managers, who have the option of accepting or rejecting them. The candidate is only informed once
agreement about acceptability has been reached between head office personnel and the line manager. The “interview” consists of a negotiation about the terms and conditions of the assignment. (Harris, 2001; Linehan & Scullion, 2001b)

- In a formal system, there are formalised, objective criteria for expatriate selection, while there are no formal criteria in an informal system (Harris, 2001)

Other factors related to the selection process include:
- The pool of potential expatriate candidates is limited to employees who are well known to the selectors (Linehan & Scullion, 2001b)
- If women do not ask to be included in the selection process for international assignments, they might not be considered at all (Linehan, Scullion & Walsh, 2001)

• **Women’s qualifications:**
  Female managers need to be more qualified, more ambitious, and more mobile than male managers are in order to be selected for an expatriate assignment (Linehan & Walsh, 1999b)

• **Men’s tendency to choose other men:**
  Men holding upper level management positions have a (unconscious) tendency to choose other men for expatriate assignments. (Linehan, Scullion & Walsh, 2001) Men’s informal perceptions of women’s suitability may also lead to a tendency to “clone” themselves (Harris, 2001; Harris, 1995)

• **The estimations of people’s ability and women’s differing career patterns:**
  Organisational practices that are used to estimate people’s ability and allocate jobs and training usually include indicators such as past education and job achievement in terms of perceived status, as well as evaluation of career velocity. Women are likely to be disadvantaged by these practices considering their differing career patterns and initial choice of job (Harris, 1995)

• **Dual-career/family issues:**
  - Past job achievements and implicit career timetables might create pressure on both men and women not to take career breaks to follow their partners abroad. (Harris, 1995)
  - Extended maternity leaves and career breaks might not be looked upon favourably by senior management (Linehan & Scullion, 2001b)
  - Home-country senior managers often assume that married women will not be interested in international assignments because of their domestic responsibilities, especially if they have children (Linehan, Scullion & Walsh, 2001; Linehan & Scullion, 2001b)
3.3 Research Question 2 – Female Expatriates’ Perspective

A frequently mentioned reason for the low ratio of women among MNC expatriates is that women simply are less interested in international assignments than men. This notion has also been tested by several researchers. Therefore, concepts by Adler (1994a) and Varma and Stroh (2001), as well as Yurkiewicz and Rosen (1995) have been included in order to find out whether this could be a reason for Swedish women not to pursue international careers. A suggestion by Linehan and Scullion (2001a) has been added to see if the location of the assignment affects women’s willingness to work abroad. Also related to the issue of women’s interest and willingness to take expatriate assignments is the impact of perceived rewards, or in other words, the relocation package offered. The impact of rewards is discussed by Harris (1995) as well as Yurkiewicz and Rosen (1995).

Dual-career couples are becoming increasingly common. At the same time, the reviewed studies indicate that women seem to still take the largest responsibility for the family and children. Therefore, it could be assumed that these issues might have a substantial impact on the ratio of female expatriates. Thus, concepts suggested by Linehan and Walsh (1999b) related to dual-career and family issues are included in the conceptual framework.

An absence of female role models, as well as a lack of mentoring and networking, constitute some factors that may affect the participation of women in international management. These issues have been studied primarily by Ruhe and Allen (1997), Linehan and Walsh (1999a) and Linehan, Scullion and Walsh (2001). Concepts concerning role models, mentoring and networking as described by these authors are added to the conceptual framework in order to investigate whether such informal factors may have an impact on the ratio of women among Swedish MNC expatriates.

Thus, the following specific concepts connected to the second research question will be looked at and compared to collected data:

- **Interest/willingness to take foreign assignments:**
  - Some studies claim that women and men today are equally interested in international assignments (Adler 1994a; Varma & Stroh, 2001), while others have found that male managers are more receptive than female managers to expatriate assignments (Yurkiewicz & Rosen, 1995)
  - Men and women differ in their willingness to work in specific locations, which makes gender a significant predictor when specific referent countries are identified (Linehan & Scullion, 2001a)

- **Impact of perceived rewards:**
  Female (and male) managers’ motivations are impacted by perceived rewards from accepting international assignments (Harris, 1995). The willingness to accept an expatriate assignment appears to be contingent on the relocation package offered (Yurkiewicz & Rosen, 1995).
• **Dual-career/family issues:**
  - Additional strains are placed on the female expatriate’s personal relationships when her partner becomes a trailing spouse (Linehan & Walsh, 1999b)
  - Many women managers choose between an international career and family because of the extra strains and guilt feelings that women experience in balancing an international career with childrearing responsibilities. This choice may have to be made because of:
    - The organisational and societal assumptions that a woman’s primary role is that of a mother
    - The fact that career success is still based on a male model, which ignores the influence of marriage, pregnancy, children, and household duties (Linehan & Walsh, 1999b)

• **Role models:**
  The mobilization of role models at different organisational levels is one of the most important career support programs for women (Ruhe & Allen, 1997). A lack of female role models may lead to women missing opportunities for career advancement (Linehan & Walsh, 1999a)

• **Mentoring:**
  The influence of mentoring is one of the most important informal factors that may affect the participation of female managers in international management (Linehan, Scullion & Walsh, 2001; Ruhe & Allen, 1997). Part of the reason for the low number of female expatriates might therefore be that women may not seek mentors, and/or that mentors may not select female protégées (Linehan & Walsh, 1999a)

• **Networking:** Female expatriates feel excluded from access to the business discussions and the useful contact making that takes place when male managers network informally. If women had more access to networking groups, they could be socialised in both the formal and informal norms of the organisation, which in turn may lead to that more women take part in international management (Linehan, Scullion & Walsh, 2001)

### 3.4 Frame of Reference

Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest that a conceptual framework is best done graphically. The point is not to make a giant scheme, but to make explicit what is already in the researcher’s mind. In addition to the specification of who and what will and will not be studied, the framework specifies some relationships. (Ibid.) Therefore, we have chosen to illustrate the narrative conceptual framework in the perspicuous graphical form of a frame of reference, as shown in Figure 3.1 on the following page.
The purpose of this study is to gain a deeper understanding of the reasons behind the low ratio of women among expatriate managers of Swedish multinational corporations. Figure 3.1 explicitly shows how the concepts related to the purpose are ranged into either the corporate or the female expatriates’ perspective, in accordance with the established research questions and the review of literature.

In this chapter, the studies reviewed in Chapter 2 have been narrowed down into a conceptual framework. The variables outlined in the conceptual framework are the basis for data collection, since they represent the main things to be studied. Finally, the conceptual framework has been illustrated in a graphical frame of reference. As we move on to Chapter 4, we will explain how we collected the data that will help us answer the research questions formulated in section 1.3.

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**Reasons for the Low Ratio of Female Expatriate Managers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Corporate Perspective</th>
<th>Female Expatriates’ Perspective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Companies’ hesitation</td>
<td>Interest/willingness to take foreign assignments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasons for companies selecting males over females</td>
<td>Impact of perceived rewards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selection processes</td>
<td>Dual-career/family issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women’s qualifications</td>
<td>Role models</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men’s tendency to choose other men</td>
<td>Mentoring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The estimations of people’s ability and women’s differing career patterns</td>
<td>Networking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dual-career/family issues</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 3.1: Frame of Reference*

*Source: Authors’ own construction*
4. METHODOLOGY

The methodology chapter will present how we went about collecting data in order to find the answers to the research questions, thereby fulfilling the purpose of the thesis. The chapter starts by stating the purpose of the research, then moving on to research approach and research strategy. Then, a presentation of how the data collection was carried out and how the sampling was conducted follows. After explaining the choice of general analytical strategy, the quality standards of the research are assessed.

4.1 Purpose of the Research

To state the purpose of the research means to inform the reader about what one wants to achieve, and how the result can be used (Eriksson & Wiedersheim-Paul, 1997). The intention or purpose of a research can be divided into different groups. We have chosen the following grouping, based on the definitions provided by Eriksson and Wiedersheim-Paul (1997) along with Lundahl and Skärvad (1992), where the purpose can be to explore, describe, or explain.

When the purpose of the study is to explore, it is called exploratory or preparatory. This kind of research is used when one wants to:
- formulate and precise a problem,
- give the researcher an orientation in the framing of the research questions,
- give the researcher an orientation about what is previously known within the subject,
- achieve a précised and coherent research plan (research questions and purpose, methods for data collection, analysis, etc.)

Exploratory studies are commonly conducted through expert interviews, literature studies, and case studies. (Lundahl & Skärvad, 1992)

If the researcher’s purpose is to describe, the study is descriptive. Descriptive research can be of varying character; one can for example describe conditions, events, courses of events, or actions. To describe means to registare and document, and often also to identify and map out. However, descriptions are not unprejudiced, since descriptive research is conducted from different kinds of starting points. Describing involves a choice of perspective, aspects, level, terms and concepts, as well as to observe, registrate, systematize, classify, and interpret. A good description is usually a necessary foundation when the researcher wants to explain, understand, predict, or decide. (Eriksson & Wiedersheim-Paul, 1997)

When the purpose of the research is to explain, the study is called explanatory. To explain means to analyse causes and connections. (Eriksson & Wiedersheim-Paul, 1997) The researcher also tries to identify factors that together cause a certain phenomenon (Lundahl & Skärvad, 1992). Explanations are made from different kinds of starting points, in the same way as descriptive research. These starting points have to be précised, and they have to inform the reader about what the explanation is going to be used for and to whom it is aimed. When explaining a certain phenomenon, there is not one single model that is the correct one to use, which means that the researcher has to consider using different models. This also means that using one single model will not be sufficient to reach a complete explanation. (Eriksson & Wiedersheim-Paul, 1997)

It is however not necessary to choose one of these purposes for the research. Reynolds (1971) suggests a compound procedure, which divides the research into three different stages. These stages consist of exploratory, descriptive, and explanatory studies, as described above. In the
exploratory stage, the research is conducted with the purpose to develop thought-provoking ideas. Here, it is important that the research is flexible and that it gives guidelines, which can be followed during the next stage. In the descriptive stage, then, the goal is to develop thorough descriptions about patterns that were foreseen during the exploratory research. (Ibid.) According to Eriksson and Wiedersheim-Paul (1997), descriptive studies are useful when the researcher has précised what the description will be used for, and what knowledge he/she wants to achieve. This means that every description must have a purpose in order to be meaningful. At the explanatory stage, the researcher is looking for a cause and effect relationship. (Ibid.) The aim is to provide the researcher with a cycle of theory construction, theory testing, and finally a theory reformulation (Reynolds, 1971).

With respect to the above discussion, we can state that our study at its introductory stage is exploratory. It is initially aiming to formulate and preceise problems, to give us as researchers an orientation in the question at issue, and to provide an orientation about existing theories in the subject of the study. However, the focus of our research is descriptive, as we will register and document, as well as identify the findings of our research. In addition, the research questions are formulated as “How are (...) described (...)?”, which points to the descriptive nature of the study. This research purpose will help us to fulfil the purpose of the study, which is to gain a deeper understanding of the reasons behind the low number of female expatriates. A good description also provides a foundation for the explanatory stage. Our study will have some explanatory features, as we begin to explain while answering our research questions at the end.

4.2 Research Approach

Studies can be divided into quantitative and qualitative research, based on the research’s type of data. Quantitative research tries to explain phenomena with numbers to obtain results, thus basing the conclusions on data that can be quantified (Lundahl & Skärvad, 1992). This type of research is characterised by distance and selection, which means that a limited amount of information is gathered from many research units using systematic and structured observations (Holme & Solvang, 1991).

In qualitative research, the conclusions are based on non-quantifiable data, such as attitudes, values, or perceptions. It could however be possible to quantify these data as well. (Lundahl & Skärvad, 1992) Qualitative research is characterised by closeness to the studied object. It also means that the researcher wants to gain plentiful information from few research units. The researcher is therefore not aiming to generalise; instead, the purpose with the qualitative approach is to gain a deeper understanding of the studied area. (Holme & Solvang, 1991) The following features of qualitative research are suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994): the researcher attempts to capture data on the perceptions of local actors “from the inside”; the main task is to explicate the ways for managing day-to-day situations; there are many possible interpretations of the material; and little standardised instrumentation is used – most analysis is done with words.

The choice of approach should be based on the purpose of the research. We find that it is important to achieve a closer contact with our studied objects in order to gain a deeper understanding of our purpose, especially since we to a large extent are studying people’s perceptions about a basically intangible subject. Therefore, we have chosen a qualitative approach that enables us to obtain more in-depth information.
4.3 Research Strategy

According to Yin (1994), five different research strategies are available in social sciences: experiment, survey, archival analysis, history, and case study. De Weerd-Nederhof (2001) points out that even if there is considerable freedom of choice of research strategy, the aim and purpose of the study limits this. The author cites Van der Zwaan, who claims that “testing and experiments almost per definition fit together just as the case study has everything to do with exploration and description” (de Weerd-Nederhof, 2001, p. 515). Yin (1994) states that the choice of strategy can be determined on the basis of the formulation of the research questions, whether control over behavioural events is required or not, and whether the research focuses on contemporary events or not. Regarding research questions, the most common types are formulated as “who”-, “what”-, “where”-, “how”-, and “why”-questions. “What”-questions are in general exploratory, which means that each of the strategies can be employed, or they can deal with general occurrences, which then suggests that surveys or archival analyses are suitable. When “how”- or “why”-questions are used, the researcher can benefit by using case studies, experiments, or historical studies. (Ibid.) An outline of the different available research strategies is provided in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESEARCH STRATEGY</th>
<th>Form of research question</th>
<th>Requires control over behavioural events</th>
<th>Focuses on contemporary events</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experiment</td>
<td>How, why</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>How, what, where, how many, how much</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Archival analysis</td>
<td>Who, what, where, how many, how much</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes/No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>How, why</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case study</td>
<td>How, why</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Yin (1994, p. 6))

As our study deals with contemporary events, and we do not need to have control over behavioural events, the choice stands between conducting a survey and making a case study (or studies). Our research questions are formulated as “how”-questions, which does not exclude the survey or the case study. However, as we already have stated that our research will have a qualitative approach, a survey is not appropriate because of its quantitative character. Therefore, our choice is to work with case studies. In addition, the qualitative approach requires a more in-depth understanding of our purpose, which can best be attained by adopting this strategy. A case study involves a larger amount of details with a smaller number of individuals, which makes it possible to achieve a deeper understanding of each individual (Lundahl & Skärvad, 1992). The case study strategy also suits our research purpose, which is mainly descriptive, but also somewhat exploratory.

There are four basic types of case studies: single and multiple case designs, which can either be holistic (single unit of analysis) or embedded (multiple levels of analysis within a study) (de Weerd-Nederhof, 2001). According to Yin (1994), the evidence of multiple cases is often more convincing, and the overall study is therefore considered more robust. How many cases one chooses to do in a multiple case study should reflect the number of case replications – both literal and theoretical – one would like to have. In other words, the number of literal replications depends on the certainty one wants to reach about the multiple case results. (de
Weerd-Nederhof, 2001) Eisenhardt (1989) states that a number between four and ten cases usually works well. With fewer than four cases it is often difficult to generate theory with much complexity, and its grounding is likely to be unconvincing. With more than ten cases it quickly becomes difficult to handle the complexity and the volume of the data. (Ibid.)

Our aim is to make a comparison between the perspective of female expatriates and a corporate perspective, as represented by human resources managers. In order to achieve a sufficiently strong basis for analysis, we have chosen to conduct three case studies within three different companies. Each case study involves two respondents, in order to achieve the stated dual perspective. Even though three cases are one less than recommended by Eisenhardt (1989), we find this to be a sufficient number of cases with respect to our limited time frame and the limitations of the scope of the study that are connected to our level of research. In addition, the fact that our case studies are based on data gathered from six respondents will make the empirical grounding more convincing.

4.4 Data Collection

The research in a report can be based on primary and/or secondary data. Primary data is collected for the first time and for a specific purpose, while secondary data consists of existing information collected by other researchers. As it is easier to use already existing information, secondary data are usually used initially. (Lundahl & Skärvad, 1992)

4.4.1 Limited Pilot Study

As referred to in Chapter 1, section 1.2.4, we chose to conduct a limited pilot study in order to investigate whether the participation of Swedish women in international management actually is low. This study started by conducting extensive searches at the Internet, using common search engines as well as databases containing newspaper articles. Web article archives of popular journals within the areas of management and economics were also sought through. Moreover, the Internet search involved different organisations and governmental institutions, such as the WTO and EU, the Swedish National Board of Trade (Kommerskollegium), NUTEK (Närings- och teknikutvecklingsverket), Ministry of Industry, Employment and Communications (Näringslivsdepartementet), and many others.

Since the Internet searches were resultless, we made inquiries to an equality expert at the Swedish employers’ organisation Svenskt Näringsliv as well as the information centre at the Swedish Trade Council (Exportrådet). None of these organisations were able to provide any information regarding the ratio of Swedish female expatriates. The equality expert at Svenskt Näringsliv was very interested in the subject, but referred to that employers do not have any interest in such statistics. Her perception was however that there are few Swedish women that are sent on expatriate assignments. She also made inquiries for our account to a person that she thought would be able to answer this kind of questions, but he did not know of any expatriate statistics either. The respondent at the Swedish Trade Council tried to find relevant data within her organisation as well as from other sources, but without success.

We also contacted a personnel manager at the international market division of a Swedish MNC and asked specifically about the ratio of female managers among their expatriate workforce. The respondent could only name one woman expatriate among the company’s 150 expatriates. In addition, we contacted the consulting company Fabi Expatriate Service, which has been working for many years with predeparture training programs for Swedish expatriates.
from many different companies, as well as training for foreign expatriates who come to work in Sweden. The respondent at Fabi stated that she did not know of any statistical data on the ratio of Swedish female expatriate managers, but from her experience, almost none of the expatriates leaving Sweden are women. The reason for this is that it is too difficult for women to fit work and family together, which results in that women are not reaching the higher managerial positions from which expatriates are picked, according to the respondent.

4.4.2 Data Collection Methods

According to Yin (1994), the information that can be collected through case studies can emanate from six different sources: documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant observations, and physical artefacts. No single source has an advantage over the others, but the different sources of evidence complement each other since they all have various strengths and weaknesses. (Ibid.) The six sources of evidence are presented below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SOURCE OF EVIDENCE</th>
<th>STRENGTHS</th>
<th>WEAKNESSES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Documentation</td>
<td>- Stable: can be reviewed repeatedly.</td>
<td>- Retrievability: can be low.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Unobtrusive: not created as a result of the case.</td>
<td>- Biased selectivity: if collection is incomplete.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Exact: contains exact names, references, and details of an event.</td>
<td>- Reporting bias: reflects (unknown) bias of author.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Broad coverage: long span of time, many events, and many settings.</td>
<td>- Access: may be deliberately blocked.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Archival records</td>
<td>(Same as above for documentation)</td>
<td>(Same as above for documentation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Precise and quantitative.</td>
<td>Accessibility due to privacy reasons.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>- Targeted: focuses directly on case study topic.</td>
<td>Bias due to poorly constructed questionnaires.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Insightful: provides perceived causal inferences.</td>
<td>- Response bias.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Inaccuracies due to poor recall.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Reflexivity: interviewee says what interviewer wants to hear.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct observations</td>
<td>- Reality: covers events in real time.</td>
<td>Time consuming.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Contextual: covers context of event.</td>
<td>Selectivity: unless broad coverage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Reflexivity: event may proceed differently because it is being observed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cost: hours needed by human observers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant observations</td>
<td>(Same as for direct observations)</td>
<td>(Same as for direct observations)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Insightful into interpersonal behaviour and motives.</td>
<td>Bias due to investigator’s manipulation of events.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical artefacts</td>
<td>- Insightful into cultural features.</td>
<td>Selectivity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Insightful into technical operations.</td>
<td>Availability</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Yin (1994, p. 80)
When conducting a case study, the researcher should try to use multiple sources of evidence in order to improve the reliability and the construction validity of the study (Yin, 1994). This is called triangulation. The most important advantage that can be obtained when using the method of triangulation is the development of converging evidence, which means that a conclusion or a result is more convincing and accurate if it is based on various sources of information. (Ibid.)

Archival records are characterised as precise and quantitative, and therefore they do not suit the qualitative approach of our study. Physical artefacts are described as insightful when it comes to cultural features and technical operations, but since our study is concerned with perceptual questions, this type of evidence is not relevant. Observations are usually conducted when studying different behaviour or role issues (Lundahl & Skärvad, 1992). The traditional ideal of direct observations is to achieve a strict separation between the observer and the studied object (ibid.), while participant observations means a higher degree of investigator involvement (Yin, 1994). The purpose of our study requires a deeper understanding of people’s opinions and perspectives, which is not possible to achieve by observing behaviour. In addition, it would be far too time consuming to include observations as a data collection method. Therefore, this method (-s) will not be used.

In order to collect data for our case study we have chosen to use interviews and documentation. The interview is chosen as our major primary data collection method because of its strength to focus directly on the topic of the case study. The potential disadvantages with an interview are that it can be biased by poorly constructed questions and that there is a risk for reflexivity, i.e. that the interviewee tells the interviewer only what he/she wants to hear. Yin (1994) presents three different types of interviews: open-ended, focused, and structured.

The most commonly used interview method is the open-ended, where the researcher asks the respondent unstructured questions, thus allowing the interview to be more of a discussion (Yin, 1994). According to Lundahl and Skärvad (1992), the purpose of unstructured interviews is to get the respondent to discuss his/her own values, attitudes, and perceptions. In a focused interview, the respondent is interviewed during a brief period of time (Yin, 1994). Still, the character of the interview is open, and it may be conducted by a conversation between the respondent and the researcher. However, the researcher is most probably following a questionnaire. Finally, the structured interview contains structured questions similar to a survey. (Ibid.) These questions, as well as the purpose of the interview, are completely outlined before the interview takes place. The questions are constructed in a way that allows the researcher to systematically go through of the areas of interest. (Lundahl & Skärvad, 1992)

The type of interview that will be used in this study is the focused interview. An interview guide (provided in Appendix A-B) will be used to be able to discuss a limited number of issues connected to the conceptual framework presented in Chapter 3. This way, the focused interview can be used to confirm or dismiss certain facts, or in this case, concepts derived from previous empirical studies. Since the interview guide basically consists of a number of concepts that we want to bring up for discussion, instead of exactly formulated questions, it will enable us to attain the open character of the focused interview. Thus, more flexibility in the respondents’ answers is allowed, while still focusing on the specific issues in the interview guide.

In general, a focused interview can be conducted by telephone or in person. Telephone interviews are less costly and time consuming, which makes them useful when contacting a distant
respondent (Lundahl & Skärvad, 1992). Personal interviews on the other hand, can generally be longer than telephone interviews and include questions that are more complex. The personal contact during a face-to-face interview enables a better feedback from the respondent. (Ibid.) In-person interviews make it possible for the researcher to use a wide range of questioning styles due to a great opportunity to probe\(^8\), to read nonverbal cues, and to use visual aids. Telephone interviews place some limitations on question wording because of the inability to use visual cues to assist the respondent in retaining the contents of lengthy and/or complex questions. Also, the telephone interviewer has no ability to use facial expressions or body language feedback to determine whether the respondent is following and comprehending. On the other hand, the negative effects that an interviewer may have on the way a respondent answers a question (so-called “interviewer effects”) are fewer for the telephone interview than for the face-to-face questioning. This is simply because visual cues, such as facial expression or body language, cannot be observed and therefore they do not affect the response. (Frey & Mertens Oishi, 1995)

For this thesis, we have chosen to conduct telephone interviews due to time and money constraints. All of our respondents are located at a long distance from Luleå, and also far from each other, which makes personal interviews too time consuming and costly to conduct. The alternative of conducting personal interviews with only a few of the respondents was excluded, since the difference in the interview situations then probably would have caused a bias between the cases. The interviews were conducted in Swedish, since this is the mother’s tongue of all respondents as well as the researchers.

In order to collect secondary data about the sampled companies, we visited their web sites. There, we could find documentation in the form of general company information, articles, and annual and interim reports. The stability, exactness and unobtrusiveness of this documentation makes it valuable when putting together the sections concerning background information about the sampled companies in Chapter 5. The following data have been collected through documentation: the company’s industry and products, countries of operation, number of employees, female employees in percent, and female managers in percent. However, we have also recognized that there might be some degree of biased selectivity in the documentation, since we were only able to find figures of the number of women employees and managers at one of the company web sites.

### 4.5 Sample Selection

According to Eisenhardt (1989), selection of an appropriate population controls external variation and also sharpens external validity. The theoretical sampling (as opposed to random) helps to focus efforts on theoretically useful cases, i.e. those that replicate or extend theory by filling conceptual categories (ibid.). It must also be noted that in practice, the sample selection is very much dependent on the possibility of gaining access. Practical issues play an important part in the selection of both cases and people to interview within the case study organisation (de Weerd-Nederhof, 2001).

Our sample selection started by searching for respondents. Even though it was secondary in importance which company they worked for, we wanted respondents from companies operating in different industries in order to possibly get a broader view of the studied area. In addition, the companies should be multinational corporations with large activities abroad, so that

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\(^8\) Probe = to ask questions in order to find things out, especially things that other people do not want you to know (Probe, 1995)
we would feel sure about that they were experienced in expatriate management. In order to find suitable respondents, we made inquiries to our colleagues and acquaintances that we thought might know of women with experience from working as expatriate managers. Selection criteria for the female expatriate respondents were that they should be, or have been, in a managerial position in a foreign country currently or within the last three years. The assignment should be, or have been, lasting for at least a year. Another criterion was that the three respondents respectively should have been placed on different locations. This way, we would gain data concerning experiences from different countries and cultures, thus avoiding a country bias. We also considered it further favourable from a comparative view since the corporate perspective might be different depending on the location of its female expatriates.

Through our initial inquiries, we obtained names and telephone numbers of two female expatriates, both of whom were repatriated in Sweden. We therefore contacted one of them directly over the telephone, and the other one by e-mail, since it was very difficult to get hold of her by telephone. We then explained the purpose and scope of our study, and asked if the women would agree to participate, which they immediately accepted to. The repatriated respondents had been active in the Czech Republic, Denmark, South Africa, and Russia. The third respondent, who is currently on an expatriate assignment in Germany, was found through an article published at the company web site. We sent e-mail to a manager at the human resource department at the company, who then forwarded it to the presumptive respondent. This led to that she contacted us by telephone, and we could set up a time for an interview. These three female expatriates all work in companies that are among the 80 largest Swedish concerns with the largest number of employees abroad, according to ITPS (2001). All of them matched the stated criteria for sample selection.

Next step in the sampling process was to identify respondents within the human resources departments at each of the three companies. The criterion for being considered a suitable respondent (as a representative for the organisation) was that the person should be involved in recruitment and selection of expatriate managers. Preferably, these individuals would also have taken part in the nomination of the female expatriate respondents. Therefore, we asked the female expatriate respondents who would be the best person to talk to regarding the issues our study involved. Two of them gave us the name and e-mail address to the person they considered to be the best interviewees. After sending these managers an inquiry about participation by e-mail, both of them agreed to be interviewed. Both of these two managers had been involved in the selection process of the female expatriate respondents. In the third case, we phoned the human resource manager at corporate headquarters, who gave us the name and telephone number to the president of human resources at the business area within which the female expatriate respondent worked. The reason for this was that recruitment and selection of expatriate managers within this company is handled by each of the three business areas, and not by corporate headquarters. We thus contacted this manager, who also agreed to participate. This manager had not been involved in the selection of the female expatriate respondent; however, he knows her and is also stationed abroad in the same country as her.
4.6 General Analytical Strategy

According to Yin (1994), each case study should begin with a general analytical strategy. The strategy should help the researcher to choose among different techniques, and also to conclude the analysis in a successful way. Yin (1994) suggests two general analytical strategies: relying on theoretical propositions, or developing a case description. When the researcher chooses to rely on theoretical propositions, he/she collects data with research questions and previous studies as a basis. Developing a case description means that the researcher uses a descriptive way to present the data, but this is seen as less favourable and should only be used when there is little or no access to previous research. (Ibid.)

When one of these two strategies has been chosen, and the data has been collected, the researcher can start to process the data in an analytical manner. Miles and Huberman (1994) describe the qualitative analysis as consisting of three simultaneously occurring flows of activities: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Data reduction should not be seen as a part that is separated from the analysis. Instead, it should be viewed as an integral part of it. The reduction of data is the part of the analysis that helps the researcher to choose, focus, and simplify the written information. Also, the data reduction analysis organises the information in such a way that the researcher can draw and verify final conclusions. The second major analytical activity, data display, helps the researcher to draw conclusions more easily by displaying the reduced data in an organised, compressed way. As with data reduction, the stage of data display is a part of the analysis, not separated from it. Finally, the researcher moves on to conclusion drawing and verification. At this stage, the researcher begins to decide what things mean by noting regularities, patterns, explanations, possible configurations, causal flows, and propositions. (Ibid.) Miles and Huberman (1994) however point out that such conclusions should be held lightly, while maintaining openness and some scepticism.

This study will basically rely on the theoretical propositions that provided the material for introduction, research questions and literature review. This strategy is advised by Yin (1994), and it is the natural choice for this research, since we have found plenty of previous studies within our chosen subject to rely on. However, these studies are conducted mainly by American and British researchers, and there is also a lack of research taking the dual perspective of corporations – female expatriates. Therefore, this study will not only rely on the theoretical propositions but hopefully also contribute by adding new aspects to the area of research.

When analysing our collected data, we will follow the three steps as suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994). First, a data reduction will be made through a comparison between theories and empirical data. This stage is called within-case analysis. A reason for conducting a within-case analysis is to gain familiarity with data and preliminary theory generation (Eisenhardt, 1989). We will compare the data from each case with all concepts outlined in the conceptual framework. All respondents (corporate and expatriates) have answered the same questions in order to provide us with their views concerning all issues included in the conceptual framework. Due to their experience within international management, they should have established opinions regarding the studied concepts. Since the female expatriates are parts of their organisations, they have some perception about how the corporation views these issues. Similarly, the human resource managers at corporate headquarters (or business area HQ) are dealing with expatriate issues in their work. Thus, they should have a perception not only from a corporate view, but also regarding the more “personal” concepts connected to
female expatriates. In addition, almost all concepts are intertwined, which implies that they could – and should – be looked at from two perspectives.

After the within-case analysis, the data is displayed by comparing the three case studies with each other, partly by using matrices. By conducting this cross-case analysis, we will be able to find similarities and differences between the three cases and the corresponding concepts. It also forces us as researchers to look beyond initial impressions and see evidence through multiple lenses (Eisenhardt, 1989). Finally, the conclusion drawing and verification stage is compiled based on the within-case and cross-case analysis.

4.7 Quality Standards – Validity and Reliability

When conducting empirical studies, it is vital that questions and data collection are thoroughly prepared, in order to avoid systematic and random errors and to increase the quality of the research. Two important factors in this context are validity and reliability, since they determine the quality standard of the research. (Eriksson & Wiedersheim-Paul, 1997)

Validity is defined by Eriksson and Wiedersheim-Paul (1997) as a measuring instrument’s ability to measure what it is supposed to measure. The term can be divided into internal and external validity. Internal validity means the correspondence between the terms and the operational (measurable) definitions of them. It is rarely possible to reach 100 percent internal validity. (Ibid.) However, in most studies (especially causal and explanatory, according to Yin, 1994) it is important to clarify the degree of internal validity. Also, one must be aware of to what extent the measuring instrument measures too much, too little, or the wrong things. (Lundahl & Skärvid, 1992) External validity refers to the correspondence between reality and the value received when using an operational definition. It is independent of the internal validity, and it cannot be estimated without knowing how the empirical material has been collected and what it looks like. (Eriksson & Wiedersheim-Paul, 1997)

Validity is the most important demand on a measuring instrument. If the instrument does not measure what it is supposed to, then it will not matter if the measurement itself is good. A further demand, or way of estimating the quality standard, is reliability. This means that the measuring instrument (e.g. a questionnaire) gives accurate and stable results. A research with good reliability involves that another investigator would get the same results if he/she used the same methods at another point of time and with another sample. In other words, to reach high reliability the method should be independent of the researcher and the investigated units. (Eriksson & Wiedersheim-Paul, 1997)

Four specific tests can be conducted in order to judge the quality of empirical research (Yin, 1994), namely:
- Construct validity: Establishing correct operational measures for the concepts being studied.
- Internal validity: Establishing causal relationships whereby certain conditions are shown to lead to other conditions, as distinguished from spurious relationships.
- External validity: Establishing the domain to which a study’s findings can be generalised.
- Reliability: Demonstrating that the operations of a study can be repeated with the same results. (Ibid.)
According to Yin (1994), there are a number of tactics that can be used for these four tests when doing case study research. By using these tactics, the quality of the study can be enhanced. The tactics are presented in Table 4.3 below.

Table 4.3: Case Study Tactics for Four Design Tests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TESTS</th>
<th>CASE STUDY TACTIC</th>
<th>PHASE OF RESEARCH IN WHICH TACTIC OCCURS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Construct validity</td>
<td>- Use multiple sources of evidence</td>
<td>Data collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Establish chain of evidence</td>
<td>Data collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Have key informants review draft case study report</td>
<td>Composition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal validity</td>
<td>- Do pattern-matching</td>
<td>Data analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Do explanation building</td>
<td>Data analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Do time-series analysis</td>
<td>Data analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External validity</td>
<td>- Use replication (logic in multiple-case studies)</td>
<td>Research design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reliability</td>
<td>- Use case study protocol</td>
<td>Data collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Develop case study database</td>
<td>Data collection</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Yin (1994, p. 33)

We have used multiple sources of evidence (documentation and interviews) to increase the construct validity of our research. We have let other people read the interview guide before the interviews were conducted in order to make sure that the questions were clearly stated and made sense. The concepts that were not instantly understood by the respondents during the interviews were thoroughly explained in order to minimize the risk for misunderstandings. Moreover, our perception is that the respondents in each case were the most suitable to answer the questions. The fact that we recorded the interviews on tape as well as took notes also enhances the construct validity, as the risk for missing any important information is minimized.

Factors that might have had a negative influence on the construct validity are related to the usage of telephone interviews and the translation of collected data. Firstly, since the interviews were conducted over the telephone, there were no possibilities to read the respondents’ non-verbal cues. Secondly, the opportunities to probing are greater when conducting face-to-face interviews than telephone interviews. This means that we might have missed opportunities to obtain more in-depth answers to some questions. Thirdly, it is possible that the validity was slightly deteriorated as the translation from Swedish to English may have caused some distortion of the respondents’ answers.

The internal validity was strengthened by the use of pattern matching during the analysis; that is, the empirically based pattern was compared with the pattern predicted in the conceptualised theories. Since the internal validity according to Yin (1994) is mostly of concern for causal and explanatory studies, this is applicable on the drawing of conclusions at the end of the study. External validity deals with the degree of generalisation that can be derived from the research. Due to the limited number of interviews, the results from these are not generalisable. Moreover, the initial choice of a qualitative approach also excludes the aim for generalisation. The external validity of this study is considered to be rather low, as it would be difficult to replicate the case studies by collecting data through interviews in exactly the same way as we have.
In order to increase the reliability, we tried to avoid leading and subjective questions. The usage of a structured interview guide (Appendix A – B) also helps to enhance the reliability. In addition, we have kept all notes and the tapes from the interviews in order to develop a case study database. According to Yin (1994), the main argument for developing a case study database is that every case study project should strive to develop a formal retrievable database so that other investigators can review the evidence directly and not be limited to the written report. This way, the database will increase the reliability of the case study (ibid.). It is however generally difficult to establish reliability to any larger extent in qualitative studies. In addition, the case studies in this thesis are dealing with people’s perceptions of an intangible and varying subject. Moreover, people’s perceptions and views may change over time, thus making it difficult for another researcher to achieve the same results even with the same sample. Since we are aware of these problems, we have to the best of our ability tried to prevent a decrease of reliability.

This chapter has been dealing with all aspects of how to collect data, starting with stating the purpose of the research, then moving on to research approach and strategy. The methods of data collection have been described, as well as the sample selection and the general analytical strategy. Finally, the validity and reliability of the study has been discussed. In Chapter 5, we will present the empirical data collected through the use of the described methodology.
5. EMPIRICAL DATA

In this chapter, the empirical data that were collected in order to enable us to answer the research questions will be presented. The data collection was conducted through six telephone interviews, of which each case study involves two interviews. First, we will present the empirical data gathered in Case 1, following the order of the conceptual framework, thus using the topic area of each research question as a sub-headline. The presentation starts with general information about the company/respondent, followed by data regarding the reasons for the low ratio of women among Swedish MNC expatriates, as described from a corporate perspective. Thereafter, data connected to the second research question concerning the perspective of female expatriates are presented. Then, data from Case 2 and 3 are presented in the same manner. The structure of this chapter is visualised in the figure below.

![Figure 5.1: Structure of Empirical Data Chapter](Source: Authors’ own construction)

5.1 Case 1 – Scania

5.1.1 Company Presentation

Scania was founded in 1891, and has since then built and delivered 1,000,000 trucks and buses for heavy transport work. Another important business area is industrial and marine engines. Scania’s largest owner in terms of votes is Volkswagen AG. As a multinational corporation, Scania has operations (production, sales subsidiaries, sales representatives, etc.) in more than 100 countries and 95-97 percent of its products are sold outside Sweden. Production facilities are located in Sweden, France, Denmark, Poland, Argentina, and Brazil. Assembly plants can be found in about a dozen more countries, including the Netherlands, Mexico and Australia. The number of employees sums up to 28,590, out of which 24,000 were employed within the European operations, according to the interim report for January – September 2001. In Sweden, Scania had 12,060 employees on average during 2000. Out of these, 1,727, or 14.3 percent, were women. The ratio of female managers is 9.4 percent within Scania’s Swedish operations. Looking at the top levels, there are no women in the group management or the executive board, but two women in the board of directors. (Scania, 2001)
According to the company respondent at Scania, Roland Lagerström, the commercial systems part of Scania has operations in 50 countries, from Argentina to Austria. The majority of these are Scania’s own subsidiaries, and some are sales representatives’ offices. Expatriates are primarily sent to key positions such as managing directors, financial manager, and managing directors of finance companies (that is, MDs for distributors and importers). Mechanics are sometimes sent on assignments as well, even if the most common positions to place expatriates are as managing director or financial manager. Sales managers and similar positions are usually filled with host country nationals. Currently, Scania has about 180 people on foreign assignments, out of which about 150 are on “real” (that is, not short-term) expatriate assignments, according to Mr Lagerström. Of these 150 expatriates, “a few” are women. The respondent mentions one female managing director at a finance company in South Africa, and says that there have been some more financial managers.

5.1.2 Company Respondent – Roland Lagerström

Roland Lagerström is manager at the human resources department at Scania’s headquarters in Södertälje, Sweden. He is responsible for recruitment of expatriate managers within Scania’s commercial system, which (as described above) has operations in 50 countries.

Corporate Perspective

Companies’ hesitation: Regarding foreigners’ prejudice against women, Mr Lagerström says that this is something one always has to consider. He refers to something he saw on TV recently – there is a female American pilot in Saudi Arabia who is allowed to fly a plane on her missions, but she is not allowed to drive a car in the country. The respondent says that such things cannot be changed. He points out that these issues have always been considered by Scania when sending someone on an expatriate assignment, since this does not only concern the expatriate but also his or her family. Mr Lagerström further suggests that children cannot be sent to some countries either, and stresses that the company must have a general picture of the situation. Scania must be able to guarantee the security of the expatriate and the family, there must be good housing, and the company also makes an estimation of health risks and security risks before someone is sent abroad. All these things are in the profile of the expatriate assignment, according to the respondent.

Reasons for companies selecting males over females: Regarding the issue of selecting men over women because of their greater qualifications, the respondent refers to a woman who has earlier been in Russia and is placed in South Africa now, and points out that this person thus has been chosen for expatriate assignments twice. Mr Lagerström hesitates concerning whether men actually have greater qualifications, and says first that this might be the case in some situations. However, he then states that the selection for assignments is based on the person and his or her competence, and what the person is capable of achieving.

Mr Lagerström does not think that women are unable to adapt. He refers to women who have followed Scania’s male expatriates as trailing spouses, who have adapted to their new environment better than their men. Some of these women have been very creative and started their own business while abroad. The respondent also knows of women who have been trailing spouses when the couple left Sweden, but who have attained higher positions during the stay in the foreign country.

Selection processes: The respondent states that Scania usually has open selection processes, except for positions as managing director. The reason for this is that it would be a disadvan-
tage to the person currently holding the position if the company started the recruitment process a year before his contract ended. This would make the current MD a “lame duck”, that is, he will no longer have the necessary conditions to make a good job and finish his career in a good way if customers and employees are aware that he is on his way home. When it comes to other positions, Scania is aiming for open selection processes, according to Mr Lagerström. However, this is not always the case. If the selectors have noted that a specific person would be perfect for a certain position, it would not be beneficial to advertise so that everyone else also become aware of this position, because people will think that all is set beforehand the next time a position is advertised as well.

Regarding the issue of formal or informal selection processes, Mr Lagerström replies that this depends on how well known the person is. He however emphasises that it is important to discuss the conditions of the assignment with the potential expatriate and his or her family. There is however a profile of the expatriate assignment, according to the respondent.

The respondent says that expatriate candidates are not always well known to the selectors. He means that one cannot always know how people work. A person who works very well in Sweden might not succeed abroad. Mr Lagerström points out that it is very important that the company feels confident in the person, but also that this person has a good basis in his or her family. If the family does not function well, then the person will not function either.

Mr Lagerström agrees that women must ask to be included in the selection process for international assignments, but he is also of the opinion that everyone needs to do this. He points out that everyone has a responsibility for his or her own development. This is something that also can be noticed in connection to personal development discussions [Swedish: PU-samtal], where the company can identify potential expatriate candidates, according to the respondent.

Women’s qualifications: The respondent does not believe that female managers need to be more qualified, ambitious and mobile than male managers in order to attain expatriate assignments. He thinks that it is the same process for women and men. Mr Lagerström is of the opinion that women should keep their female personality and bring out the advantages from this as well.

Men’s tendency to choose other men: Mr Lagerström thinks that men do have a tendency to choose other men or to “clone” themselves, even though he stresses that this is done unconsciously. He compares this with the process of organisational culture formation, where the culture arises when selectors choose persons with the same values as themselves.

The estimations of people’s ability and women’s differing career patterns: Mr Lagerström is uncertain whether women are disadvantaged due to their differing career patterns and initial choice of job. He says that there probably are several men “aiming for the treetops” when they enter an organisation, but since the company is still new for them, just as it is for women, he means that everybody still have to start somewhere. Then, during a person’s time of employment within a company, much is happening and there are many things that influence the career.

Dual-career/family issues: The respondent believes that women and men feel pressure not to take career breaks to follow their spouse on international assignments. He is of the opinion that if both partners have an academic education, then the woman wants to get a few years of work experience before she takes a break to follow her husband abroad or to have children.
Mr Lagerström also points out that it is increasingly common with dual-career couples, but that most people choose to take a break anyway. He suggests that companies usually think that it is good if the couple have children during this break. However, the respondent does not think that extended maternity leaves and career breaks are a barrier to women. Scania has tried to support the women as much as possible, according to Mr Lagerström. He further states that this has never been a problem within Scania.

Mr Lagerström thinks that there might be assumptions within companies that married women are not interested in international assignments, especially if they have children. He is however of the opinion that every person has to be asked about their interest. Scania has systematic personal development discussions [PU-samtal], where these issues should be discussed. The respondent further states that the joint decision-making in the family is the same regardless of which of the partners is the trailing spouse, and stresses the importance of that the couple must be certain about their decision to go. The respondent is of the opinion that there might be more women who reject offers about expatriate assignments, but the reason for their not going is not that the company does not consider them. Rather, they choose to refrain from the offer due to family reasons, but men do this as well.

**Female Expatriates’ Perspective**

**Interest/willingness to take foreign assignments:** The respondent thinks that earlier, men may have been more interested or willing to take foreign assignments, but that this is changing in the new generation. He contends that women today are equally interested in expatriate assignments. When considering specific locations, Mr Lagerström thinks that there is a difference between men’s and women’s willingness. He suggests that women may consider the children more, in the sense that they evaluate what kind of society it is, how one is supposed to live, what the schools are like, and so on. The respondent points out that Scania has more men available for expatriate assignments, since women tend to choose other companies when applying for positions or trainee programs. Mr Lagerström thinks that this is due to that Scania is a technology-based company.

**Impact of perceived rewards:** The respondent is unsure about the impact of perceived rewards from accepting international assignments. He says that it is partly a financial matter, but that there are also rewards in the form of housing, schools, and whether one is member in some club, etcetera. Moreover, a potential expatriate looks at the country in question, and whether he or she is supposed to live in a very large town or a smaller. He/she would also consider the conditions for spending the time and to have something to do. Mr Lagerström contends that this is a very complex issue, but that the way people react also depends on their previous experiences from foreign assignments. He means that if a person has been living in a developing country under tough conditions, then he or she would appreciate an assignment in an industrialised nation very much. And vice versa – a person who comes from a nice industrialised country might not be especially motivated by an assignment in a developing country. Regarding status symbols, the respondent says that it is possible that men are more motivated by them, but the believes that their trailing wives also are happy to talk about their beautiful house at the country club, and that they like to drive around in a big car. He adds that status symbols are dependent on which country the expatriate is in. For example, it is very macho to have a big car in some countries, while in others it is unimportant.

**Dual-career/family issues:** The respondent thinks that a female expatriate whose husband still has “old-fashioned” values may feel additional strains on her personal relationships when the man is the trailing spouse. This is connected to the old picture of the man as the family’s
breadwinner. Mr Lagerström suggests this situation would not be as valid concerning Sweden in comparison with other countries where men never even would consider following their wife as a trailing spouse.

Regarding the issue of women choosing between an international career and family, and the assumption that a woman’s primary role is as a mother, Mr Lagerström believes that women make such a judgment. He thinks that even if men also have close ties and strong feelings for their children, women have another “extra” dimension in the relationship to the children. Therefore, he suggests that women make a somewhat different estimate. The respondent does however not think that women make this choice because of the notion that career success is based on a male model. He stresses that it is important for women to be themselves, and that they are confident in themselves.

Role models: The respondent states that role models are very important as career support, and that role model behaviour is crucial. He further suggests that this kind of behaviour is what makes a good leader. Mr Lagerström thinks that it is possible that the lack of female role models leads to missed opportunities for women’s career advancement. He however doubts that this is due a self-fulfilling prophecy since the women who are very competent and capable will be asked about their interest for international assignments.

Mentoring: Mr Lagerström is of the opinion that everybody, on all organisational levels, needs a mentor or coach. He thinks that people should not only have mentors in the beginning or middle of their careers but the entire way up. According to the respondent, Scania has been using mentoring in different ways, but he points out that the relationship must be “right”. He also refers to that there have been some associations especially for women.

Mr Lagerström does not know if part of the reason for the low number of female expatriates could be that women are not seeking mentors. He does however not think that mentors do not select female protégées, and suggests that if the person who wants a mentor has a go-ahead spirit and is committed and capable, it does not matter if it is a woman or a man.

Networking: Mr Lagerström thinks that it is very possible that female expatriates are excluded from men’s informal business discussions and useful contact making. He suggests that this also could be very dependent on the person her- (or him-) self, and that a woman needs some nerve to be able to get into these network groups. The respondent is of the opinion that Swedes are not very skilled in networking due to a lack of tradition in this area, especially in comparison with the Japanese, who are said to be the very best in building and maintaining networks.

Regarding the connection between women’s access to networking groups and their increased participation in international management, Mr Lagerström says that even if one gains access, one has to deserve the place in the network and win the others’ trust. So, in the end this is an individual issue, according to the respondent. However, the respondent says that there may be a reason to believe that women do not have the same possibilities in some other countries, where there might be many clubs where women are not allowed.

Additional comments: Mr Lagerström says that 20 years ago, Scania had quite extensive operations in Iraq. In a group of Iraqis coming to Sweden, there were a number of men and only one woman, but it was the woman who was the manager of the group. Iraq was actually a leading country among the Moslem countries at that time, according to the respondent. He
also suggests that you do not have to go any further than to Germany in order to find a “men’s world”, while the countries in the former East bloc show more women in top positions. Mr Lagerström concludes that it is the culture in different countries that raises barriers for women. He does not think that Scania limits women, but that in order to see more women on expatriate assignments, there have to be women in managerial positions in the domestic organisation. Considering the difference between the number of women in international management and domestic management, Mr Lagerström suggests that the male career might still be prioritised in the families. However, Mr Lagerström is of the opinion that there is a quite natural explanation to this low figure, since there simply are very few women in the engineering industry.

5.1.3 Female Expatriate Respondent – Inge Persson

Inge Persson is 58 years old and lives in Höganäs in Sweden’s southernmost county Skåne. She is married and has a grown-up son. The respondent has been working for the Scania concern for more than 30 years, out of which 25 years have been within Swedish Volkswagen (VAG). After graduation from a higher commercial school, Mrs Persson started to work as a secretary and administrator within VAG. Later, she decided to educate herself further by attending evening school, which led to a controller exam. In 1985, Mrs Persson began her career within business administration and economics, when she started to work as a controller at VAG where she held responsibility for budget and strategic planning. During 1990 until 1995, Mrs Persson worked as a financial manager on a project assignment basis with the introduction of SEAT, which also included the build-up of the SEAT organisation. After this, she was asked by Scania if she would be interested to work abroad, since she had good knowledge of language. This led to that Mrs Persson got her first foreign assignment as a financial manager at a quite recently established Scania importer in Prague, Czech Republic. She entered upon the position in October 1995 when she moved to Prague with her husband. After three years in the Czech Republic, Mrs and Mr Persson went straight to Silkeborg in Denmark, where Mrs Persson entered as a financial manager on a two year contract for one of Scania’s affiliates within bus production and sales. When the assignment in Denmark was finished, Mrs Persson intended to retire. However, she is still operating within Scania on shorter assignments. For example, she has recently been in South Africa for six weeks, where she has been working with organisational issues and the establishment of Scania routines. At the time of the interview, Mrs Persson was discussing with Scania about an assignment in Morocco.

Corporate Perspective

Companies’ hesitation: Regarding the issue of companies’ hesitation to send women on expatriate assignments because of the assumption that the local culture is prejudiced against women, the respondent’s opinion is that the largest prejudice is at home in Sweden. Being sent as an expatriate implies that you are an expert on certain things, which results in being treated with respect in the host country. The respondent also thinks that she was advantaged by her age in the Czech Republic, since people in Eastern Europe still are of the opinion that a higher age means experience and knowledge. This is contrary to Sweden, where Mrs Persson feels that people “like her” are not good enough anymore. She never experienced anything negative about being a woman in the Czech Republic; instead she was treated very politely and felt respected. The respondent further states that all prejudices regarding men and women are still there, even if she herself has not experienced any during her expatriate assignments. Rather, she perceived it as more of an advantage to be a woman.
She feels that the Czech Republic was quite equal in working conditions. When comparing with her experiences in South Africa, the respondent states that she does not really believe that there are any major conflicts between men and women, but rather that the existing conflicts are at another level, that is between different ethnical groups. Still, she contends that South Africa is a pronounced male-dominated society. Her own experience was again that she was met in a positive manner, and the fact that she was “older” and sent from Scania headquarters meant that she was treated with respect.

**Reasons for companies selecting males over females:** The respondent rejects the idea that men are selected because they have greater qualifications for international assignments, and sees it as provoking. She questions on what basis companies can draw this conclusion, and points out that young men have no experience, since that is gained once you are on a foreign assignment. The success depends on the support from the company, what kind of organisation there is on the location, and how you are introduced. These conditions are equal for both men and women. Mrs Persson’s opinion is that women in fact have personal characteristics that are better suited for international assignments, since women have a better sensitiveness of hearing, are more adaptive, are more observant, and try to blend into the new environment. She further points out that a lot of mistakes and failures are made by men, but that if one or a few women are sent on expatriate assignments and one fails, then everybody is pointing at her failure as an example.

Regarding women’s presumed inability to adapt, the respondent refers to her own life experience, and states that women really are more adaptive than men are. She asks rhetorically, “Who adapts themselves in life in general – us women!” The respondent further states that in a family relation, especially after having children, the greatest adaptation is always demanded from the women. She thinks that this is applicable also to foreign assignments, since expatriate men and women have the same education, language abilities and so on. The attitudes concerning women’s inability to adapt may exist in organisations, but the reality is completely different, according to Mrs Persson. She further states that the largest problem in this issue is that companies do not dare to invest in women.

**Selection processes:** The respondent’s perception is that the selection processes at Scania have both open and closed features. From her understanding, there is a work group that is responsible for selection to expatriate assignments. This group looks through the different departments in the Swedish organisation in order to find potential expatriates, which then constitutes a kind of a “closed list”. But then there are also advertisements that make public which jobs are available. Mrs Persson thinks that the company uses both methods; there is handpicking as well as job advertisements. For the first assignment in the Czech Republic, Mrs Persson was in fact recruited directly from VAG, and was summoned to a series of formal interviews. During this selection process, the recruiters at Scania looked at Mrs Persson’s formal grades and curriculum vitae, and they also took references from her previous supervisors. This assignment was never published as an internal advertisement within Scania, nor was the open position made public in any way. She concludes that she was in a way handpicked, but still she went through a formal interview process, which also points to that Scania uses formalised criteria for expatriate selection. Mrs Persson thinks that Scania uses different methods for selection depending on the type of position and the supply of available personnel.

The respondent believes that candidates for expatriate assignments are usually well known to the selectors. On the other hand, Mrs Persson was herself not known by those at Scania who recruited her to the assignment in Prague. She further states that companies might be afraid of
investing in the “wrong” people. This caution is valid regarding men as well as women, and therefore selectors probably try to pick people that are well known to them. This way, the selectors might feel more certain that the expatriates are able to cope with the strains involved in an international assignment. The respondent points out that there are always exceptions, but the majority of expatriates are well known to selectors.

Regarding the issue of women having to ask to be included in the selection process for international assignments, Mrs Persson states that women have to remind employers of their existence, and that women in general have to make themselves more visible. She says that men are promoting themselves to a much larger extent – they keep telling how competent they are and what they have accomplished. A woman works and does her assignments well, but she does not make a fuss about it. However, when a woman becomes “too” loud and visible, then she is perceived as a “stuck-up witch”. There is a delicate balancing involved in the process of becoming visible, according to Mrs Persson.

Women’s qualifications: The respondent says that because of women’s lack of networks, a woman who actually attains a foreign assignment has to be much more capable than a man who goes abroad. The female expatriate has to attain the assignment on her own merits; she does not have a network supporting her and protecting her back. If she stumbles, there is nobody there to pick her up. But the men have their network, and if there is something they cannot solve, they just call someone who helps them out, while the women have to make it on their own.

Men’s tendency to choose other men: The respondent is of the opinion that men certainly do have a tendency to choose other men for expatriate assignments and to “clone” themselves. She refers this to the existence of the male network, and states that this is something that women lack, posing the rhetorical question “Who should we form networks with?” Mrs Persson says that there are not enough women at different levels in companies who can stick together and form this kind of “club” in the same way that men have done. She says that, “When it comes to appointing a new CEO or financial manager, the men asks each other if they know somebody. Then they go, yes, I know this guy Kalle, and I think he’s a really nice and capable guy, that could be something! - But what about us?”

The estimations of people’s ability and women’s differing career patterns: Mrs Persson thinks that women previously had different career patterns and tended to choose jobs rather than careers, but that this has changed today. Her perception is that young women today are more career-minded, targeted and plans at an early stage what they want to become. In her own generation, most women started somewhere at “any” job, which is what she has done herself. Mrs Persson contends that making a career is very demanding, and to make a career at an older age can be very hard work, which makes it necessary to start a career earlier. She also points to the fact that women today give birth to children at a much higher age than when she became a mother, which also implies that women have the time to study and to start a career before forming a family. The respondent remarks that it should be easier for women today to make a career.

Dual-career/family issues: The respondent thinks that past job achievements and implicit career timetables might create pressure on men and women not to take career breaks, and also that extended maternity leaves and career breaks are not appreciated by the employer. She comments that if you look at it from the employer’s view, it is in fact an interruption. However, she also believes that employers realise that “children have to exist”, and since you can-
not have the kids at work, someone has to stay at home with them during a period of time. Mrs Persson further states that, “I have been working for 40 years even though I have had children, so you can still gain a lot out of a person who wants to commit herself to a job and a career.” The respondent means that personnel departments at companies have to accept these facts. Mrs Persson however believes that companies rather choose a man than a woman with small children for expatriate assignments, at least during a certain period of time, until the children reach the age of 10 to 12 years.

Regarding the assumption that married women are not interested in international assignments, the respondent states that she thinks that the interest exists, but then there are issues concerning the husband and his career. What enabled Mrs Persson to go on expatriate assignments was the fact that her husband retired. She further states that she would not have been able to take an assignment abroad while her husband was still active in his professional life. “It is not that we [women] do not want to go, but that we realise that it is impossible”, Mrs Persson says. The respondent however points to that there are exceptions, and gives an example concerning a young Norwegian woman who was on an expatriate assignment as an accountant in Prague. She had her husband with her as a trailing spouse. He had made a career break for two years so that she could gain international experience, and he was at home taking care of their son. Mrs Persson does not believe that women are unwilling, but that they adapt to their family situation. She contends that the person who has the highest salary in the family is in control, and today that person is still the man.

**Female Expatriates’ Perspective**

*Interest/willingness to take foreign assignments:* Mrs Persson thinks that men have a greater self-confidence, which makes it easier for them to immediately accept offers about international assignments, even if they realise that they are not qualified enough. On the other hand, women feel that they have to be certain that they will be able to manage it, if they are to accept an expatriate offer. Women are less prone to take chances in this respect. This way, the men may be more inclined to take on a foreign assignment, since they might jump into it without hesitation and without really evaluating themselves. The respondent contends that since women are more careful, this can be interpreted as if they are less inclined to accept expatriate assignments.

Regarding the willingness to work in specific locations, Mrs Persson herself feels that she would not gladly accept an assignment in a Moslem country. She thinks that differences between men’s and women’s willingness to work in certain countries may exist, and that gender differences actually appear regarding these issues. The respondent states that there are differing attitudes towards women, primarily in Arabic countries, but she believes that women are not sent to these countries, at least not from Scania. According to Mrs Persson, men think more like “if I don’t make it here, I’ll just take another job somewhere else”. Women are more focused on the necessity of a successful assignment; that they have to manage it. The cautiousness appears again.

*Impact of perceived rewards:* Mrs Persson means that purely monetary rewards are incentives for women as much as for men, and says: “Why wouldn’t we find it pleasant to have a proper salary?” However, she thinks that men are more status oriented – they find it much more fun to brag about what car they drive and what fringe benefits they have. Women enjoy it as much as the men do, but women do not have the same need to tell everyone around them about it. She does not agree upon that women enjoy benefits and a higher salary less than men; women also want to get paid for what they do. Mrs Persson also believes that the motivation to accept
expatriate assignments increases with a higher salary. When looking at the workload of a financial manager, it is as heavy at home in Sweden as it is on an expatriate assignment. There are however other factors in a foreign assignment that makes the salary or rewards higher – being away from home and having to renounce certain things. The respondent says that, “If I’m paid twice as much to be a financial manager in Prague in comparison with the same job at home, of course it is more attractive to work abroad, and it motivates me”. She points out that it is obvious that many of Scania’s expatriates want to stay abroad, simply because their economic situation is better when they are on assignments.

Dual-career/family issues: Mrs Persson thinks that there might be additional strains on female expatriates’ personal relationships when the man is a trailing spouse. She says that today it is usually the men who are placed abroad and the women are trailing spouses. These women have formed groups in different countries where they can meet, do things together and become involved in different activities. A man in the same situation becomes lonelier, which might be a strain even if it was not a problem for Mr and Mrs Persson. The respondent carries on by telling about incidents that sometimes occurred during representation, when people directly turned to her husband, assuming that he was the one who was stationed abroad. He then had to point out that it actually was his wife who was placed on a foreign assignment, and that he was the trailing spouse. Mrs Persson contends that it is necessary to have a very good relationship to be able to cope with such situations.

The respondent thinks that women might choose between an international career and family, in the sense that women today might start families later. If a young woman has started to make a career, and she is offered an international assignment, she may choose to go abroad and instead wait a few years before she commits to family matters. Mrs Persson finds that men could be so involved in their career that they simply “forget” to form a family – they find the career to be more fun. Women are limited by the “biological clock” – the time is catching up.

Mrs Persson does not believe that the organisational and societal assumption that a woman’s primary role is that of a mother is valid today. She says that this assumption has been prevalent, but that it has to be gone by now: “It could be due to that I don’t want to agree because I find it unfair to women, but I think that men cannot stand still in their perceptions. What people thought 50 years ago cannot be valid today. Of course, we are the ones giving birth, but this is not our primary role, we choose for ourselves today. I also think that the perception about us women is changing.”

The respondent thinks that career success is still based on a male model, which may influence women managers to choose between an international career and a family. She mentions the reward system as an example of this; e.g., that a company car usually is a part of a compensation package, and that she herself would have loved to have a cleaning help when she was a young mother. Mrs Persson says that a woman who is making a career should be able to choose a maid instead of a company car, but that this might still be a bit controversial. This is connected to male measures. The respondent further thinks that if more women are starting careers, these issues might be discussed again.

Role models: Mrs Persson is of the opinion that it is really important to have role models. She says that, “I used the men as role models. When there are no women, then you have to take a man!” She thought, “if he can do it, then I can do it”. According to the respondent, a role model does not necessarily have to be a woman. Mrs Persson further states that a lack of role
models might lead to women missing opportunities for career advancement, thus contributing to explain the low number of female expatriates. However, she thinks that companies should work against this situation. The lack of role models may also lead to women forming self-fulfilling prophecies regarding their chances to work abroad. The respondent refers to the “pattern” that women have more doubt in themselves; that they are not as self-confident as men. These differences could according to the respondent be explained by the existence of male role models on expatriate assignments, which contribute to men thinking, “I can do it as well”. But a woman has no one to look up to, which means that she has to be cocky enough to compare herself with men. Mrs. Persson suggests that what many women miss is mentorship.

Mentoring: According to Mrs Persson, it is important that there is someone there to encourage women and see to that they proceed through a certain career in a company, especially in very male dominated, technical companies. She is of the opinion that role models in the form of mentors are something that Scania should invest in. Mrs Persson has managed her career independently without the support from a mentor, but refers to that she actually might be somewhat “cocky”. Today, the only form of mentorship within Scania consists of the mentors provided to trainees attending formal trainee programs during a two-year period, according to the respondent. However, she thinks that the company is making a mistake by not letting the trainees keep their mentors for an extended period after the trainee program is completed. She also believes that women would benefit from having an explicit mentor program.

The respondent does not believe that part of the reason for the low number of female expatriates is that women do not seek mentors. Mrs. Persson also rejects the idea that male mentors may not select female protégées. In her opinion, a mentor is as eager to select a young woman as a man, since being a mentor to a successful young woman may even be considered a greater honour. Mrs Persson says that a person who is appointed as a mentor should have experience and like young people who want to achieve something career-wise. Thus, a man taking his mentorship seriously will gladly accept female protégées.

Networking: The respondent believes that female expatriates are excluded from access to male networks, which may have an impact on the low number of women in international management. She further states that women have no natural support in this form. In addition, she feels that women sometimes have a tendency to become jealous and counteract each other instead of supporting each other. Mrs Persson however believes that networks, which include both men and women, should be developing among young people who are graduating nowadays. The respondent’s own network has partly consisted of former colleagues who have encouraged and supported her. Even if they have not been able to support her on a managerial level, they have helped and pushed her onwards “from below”. The other part of her network consists of her former bosses, who have recommended her to other positions. She further states that, “In a male network you make contacts upwards in the company. In a female network you stay at your own level, they can support you, but they cannot help you upwards. Then you have to have possibilities to ‘climb’ through men.”

The respondent agrees to the idea that more access to networking groups could help women to be socialised in the formal and informal norms of the organisation, which may lead to more women in international management. She states that one has to be known in a certain circle in order to be “seen”. Since women simply are doing their jobs and often are quite unnoticed, it becomes important to have a circle in which one’s name appears. It is important to become visible, but of course, it is easy for people to “disappear” in the mass of people within a large organisation.
Additional comments: Mrs Persson believes that today Scania is experiencing difficulties in finding people who want to go on expatriate assignments due to the problems with dual careers – one person has to give up his or her job. She suggests that if the company worked actively with these issues from headquarters and was better in planning, preparing people mentally for the role as expatriate, then going abroad would not come as a “surprise” for employees. This way, people would be prepared and ready to deal with family and dual-career issues. The respondent is of the opinion that there has to be a personnel-planning system as a part of the company’s politics. This would also help the company to identify potential female expatriates.

5.2 Case 2 – SCA

5.2.1 Company Presentation

Svenska Cellulosa Aktiebolaget, SCA, is a manufacturer of absorbent hygiene products, packaging solutions and publication papers. The corporation has operations in more than 40 countries on all continents, with Europe as the main market. SCA Hygiene Products is the biggest business area with 46 percent of the company’s total sales in 2000. Currently, SCA has 39,800 employees, according to the Interim Report for January - September 2001. Out of these, SCA Hygiene Products employs about 15,000 people (or 41 percent), according to the annual report 2000. (SCA, 2001)

Of SCA’s employees worldwide, 22 percent are women, and out of SCA’s 1,900 or so managers, only 120 (or 6 percent) are women. There are currently no women in the board of directors or the senior management. “These are not glamorous figures, but don’t forget where we came from”, says Francis Van Sevendonck, senior vice president for human resources at SCA in an article at the company’s web site. “In the past, human resource capital was valued in muscle and sweat. Today, it is valued in creativity, intellect, motivation, loyalty, personality – qualities that men and women have equally. Some specialists say women have more of those qualities than men.” (SCA, 2001)

The largest business area, SCA Hygiene Products, shows higher ratios of women. According to Jan Lindahl, 27 percent of the employees at Hygiene Products are women, and the ratio of female managers among the 200 highest managerial positions is 12 percent. Mr Lindahl further states that SCA Hygiene Products has about 100 people on expatriate contracts, out of which 17 are women. The respondent estimates that the expatriates at Hygiene Products represent about 80 percent of the total amount of expatriates within the SCA Group. Expatriates are placed primarily in management positions, but not only in top management such as general managers or managing directors. According to Mr Lindahl, expatriates can be placed as for example marketing managers or production managers. The majority of the expatriates at SCA Hygiene Products are placed within Europe, where the company has its major operations. This involves all European countries, even though many of these expatriates are located in Sweden and Germany, where Hygiene Products has large organisations. There are also a few expatriates in the U.S., the Philippines and Japan.
5.2.2 Company Respondent – Jan Lindahl

Jan Lindahl is President of Human Resources at SCA’s business area Hygiene Products, which has its headquarters in Munich. Mr Lindahl has been in Germany for four years, but he is not an expatriate; he is on a local contract and has the intention to stay for a longer period of time.

Corporate Perspective

Companies’ hesitation: Mr Lindahl does not perceive that there is any hesitation from the company regarding sending women on international assignments due to assumptions of foreigners’ prejudice about women, at least not concerning the countries where SCA Hygiene Products has operations. He mentions that there was no such hesitation when assigning Anника Nordin as mill manager in Germany, despite the fact that a tissue mill is a quite conservative or traditional workplace. The respondent however believes that companies that send expatriates to Arab countries (which SCA does not) might assume that women cannot be sent due to the local culture, which he thinks is understandable.

Reasons for selecting males over females: The respondent states that it seems rather stupid to claim that men have greater qualifications for international assignments, and questions in what way qualifications could be perceived as a matter of gender. He suggests that the only reason for selecting males over females [based on gender issues] would be if the company works in countries where women in managerial positions are not accepted by the local culture, for example in parts of the Arab world, since women then would not have the necessary conditions to succeed with their assignment. Mr Lindahl does not think that women are less able to adapt to the challenging requirements of foreign assignments.

Selection processes: Regarding the issue of open versus closed selection procedures, the respondent states that the company most often uses closed selection, by identifying suitable expatriate candidates. When it comes to selection in general, the highest positions are always filled through a closed process, while open selection is used for other positions, according to Mr Lindahl. However, expatriate selection is a closed procedure. The respondent refers to that since not everyone has the qualifications or prerequisites necessary for expatriate assignments, the company tries to be selective in recruitment and identify people who are perceived to be capable of managing an assignment. The process also involves that there could be several candidates for an assignment, who then go through interviews.

According to Mr Lindahl, there are no formal criteria that are different for expatriate selection than for regular recruitments. He states that when domestic managers are appointed, there are naturally demands on a certain education, experience within functional areas, and a certain track record, which means that the person has achieved good results. When it comes to expatriates, there are additional demands in the form of adaptability and flexibility, and the ability to handle another culture. Mr Lindahl contends that a general assessment of the individual’s suitability for an assignment takes place, as his or her experience, competence and personality is estimated, but that there are no specific formal criteria for expatriates.

The respondent states that expatriate candidates usually are well known to the selectors, which he views as rather natural when it comes to filling managerial positions. Candidates for expatriate assignments are in practice well known, but the respondent does not believe that it necessarily has to be this way. Mr Lindahl thinks that it is possible that women have to ask to be included in the selection process for international assignments if they are to be considered,
but he is not sure if this is specific to expatriate positions. He refers to that there are many women within SCA who claim that the company should do more to facilitate for them to attain managerial positions in the first place, which then involves the domestic positions. The respondent says that it is possible that the employer presumes that it is more difficult to get a woman to accept an expatriate assignment than a regular managerial position, due to her family situation. He states that it in fact is more difficult for the company to get women to accept to move abroad than it is to get men accepting an international move.

Women’s qualifications: Mr Lindahl does not believe that female managers need to be more qualified, more ambitious, and more mobile than male managers in order to be selected for expatriate assignments. On the other hand, one will not attain an international assignment just because of being a woman. He is of the opinion that women and men need the same qualifications, and that women do not have to be more capable, flexible or mobile than men. However, the respondent refers to his previous comment that it is more difficult to get women to move abroad due to their family situation.

Men’s tendency to choose other men: The respondent believes that there is a tendency for men in managerial positions choosing other men or “cloning” themselves. He adds that this is not specific to expatriate selection, but that it applies to all nominations for managerial positions or recruitment in general. Mr Lindahl does however not think that this tendency is especially widespread within his organisation, at least not in the sense that men want to choose other men instead of women. Instead, this is probably a question of unconsciously nominating people who are similar to oneself in terms of characteristics and ability, according to the respondent.

The estimations of people’s ability and women’s differing career patterns: Mr Lindahl does not believe that women are especially disadvantaged by their differing career patterns when it comes to organisations’ estimations of people’s ability and the allocation of jobs. He thinks that women partly do have different career patterns than men, but to a smaller extent in Sweden than in other countries. Equality issues and equal career opportunities are very Swedish occurrences, while people tend to be more conservative in other countries concerning these issues, according to the respondent. He states that it is more common in other countries that women stay at home after having children, even if this also varies between individuals. Mr Lindahl suggests that women in general take a break from their professional lives when they have children, or that they prefer to work less or to take positions that involve less responsibility. However, he does not think that such changes in women’s work life is a disadvantage when it comes to attaining an expatriate assignment, unless the woman states that she cannot work a sufficient number of hours. For example, if a person says that she (or he) cannot work more than 40 hours a week due to childcare responsibilities, the company might not invest in that person since management is aware of that 40 hours a week is not enough when one is going abroad and breaking new ground. Mr Lindahl also points out that if a woman is supported by a husband who stays at home, she is not disadvantaged in comparison with a man who has his wife at home taking care of the children. The respondent concludes that as long as the conditions are alike, there is no reason that a female expatriate would be disadvantaged in comparison with a man.

Dual-career/family issues: Regarding the issue of past job achievements and implicit career timetables creating pressure on people not to take career breaks to follow their partners abroad, Mr Lindahl states that this in fact is a problem. He says that if a person takes a career break, this might be more negative in a certain situation than if there had not been any break,
in the sense that the person might not be able to make the same career as one who has not taken any break. However, the respondent does not agree to that extended maternity leaves and career breaks are looked upon unfavourably by senior management. He thinks that this is not a problem within SCA Hygiene Products. Mr Lindahl does not perceive that there are any assumptions by home country senior managers that married women with children will not be interested in international assignments. He is of the opinion that people should be asked if they are interested and mobile. The company should only estimate the competence of expatriate candidates, and then it is the person him- or herself who should answer if he or she is prepared to accept an assignment, according to the respondent.

Female Expatriates’ Perspective

Interest/willingness to take foreign assignments: Mr Lindahl believes that female managers are as interested in international assignments as male, but that they are not as inclined to move due to their family situation. He suggests that if he would ask an equal number of men and women if they would like to move abroad, there would be a higher frequency of positive responses among men, but this would be due to family reasons and not necessarily that women are less interested. The respondent’s opinion is that women feel a larger responsibility for the children and that they experience greater difficulties in getting their men to follow abroad. Regarding differences in willingness to work in specific locations, Mr Lindahl believes that women might be more hesitant to tough countries that involve handling of hardship. Within SCA, the respondent thinks that Russia (Moscow) and Philippines (Manila) might be perceived as tough.

Impact of perceived rewards: The respondent thinks that rewards from accepting international assignments might have a large impact in some situations. He states that this depends on where you come from, in the sense that people from countries where salaries are low and taxes high, such as Sweden (in comparison with the rest of Europe), see the relocation package offered as an incentive to work abroad. On the other hand, for expatriates who are sent from the U.S. to Europe, the salary is not a motivation factor but can rather be a hindrance. Mr Lindahl does not think that there are any significant differences between men and women when it comes to the impact of perceived rewards. He believes that men maybe are pushing salary issues harder, while women have a tendency to just accept the company’s salary proposal. The respondent does not perceive that there is any gender difference concerning the importance of non-financial benefits. However, he suggests that women seem to put more emphasis on shorter work hours and flexibility from the organisation. Mr Lindahl refers to a Swedish married couple with children, in which both partners worked within the company. When they were offered expatriate assignments, the woman said that she accepted the offer with the prerequisite that she could work 80 percent so that she would be able to take care of the children. This is quite typical, according to the respondent. Even though this couple had similar jobs, it was the woman who asked for shorter work hours, not the man. The respondent contends that this implies that the responsibility for the family still seems to lie heavier on the women.

Dual-career/family issues: Mr Lindahl thinks that it is true that additional strains are placed on the female expatriate’s personal relationships when her partner becomes a trailing spouse, even though this is not really the company’s problem. He believes that it is harder for men than for women to accept the role as a trailing spouse. The respondent further suggests that even though this seems to be changing nowadays, these changes are very limited to Sweden. According to Mr Lindahl, these roles are changing in Swedish marriages, while in for exam-
In Germany or France, it does not occur that men give up their jobs and careers to be trailing spouses with their wives who also have good jobs.

The respondent thinks that many women actually choose between an international career and family due to strains and guilt feelings. He states that even though many men make this choice as well, women have a more frequent tendency to choose family and not take the international assignment. Mr Lindahl perceives that it is more common today that men also give priority to their family or their partner at home. The respondent thinks that organisational and societal assumptions that women’s primary role is that of a mother may affect women to make a choice between an international career and family, especially outside Sweden. He also thinks that the fact that career success is still based on male model might influence this choice. However, Mr Lindahl does not believe that this is a very important factor nowadays, especially not in Sweden. He adds that these issues are much more traditionally viewed in continental Europe. For example, the German society is founded on the notion that men work and women stay at home with the children.

**Role models:** Mr Lindahl thinks that role models are important as career support for women. He states that even though women also could use men as role models, it is more important for them to see that a woman can handle an expatriate assignment, especially if she has family and children. The respondent also agrees to that a lack of female role models may lead to women missing opportunities for career advancement.

**Mentoring:** According to Mr Lindahl, SCA offers mentors to all female managers as a means to facilitate for women to make a career. He thinks that mentoring might have some affect on the participation of women in international management. The respondent does not believe that there are fewer mentors available to women than to men. He suggests that men actually are more motivated to be mentoring women than men, since they find it rewarding to try to help women in their careers. Mr Lindahl is convinced that the suggestion that mentors may not select female protégées is incorrect, at least within SCA. The respondent says that he cannot really answer if it is true that women may not seek mentors.

**Networking:** The respondent thinks that women may feel excluded from access to men’s informal networking, at least in certain environments, or in certain countries. He states that since SCA Hygiene Products has a large organisation in Germany, the expatriates who are placed there are less dependent on external networks. But managers who are sent to smaller subsidiaries might need to build external networks with for example other subsidiary managers, according to Mr Lindahl. He believes that in such situations, it might be more difficult for a woman to gain access to network groups. Mr Lindahl thinks that access to networking groups facilitates for women to be socialised into formal and informal norms of the organisation. However, he does not perceive that the lack of such access would be any significant barrier to women’s partaking in international management.

**Additional comments:** According to Mr Lindahl, the biggest problem in expatriate recruitment is that people, both men and women, are not mobile. He states that his can be due to different reasons that are linked to dual-career issues and family situation. This can for example be that the other part in a dual-career couple does not want to give up his/her job, or that the children do not want to move, or that the children are in an age that for example makes it hard to place them in an international school. The respondent thinks that there are many barriers for an international move on the whole, and that these obstacles usually are larger for a woman. His perception is that the largest barrier to expatriate assignments is the family situation. Mr Lin-
EPIRICAL DATA

dahl says it is harder for a woman to convince her man to move abroad with her than vice versa, even though there are exceptions, such as Annika Nordin who brought her husband as a trailing spouse. The respondent suggests that if both partners in a couple have very similar positions, and both are going to work equally much regardless if they have children or not, then the dual-career problem would probably not exist. “But this is not the way society works, at least not today. This is of course a bit sad”, Mr Lindahl contends.

He also states that the general impression in the company is that women are less inclined to move abroad, since many women have rejected offers of expatriate assignments due to their family situation. Mr Lindahl adds that men reject offers for the same reasons as well, but it is more common among women. The respondent refers to that SCA Hygiene Products assign about 20-30 new expatriates each year, which has given him (and the organisation) a certain experience in this area. Therefore, he is able to conclude that it is more difficult to get women to make an international move.

5.2.3 Female Expatriate Respondent – Annika Nordin

Annika Nordin is 46 years old, married, and has an eight-year-old daughter. She is a mechanical engineer and holds a degree in marketing as well. Mrs Nordin joined the SCA owned company Mölnlycke in Gothenburg in 1984, and has since then held different positions within SCA. Before she moved to Germany, she had been working ten years at a marketing department with product management, purchasing, and project management in research and development. In 1997, Mrs Nordin was offered a job as a product manager for household towels at SCA Hygiene Products’ facilities in Raubling, and therefore she and her family moved to Germany. Two years later, Mrs Nordin was appointed as plant manager for the tissue mill in Mainz-Kostheim. This is also her current position. The mill, which produces hand wiping and object wiping products from recycled materials, has 450 employees and an annual production of 100,000 tonnes. It serves more than 30 markets.

Corporate Perspective

Companies’ hesitation: Mrs Nordin states that SCA mostly operates in Europe and Western countries. She has not perceived any worries within the company about foreigners’ prejudice against women. The respondent further says that there are no such problems in Germany, where she is active, and that she has not experienced any prejudice herself. She was earlier offered an assignment in Italy, and the company showed no hesitation at that point either. However, she did not accept the Italian assignment since she was pregnant at that time. According to Mrs Nordin, the only worry that SCA had when she was on her way on her first assignment concerned her husband – what was he going to do while the couple was abroad? The company was aware of the fact that Mrs Nordin’s husband would find himself in a very special role on the foreign assignment. In general, the toughest role on a foreign assignment for women as well as men is the role as a trailing spouse, according to the respondent. It is not as tough for the partner who is placed on an expatriate assignment because he or she is experiencing something new and exciting. Rather, the trailing spouse will experience the hardest times; a man who is placed in an official role has to be very strong himself, according to the respondent. This was more the issue that the company wanted to check. As Mrs Nordin then says, “I happen to have such a [strong] man, then they said okay, there are no problems”.

Reasons for companies selecting males over females: Mrs Nordin does not think that men have better qualifications for international assignments. Regarding the assumption of women’s relative inability to adapt, the respondent’s perception is that women have better
abilities to adapt when going abroad then men. She points out that the ability to adapt is very much related to the surroundings and to what kind of mentors and support that are provided to women. The respondent further states that if you just put someone in a group where everyone else has another culture, then nobody would manage the situation without support, neither men nor women. Mrs Nordin thinks that women have better ability to adapt due to that they have better listening skills.

Selection processes: Mrs Nordin was contacted for her first foreign assignment in connection to that SCA had taken over a company in Germany. SCA had then decided to move parts of the Hygiene Products headquarters to south of Munich. There was a lot of competence in Gothenburg that the company wanted to bring to Germany. At this point in time, the respondent was a project leader for a project in which the sponsor was a German divisional manager. Mrs Nordin says that, "He probably was of the opinion that I was doing a good job, and therefore he started to work on me". It was more of a campaign trying to persuade Mrs Nordin to take the assignment than a formal selection process, since no interviews were made. The respondent however assumes that references about her were requested. Mrs Nordin perceives the selection process that brought her to Germany to be informal. She is of the opinion that expatriate candidates usually are well known to the selectors. Regarding the issue concerning that women must ask to be included in the selection process for international assignments, the respondent states that this probably is true. She points to that it is not taken for granted that women want a career of their own. According to the respondent, women have to stand up and say, “I want to”, while it is always assumed that men want a career. She also thinks that women have to be active themselves, otherwise they might be passed by. This is however not valid only for foreign assignments; it is a general issue, according to Mrs Nordin.

Women’s qualifications: Mrs Nordin is of the opinion that female managers have to be more qualified and more ambitious then men, but that this is also valid for other things, not only for foreign assignments. Fundamentally, women have to “show more”; it has to be noticed that there are women who are different, according to the respondent. Regarding mobility, Mrs Nordin states that either you are mobile or you are not. She does not think that all Swedish men are mobile either.

Men’s tendency to choose other men: Men’s tendency to “clone” themselves is actually what it is all about, according to Mrs Nordin. The respondent is of the opinion that when selectors do not choose someone who is similar to themselves, they probably consider that they are taking a larger risk. Thus, you have to be more competent to decrease this perceived risk. Mrs Nordin then points out that this is not an issue that is specific only to the selection for expatriate assignments. She also stresses the importance to note that her frame of reference regarding these issues is within Western Europe. The respondent thinks that if SCA was about to send someone to an Arabic country, South East Asia, or Africa, then the company would possibly view these issues differently. Mrs Nordin states that there are also tendencies to females choosing females, and she believes that it is quite human to do so. Often, people are of the opinion that they are doing a good job themselves, and if a person then is similar to oneself, one thinks that he or she probably will be able to perform equally well.

The estimations of people’s ability and women’s differing career patterns: Mrs Nordin does not think that women are disadvantaged due to different career patterns and their initial choice of job when it comes to achieving a foreign assignment. Rather, she is of the opinion that women’s longer, troublesome career paths make a person more mature, which in turn gives the person the ability to handle the foreign assignment better. Mrs Nordin states that she has
some good examples of that, besides herself. She is also of the opinion that having children is not a disadvantage in this context.

_Dual-career/family issues:_ Mrs Nordin perceives the notion that past job achievements and implicit career timetables cause pressure on both men and women to not take career breaks to be a very individual opinion. She believes that this pressure is more commonly felt among men as they would see such breaks as a loss of time. In contrast, the respondent refers to her husband, who did not have a career of his own, but rather a just a job where he just “carried on”. After Mr and Mrs Nordin’s move to Germany, it has been confirmed that he has absolutely not lost anything by moving abroad. When he returns to Sweden, he will have his old job back at once, according to the respondent.

Mrs Nordin does not think that extended maternity leaves and career breaks is an issue. When the woman has reached an age of 45-50 and the children are 20, it does not matter if she has been at home for one year during a 20-year period of time. The respondent states that these are only arguments that are still used by some companies, but that they are unfounded. Mrs Nordin suggests that if this kind of arguments were valid, then there should be statistics showing that women without children would have gotten further in their career, but as far as she knows such statistics does not exist. Mrs Nordin says; “I do not have any evidence for this anyway, I just think that this is a bad argument”.

Mrs Nordin thinks that companies may assume that married women with children are not interested in foreign assignments, and therefore, it is necessary for women to show their interest more clearly. The respondent does not think that there is any real difference in the interest in foreign assignments between married and unmarried women. She is of the opinion that the interest derives from other mindsets that the individual might bring with her from home, such as the will of going abroad at some point in life. In addition, Mrs. Nordin thinks that there is a large difference between Sweden and other countries, but that there are no real differences within Sweden. However, she states that the only difference is that there still is a social pressure on men to make a career, and that it is still more accepted for women to follow as a trailing spouse for a couple of years. Mrs Nordin also thinks that it easier for a woman to get a leave of absence from her job to follow her husband abroad (than the other way around).

_Female Expatriates’ Perspective_

_Interest/willingness to take foreign assignments:_ Mrs Nordin points to the fact that there are more men than women on international assignments within SCA, but she does not know whether this is due to women’s lack of interest or that men have managed to solve their practical problems better. The respondent says that if it is purely a question about interest, she does not think that there is any difference between women and men, and that there are as many women as men who are longing to go on a foreign assignment and who think that it would be really fun. Mrs Nordin however believes that there are more men that succeed in overcoming the practical problems connected to a foreign assignment, or that they might be encouraged by the companies to go.

The respondent thinks that there is a difference in willingness between men and women to work in specific locations. She suggests that the issue of location also applies to the men – it depends on the potential expatriate’s type of personality, and the structure of the company one works within. According to Mrs Nordin, some people love to go abroad, “tuck up their sleeves” and break new land, while others rather want to go abroad and administer what already exists. The respondent then states she would herself be careful or think twice before
going to for instance Russia or any Arabic country. Mrs Nordin however remarks that this carefulness is not so much a concern for her own sake; it is rather caused by consideration for her family and child.

**Impact of perceived rewards:** Mrs Nordin states that the impact of perceived rewards from accepting international assignments is of importance. Since her husband is a trailing spouse, one of the things that motivated them to make the international move was the better standard of living; that they can allow themselves a little bit more abroad. The respondent points to that this is an absolute necessity since it is more expensive to live in a foreign country. She contends that if you did not get anything extra for the trouble to move your family and putting your children into new schools, and for the additional work and trouble that your husband/wife will experience, then nobody would go on expatriate assignments.

Mrs Nordin does not perceive that there is any substantial difference between men and women regarding the impact of rewards, but that men might be even more motivated by money than women. She also thinks that men might be more motivated by status symbols than women. The respondent made a concluding remark regarding the issue of rewards: “When you come to this situation that you are the family provider, then your husband usually see to that you become interested [in rewards]. He becomes your manager so to speak”.

**Dual-career/family issues:** Mrs Nordin agrees to the suggestion that there are additional strains on the female expatriate’s personal relationship when the male partner is the trailing spouse. She refers to that the woman then is supposed to manage two things. The respondent states that this is not only negative. Since one has to go home to the family, one cannot work overtime every evening and leave the family alone, which brings a positive aspect to the situation, according to Mrs Nordin. She also means that one thing that everybody learns in every management course, is the importance of having balance in life. The respondent’s opinion is that it is necessary to accomplish this balance; otherwise, one cannot stay abroad.

Mrs Nordin is not convinced that female managers in Sweden choose between career and family, but suggests that it might be this way when looking at foreign conditions. The respondent is of the opinion that whether this choice has to be made is dependent on the back up a woman receives from her husband. She has never met societal and organisational assumptions that a woman’s primary role is that of a “mother”. The respondent says that, “Then a man’s primary role is to be a father”. Mrs Nordin emphasises that her most important role in life is to be a mother to her daughter, but adds that if she would ask her male foreign colleagues, their most important role would also be that of a good “dad”. Mrs Nordin points to that foreign countries show a lot more female managers in top positions than in Sweden, but that these women have paid a price for this, which might be that they do not have any children and that they never got married. In Sweden, there are a lot of female managers at middle level, but they are not allowed to get to the top, according to the respondent.

When addressing the issue if women choose a job before a career, Mrs Nordin states that she does not know how men think, but that she chose a job, or rather something that she thought would be fun. The respondent’s starting point for her choice was that she wanted to be satisfied in life. Regarding the issue of women choosing between an international career and a family because of the notion that career success is still based on a male model, Mrs Nordin replies with an international comparison. She states that even though Germany where she lives has quite decent rules for maternity leave, in the Netherlands, Belgium, or France women only have one month maternity leave before giving birth, and three months after-
wards. Women who are career minded do not stay at home with their children. They are back on fulltime at their work again after three months, according to the respondent. She suggests that this is more accepted in other countries; these societies does not talk that much about the importance of being with your child during the entire first year as we do in Sweden. In other countries, it is quite alright to hand over the children to others, as in England where it seen as completely normal to leave the children at boarding schools at the age of four, according to Mrs Nordin. The respondent herself is of the opinion that this is horrible.

Role models: Regarding the issue of the importance of role models as career support, Mrs Nordin states that it is important if you know someone else who has been on a foreign assignment, since there then will be someone in the closer surroundings who you can call and ask about his or her experiences abroad. Mrs Nordin was one of the first who moved to Raubling, and therefore she had to answer a lot of questions from colleagues sitting at home in Sweden pondering upon whether they should go abroad or not. The respondent thinks that it is good to have role models that have made their way, and that this is also good for the company. Role models can also be male. She says that there were as many men as women calling her to ask how it was to live in Germany; it was not only women who made enquiries.

Regarding the lack of female role models and its connection to missed career opportunities, the respondent states that in general, one has to be stronger when being the person who is breaking new ground than if you just follow. Mrs Nordin says that it is more demanding not to have a predecessor, but also that the reward might be greater as well. If the company wants to, they can pay more for this, especially if you are the first expatriate on the location, according to the respondent.

Mentoring: Mrs Nordin feels uncertain about the importance of mentoring for the participation of women in international management, since she does not have (and have not had) any mentor herself. She is however quite sure that mentorship is good because it creates a feeling of safety for someone who is pondering on if they dare to take a foreign assignment or not. It means that there is someone there to trust, someone who can give some good advice. Mrs Nordin thinks that mentoring also is good for a person who is about to enter a new [corporate] culture that he or she is supposed to alter or do some changes within. A mentor can mirror the things you are doing, but also strengthen things you say, according to the respondent. Mrs Nordin states that it is hard to land in a new culture on your own. The mentor is then able to support the expatriate but also to make the environment aware of that it is nothing wrong with the expatriate, but rather with the system. SCA has mentorship to offer for those who are interested. Mrs Nordin was once offered a mentor by the German division manager, but she declined the offer. The respondent believes that mentorship is really good for those who want to have it, and if one is able to establish a good relationship with his or her mentor, it can be enriching for the individual.

Mrs Nordin has not experienced that male mentors do not select female protégées, but refers to that she has not been searching for a mentor herself. She thinks that the low number of female expatriates then possibly can be partly explained by that women do not seek mentors. The respondent suggests that more senior male mentors who feel mature in their role might enjoy taking care of a woman very much, especially if they have daughters of their own. Mrs Nordin does not think that male mentors have a problem with accepting female protégées, but that it rather might be connected with a larger honour, at least today.
Networking: Mrs Nordin states that she has been working with networks instead of mentoring, and that she has a really good network that includes both men and women. Her network is built on her long time of employment within the same company but in different departments. The respondent means that this network is useful, not in the sense that it will help her upwards in the organisation, but rather to open doors and to be able to see your own problems in another perspective. Another good thing according to Mrs Nordin is that you can get things done within the organisation due to that you know a lot of people, even if you are working from a large distance. The respondent states that this was an advantage in her current position, since the German organisation had problems to open up to the research and development department in which she had been working. Therefore, Mrs Nordin could use her network to make the situation better for her German colleagues.

Mrs Nordin thinks that female expatriates are excluded from access to men’s informal business discussions and useful contact making, but she is also of the opinion that women exclude men from some discussions. The respondent herself has not experienced being excluded. Mrs Nordin states that she has had different networks, and that one can have different networks for different purposes. The respondent is of the opinion that it sometimes can be very helpful to just sit down and ventilate your problems with women, because then you are able to see that you are not the only one having certain problems. Mrs Nordin thinks that this sometimes can become too one-sided – if one has another problem, such as a branch problem, one probably needs to use a completely different network. Regarding the issue of whether more access to networks may lead to more women in international management, the respondent says that it is important because it exemplifies. Women can see that others made it, and that “her husband was a trailing spouse, or that he followed her and got a job there, and so on”, according to Mrs Nordin. This way, the network groups provide role models.

Additional comments: The respondent is of the opinion that the basis for accepting a foreign assignment is the family and the family members’ perception about what they are supposed to do in life. She finds it important that the family would find it fun to move to a foreign country for a while so that there is a preparedness. The respondent has seen a lot of cases during the last years where this preparedness has not existed, which can come as a chock to men who want to go on foreign assignments and suddenly have realised that their wives never have had that dream.

Mrs Nordin thinks that the issue of the low number of female expatriates is about the debate of equality. The respondent points out that SCA has trainee programs, and within those, there are as many women as there are men, working all over Europe. This occurs before they settle down, start their family, and have children, according to the respondent. Mrs Nordin states that when women have a family they will become more limited, since having children means taking on a responsibility. One cannot move around with the children every other year, because that would hurt them. The respondent also thinks that these things are about choices you do in life – “What is worth something?” Mrs Nordin states that it is about how many examples there are out there. “Maybe it is easier for a man, since many more men has made such a choice and moved abroad, and it is easier for women to tag along because it is accepted by their companies”, the respondent says. Ten years ago, Mrs Nordin was in a group at Mölnlycke, which noted that the company had employed equal numbers of women and men. However, when the group looked at the top positions within the corporation, there were no women. Mrs Nordin finally says that the lack of women in top management is probably connected to how many female expatriates the company has.
5.3 Case 3 – Volvo Car Corporation

5.3.1 Company Presentation

Volvo Car Corporation, hereafter referred to as Volvo CC, is since 1999 a part of Ford Motor Company. Volvo CC manufactures and sells private cars in 100 markets worldwide. The corporation has 2,500 dealers all over the world, and in 2000, the retail sales amounted to 412,665 vehicles. Out of these, 69 percent were sold in Europe and 27 percent in North America. (Ford Motor Company, 2001) 85 percent of the approximately 32,230 employees in Volvo CC are found in Sweden (70 percent) and Belgium (15 percent), which makes the number of employees in Sweden amount to about 22,560. In Sweden, the ratio of female employees is 23 percent, while women only represent 2 percent of Belgian employees. There are currently no women in the board of directors, or in the senior management team. However, in the spring of 2002, Lena Olving is entering the senior management team as Senior Vice President for Quality. The ratio of women on different leadership levels in Volvo CC is as follows: Leadership level 2 – 0 percent, level 3 – 3 percent, level 4 – 4 percent, and level 5 – 11.5 percent. This differentiation in levels is Volvo CC’s own; the senior management team representing the top level, while level 5 is the lowest. (Volvo Car Corporation, 2001)

According to the company respondent Sven Eckerstein, Volvo CC has been sending quite a lot of expatriates to the U.S since Ford acquired the company. The headquarters of Ford Motor Company are located outside Detroit, and the sales headquarters in California. Expatriates are also sent to for example Russia, Asia (where the area manager is a woman), and Belgium (Volvo CC’s marketing department is located in Brussels). Mr Eckerstein says that expatriates are placed in all kinds of positions, not only managerial. For example, a lot of people with marketing competence are sent on assignments. Many expatriates with unique competence and specialist knowledge are sent to the U.S, for example experts on safety issues and different types of technicians. Volvo CC does not assign very much production personnel abroad, but it does occur that e.g. processing technicians go on expatriate assignments. According to the respondent, Volvo CC currently has about 500 expatriates on assignments. Out of these, Mr Eckerstein estimates that about 15 are women.

5.3.2 Company Respondent – Sven Eckerstein

Sven Eckerstein is a member of the senior management team at Volvo CC, where he has been working for 30 years. He is Senior Vice President for human resources at the Swedish headquarters in Gothenburg, and states that he has put a lot of energy on diversity issues.

Corporate Perspective

Companies’ hesitation: Mr Eckerstein thinks that Volvo has never had any assumptions that foreigners are prejudiced against women. He says that Volvo has female expatriates in Asia (Malaysia and Thailand) and he does not believe that any question concerning women having difficulties in these countries has ever been raised. However, the respondent points out that Volvo does not operate in Arab countries, where this kind of prejudice possibly could be an issue. Mr Eckerstein states that there really is no hesitation from the company regarding assigning women to foreign countries. He suggests that the major reason for women not taking expatriate assignments is that they more often have men who are making a career for themselves, than men have women making career for themselves, even if many are dual-career couples. The respondent also points out that it is easier for a woman to have leave of absence to be a trailing spouse, or rather that companies are more inclined to give women leave of
absence for this purpose than they are to men. Mr Eckerstein suggests that it might be difficult for a woman to get the male partner to even ask to take leave of absence from work.

Reasons for companies selecting males over females: The respondent does not at all think that men have better qualifications for international assignments than women. He is of the opinion that women have at least as good qualifications. Mr Eckerstein rejects the notion that women are less able than men to adapt in international assignments. He refers to that there presently are two women from the U.S. at his department, and that he has not experienced that they would have any difficulty in adapting.

Selection processes: According to Mr Eckerstein, all new positions are openly advertised in general, but expatriate positions are usually not advertised. However, available expatriate positions are “taken to discussion” internally by letting suitable employees know that there are foreign assignments if they are interested. These inquiries are made within a department or project group where people have suitable competence for the assignment in question. The respondent says that if for example an engineer is required for an assignment, then general inquiries are made within this specific group. Mr Eckerstein states that the biggest difference between expatriates and non-expatriates is that an expatriate is already a specialist within his or her area.

The respondent further explains that the prospective expatriate discusses the assignment with his or her future boss. Usually, the person is so well known that no interviews are needed. Conditions regarding the assignment are not really negotiated, since there are company policies and regulations that set the salary and conditions. Mr Eckerstein says that if Volvo CC would send an expatriate to for example China (where the company currently has no operations) or to some other country that is very culturally different in comparison to Sweden, the company would make sure that the individual really realises what kind of place he or she is destined for. This type of assignment is however not very common, which makes these expatriates quite unique. Regarding the issue of formal or informal selection processes, there are formalised criteria for selection.

Mr Eckerstein is of the opinion that expatriate candidates often are well known to the selectors, even if expatriates occasionally are recruited through advertisements. When it comes to engineers, they are often selected for specialist assignments, and then the projects are staffed with well-known people. Regarding the issue of women having to ask to be included in the selection process for international assignments, the respondent states that it is probably necessary for men to ask as well. However, Mr Eckerstein thinks that women often have a lower profile, while men are more “pushy” and makes themselves more visible. Therefore, even if women are equally capable, they do not make a fuss about themselves. The respondent emphasises that he would like women to be more active in this sense, and that they would ask to be included more frequently.

Women’s qualifications: The assumption that female managers need to be more qualified, more ambitious, and more mobile than male managers in order to be selected for expatriate assignments could be correct in one way, according to Mr Eckerstein. He refers to that since women are holding a lower profile, they may have to perform better and achieve more in order to be noticed. If a man is to place a woman and a man side by side in a selection process, it might be necessary for the woman to have achieved more, according to the respondent. He further points out that the initial statement or assumption is based on that males handle the selection.
Men’s tendency to choose other men: Mr Eckerstein is of the opinion that men “recruit toward their own reflection image”. He agrees to the statement that men (maybe unconsciously) choose other men, or actually clone themselves. The respondent adds that the same behaviour can be seen in women, but he views this as very positive and states that it is good to have female managers in an organisation, since they in turn recruit more women.

The estimations of people’s ability and women’s differing career patterns: The respondent does not think that women are disadvantaged by the usage of past education and job achievement and evaluation of career velocity for estimations of people’s ability and allocation of jobs training. His impression is that young women today want to make a career for themselves. This is indicated by the fact that the average age for women to marry and have children is steadily increasing, according to the respondent. Mr Eckerstein does not perceive that women nowadays have very different career patterns than men, or that they initially choose a “job” instead of a “career”. He suggests that these notions are built on traditional patterns.

Dual-career/family issues: Mr Eckerstein is aware of that past job achievements and implicit career timetables put pressure on both men and women not to take career breaks to follow their spouses abroad. He says that it is always a struggle to handle dual careers and to fit job and children together. The respondent states that he “dares to believe that we have some more miles to walk before we have reached equality”. He suggests that women tend to “back off” and choose the development of the family instead of investing in their own career. Mr Eckerstein points out that people have to be aware of this situation in order to prevent women from losing their careers. There are no assumptions within the home-country senior management that married women will not be interested in international assignment, especially if they have children.

Regarding the view on extended maternity leaves and career breaks, the respondent says that absence never is appreciated. However, he states that children need to have their mother or father at home, and that the possibility for the man and the woman to share the parental leave has to be created. Volvo CC therefore supports the Swedish co-workers financially by giving them an extra compensation when they are on parental leave. This compensation facilitates for parents, since the part with the highest income also can take parental leave without substantial financial loss, according to the respondent. The extra compensation is a part of Volvo Car Corp’s strive to be an attractive place to work at and an important part in the company’s work for equality (www.volvocars.com).

Female Expatriates’ Perspective
Interest/willingness to take foreign assignments: Mr Eckerstein is of the opinion that the interest or willingness to take foreign assignments usually depends on the family. His perception is that men often seem to be more interested, while women often regard family issues more, which might make them less interested. The respondent definitely thinks that there is a difference between men’s and women’s willingness to work in specific locations. He states that it is easier to get women to accept assignments in certain countries than in others. Mr Eckerstein means that women (more than men) are concerned with things like the country’s legal system and how women and children are treated in the society.

Impact of perceived rewards: Mr Eckerstein thinks that managers’ motivations are impacted by perceived rewards (or the relocation package offered) from accepting international assignment. He believes that women often have different values than men when it comes to the impact of perceived rewards from accepting international assignments. The respondent suggests
that men put more emphasis on a high salary, while women see to other things, such as how the family will be affected by the foreign assignment. In addition, Mr Eckerstein’s impression is that many men accept assignments in a rough environment just because the reward is higher.

**Dual-career/family issues:** Mr Eckerstein believes that additional strains are placed on the female expatriate’s personal relationships when her partner becomes a trailing spouse. He says that this should not be the case, but that it probably is this way. The respondent thinks that women might choose between an international career and family. He does not reject the idea that this choice could be done because of organisational and societal assumptions that a woman’s primary role is that of a mother. These assumptions may exist, because old values are still held in many respects, according to the respondent. Moreover, Mr Eckerstein agrees that the choice between international career and family might be made because of that career success is still based on a male model. He says that this model assumes that career success is measured in money and status, and his perception is that women have different value bases. The traditional view on career is, according to the respondent, that “one climbs in the hierarchies and earns more money”.

**Role models:** Mr Eckerstein is of the opinion that role models are important as career support. He regards role models as a way of preserving behaviour in a positive sense, and to transfer competence within the organisation. The respondent “definitely” believes that a lack of female role models may lead to missed opportunities for career advancement. He suggests that if there are a number of women available as role models, this will enhance the will to make a career.

**Mentoring:** Mr Eckerstein believes that mentoring is an important factor for the participation of women in international management. Volvo CC uses mentorship, which the respondent thinks is important, as it can be a way of breaking the traditional pattern of male domination. He further finds that it is beneficial for the organisation if women have male mentors and vice versa, since this alters the balance in a positive way. The suggestion that women may not seek mentors is rejected by the respondent, who states that he believes that women are surely seeking mentors. Neither does he believe that mentors are not selecting female protégées.

**Networking:** Mr Eckerstein says that he “definitely believes” that female expatriates are excluded from access to men’s informal business discussions and useful contact making. He states that these networks are not found within the established systems, and mentions the senior management at Electrolux as an example of this informal behaviour. They meet in the sauna every Friday afternoon to discuss business matters, and this is obviously a place where women are excluded. The respondent suggests that women must find other ways to network. He states that it is difficult to be able to gain access to these networks when one also has to pick up the children at the day nursery and so on, and usually it is the women who do this. Mr Eckerstein agrees to the statement that more access to networking groups could help women to be socialised in the formal and informal norms of the organisation, which may lead to more women in international management.

**Additional comments:** Mr Eckerstein points out that studies have shown that women are more capable as managers than men. He is of the opinion that companies need more women in order to make better business. “It is not just a human issue; it is also good for the business”, Mr Eckerstein contends.
5.3.3 Female Expatriate Respondent – Britt Ålvsäter-Thomasson

Mrs. Ålvsäter-Thomasson is 51 years of age, married and has a grown-up daughter. She started at Volvo in 1978 as a secretary, which at that time was almost the only position open for women. In 1984, Volvo started a developing program aimed to “young potentials”. It was the first time that women were allowed to join such a program, and the respondent was one of five young women participating. The aim of the program was to develop middle level managers within Volvo; however, there was no guarantee for attaining such a position. When Mrs. Ålvsäter-Thomasson returned from the training program, she got a position as an education coordinator at the personnel department. The next position she attained was as a personnel manager, the first task being to create a personnel department. After the completion of the development program (in 1984), the respondent has changed position within the company approximately every second year. She has been in different positions as personnel manager, but she has also been globally responsible for leadership development within Volvo.

However, the respondent came to a point when she felt that a foreign assignment was missing in her track record, and that it was an absolute necessity to get this experience. Mrs Ålvsäter-Thomasson saw the opportunity for a foreign assignment in 1998, when Volvo formed a subsidiary in Russia with headquarters in Moscow. All companies within the Volvo group were included in the Russian affiliate, e.g. Volvo Cars as well as Volvo Trucks and Penta. Volvo wanted to concentrate all the Volvo companies into one, in order to achieve the best synergy effects possible. Mrs Ålvsäter-Thomasson was appointed for a one-year assignment as personnel director in this Russian affiliate. Her task was to bring together all the different companies within the same personnel policies, and to recruit a couple of hundred people. Mrs Ålvsäter-Thomasson lived in Russia without her husband, who stayed in Sweden. The respondent returned to Sweden in the spring of 1999. The respondent’s current position is as a vice president for human resources within the areas of purchasing, design, car projects, and all staffs. In addition, she is a personnel manager for the personnel function.

Corporate Perspective

Companies’ hesitation: The respondent does not think that Volvo hesitates to send women on foreign assignments due to an assumption that foreigners are prejudiced against women. Rather, she believes that there might not be that many women who are able to go abroad, since they want to bring the family and it may not be easy for a woman to bring her husband who might not get a job at the location. Mrs Ålvsäter-Thomasson did not perceive that there was hesitation about her going to Russia. The reason for sending her on the assignment was that she asked for the position herself since she can speak Russian, which not many others within Volvo could. Before the respondent attained the expatriate position, the company tested her by asking questions to ensure that she understood that it was a very different country. The company prepared her well, so that she would really be certain that this was what she wanted to do.

Reasons for selecting males over females: Regarding the issue of men’s greater qualifications for international assignments, Mrs Ålvsäter-Thomasson thinks that men are perceived to be more qualified due to their advantage when it comes to attaining a variety of positions. She suggests that men advance quicker within the company and therefore are more visible and audible. The respondent further states that women want to be equally visible but that they have greater difficulties in reaching that visibility. Women work in a different manner and thus are not as easy to identify in this context. Mrs Ålvsäter-Thomasson does not think that there is any assumption within Volvo that women are less able to adapt in foreign assign-
ments. She rather believes that in reality, women have a better ability than men in adapting to international assignments.

**Selection processes:** Mrs Älvsäter-Thomasson does not think that Volvo advertise all expatriate positions, and mentions that in her case the assignment was not advertised. She asked herself to be included in the selection. Already at the point when discussions about forming the Russian subsidiary started, the respondent showed her interest. Mrs. Älvsäter-Thomasson went through interviews before attaining the Russian assignment. She contends that the company uses both open and closed selection processes. The process can also be both formal and informal, according to the respondent. Mrs Älvsäter-Thomasson contends that expatriate candidates often are well known to the selectors. In her case, the assignment meant that she was going to work for several Volvo companies. She was very well known within Volvo Cars, but not at all within Volvo Trucks. Therefore, the interviews were primarily conducted by the company in which she was not previously known. The respondent thinks that women sometimes may have to ask to be included in the selection process for international assignments, but also that capable women who strive to be visible and are showing good results actually will be offered assignments.

**Women’s qualifications:** Mrs Älvsäter-Thomasson believes that men might be more mobile considering the barrier facing women in bringing their family. Otherwise, she perceives that the demands on men and women are equal. The respondent further says that it is possible that men who have not shown very good results actually are “exported” on foreign assignments. This way, “the problem is gone for a while”, as Mrs Älvsäter-Thomasson puts it. She does not think that this method is used regarding women.

**Men’s tendency to choose other men:** The respondent thinks that the tendency for men to choose other men does occur. She means that the reason for this is that selectors then will feel confident in that things will turn out the way they want to; there will be no surprises. Mrs Älvsäter-Thomasson believes that male selectors choose people with the same qualities as themselves. However, it is easier for them to identify with a man’s similarity than with a woman’s. She further suggests that male selectors may have difficulties with women since they do not feel certain that a woman will act in the way they had in mind; that is, they may find it easier to predict a man’s behaviour. In addition, the respondent thinks that men might be more protective of women; that they do not want to “throw them out” into too insecure assignments. She refers to this as a male instinct to protect and take care of women.

**The estimations of people’s ability and women’s differing career patterns:** Mrs Älvsäter-Thomasson agrees that women’s differing career patterns and initial choice of job may be a disadvantage to them. She refers to her previous comment about career velocity, stating that men move faster within the organisation. In addition, the respondent’s perception is that women do not readily accept the “tougher” jobs. However, she is of the opinion that this is starting to change now, but earlier it has not been worth while for women to take tough assignments, since they give priority to their children and their freedom.

**Dual-career/family issues:** The respondent does not think that past job achievements and implicit career timetables causes pressure on both men and women not to take career breaks to follow their spouse. She means that the younger men today start to have the same values as women, and refers to the men born in the 1970s who actually say that they happily follow their spouses abroad. Moreover, Mrs Älvsäter-Thomasson points out that men today are taking more paternity leave than earlier generations. She believes that things are changing to the
benefit of women. The respondent is however quite certain that extended maternity leaves and career breaks are not looked upon favourably by the corporation, due to the fast pace of today. For example, for a person with a technical job there is so much happening in the professional area during a long maternity leave or career break that it will be difficult to get back on track again. This is why shared parental leave will provide women better possibilities, according to the respondent.

Mrs Älvsäter-Thomasson thinks that it does occur that companies assume that married women are not interested in international assignments (especially if they have children). She states that companies might be “a little afraid” to ask a married woman with children, but she also believes that this might happen to men as well. The assumption might therefore not be made concerning women only but also regarding men, according to the respondent, who suggests that companies may reason that, “Well, he has just become a father”.

**Female Expatriates’ Perspective**

**Interest/willingness to take foreign assignments:** Mrs Älvsäter-Thomasson thinks that men and women are equally interested in taking expatriate assignments. She is of the opinion that if women are asked to go on an assignment, they are likely to accept. The respondent does not think that there is any significant difference in men’s and women’s willingness to work in specific countries. She suggests that women might ponder on their conditions to work in certain countries, even if she does not feel certain about this issue. Mrs Älvsäter-Thomasson does however not have any such considerations regarding specific locations herself.

**Impact of perceived rewards:** The respondent thinks that managers’ motivations are impacted by perceived rewards (relocation package) from accepting international assignments. However, she does not believe that there is any difference between men and women concerning the impact of perceived rewards from accepting international assignments. She thinks that “everybody is equally greedy” when it comes to this. Possibly, women are more careful in their choice of destination, that is, women lay more stress on the actual country than on which country they will earn most money in, according to the respondent. Mrs Älvsäter-Thomasson thinks that women may emphasize quality of life more, instead of just accepting and leave, like many men do. She suggests that women see more to issues like whether it is a comfortable country to live in, or if it is an exciting country. Moreover, the respondent believes that men might be more flattered and just accept the assignment, and then they realise that “oh my God, this does not suit me at all!” Mrs Älvsäter-Thomasson says that she always wanted to go on an assignment since she had studied Russian, and that she thought “now or never” [when Volvo was planning to set up the Russian subsidiary]. She also refers to another woman she knows who is on an assignment in Asia, who says that she really loves Asia. The respondent contends that women seem to choose the location more carefully.

**Dual-career/family issues:** Concerning the issue of the additional strains on the female expatriate’s personal relationships when the male partner is the trailing spouse, the respondent states that she does not think that it is hard for the woman, but possibly for the man. The reason for this is according to the respondent that in the compounds where people live, the vast majority of trailing spouses are women and it might not be that easy to be the only man in this environment. Mrs Älvsäter-Thomasson says that she only knows of one woman who has brought her husband as a trailing spouse, and it has worked out well for them. However, she does not believe that there is any difference between male and female expatriates regarding how much responsibility they take for housework and childcare. She refers to her own experience and that of a colleague in Asia, and says that she hired a person for cleaning help. The respondent states that since she did not bring her family to Russia, she had a cleaning help so
that she would not have to do this kind of housework. According to the respondent, it is common that expatriates hire some kind of household help.

The respondent does not think that women in general choose between an international career and a family. She suggests that this varies from individual to individual, and refers to the fact that younger women today have children later. Mrs Älvsäter-Thomasson thinks that organisations and society might still assume that a woman’s primary role is as a mother. However, she also says that women nowadays are competing with their men who want to be a part of the parenthood. This is something she has noticed among the generation born in the 1970s. The respondent is of the opinion that some women [mothers] seem to find it almost bothersome that their men are “getting into” their lives, in the sense that they felt excluded from the family during the period when they were working and the man was at home with the children. Mrs Älvsäter-Thomasson agrees to the suggestion that career success is still based on a male model, even though she does not think that women choose between an international career and a family because of this.

Role models: Regarding the importance of role models as career support, Mrs Älvsäter-Thomasson contends that there are not many female role models. She suggests that role models are important regardless of their gender, since there are many women who definitely not are role models to others. However, she thinks that a female role model facilitates for women, since they then get their own behaviour and ideas confirmed. Mrs Älvsäter-Thomasson also thinks that the lack of female role models actually may lead to women giving in and missing career opportunities.

Mentoring: The respondent, who has experience both from having a mentor and being one, feels that mentoring is extremely important. She says that mentoring means that one has a more experienced person with whom one can discuss suspicions, thoughts, and ideas, which can help to focus on the right thing. This is invaluable, according to Mrs Älvsäter-Thomasson, who also thinks that a mentor can inspire and give courage so that people dare to go on expatriate assignments.

The respondent thinks that part of the reason for the low number of female expatriates might rather be due to that women do not seek mentors than that male mentors do not select female protégées, even if she is not sure if this is a contributing factor. She is of the opinion that there is no lack of male mentors to women; on the contrary, she perceives that those men who have female protégées are very proud since it is seen as a greater honour. Mrs Älvsäter-Thomasson thinks that there are as many young men today that do not seek mentors, simply because they do not know how to go about. The respondent suggests that this issue is connected to networking, and says that the “older” men have their old boy network where they help each other out.

Networking: Mrs Älvsäter-Thomasson thinks that women expatriates are excluded from access to men’s informal networks. She however suggests that women have to identify these networks and try to gain access to them, and if women are able to do this, they are welcome to join, but they are not explicitly invited. The respondent does not think that it is hard to gain access to these networks. Rather, it is an issue of identifying these groups and finding out where the decisions are made and what the men are doing while taking these decisions. The next step will be to try to ally with someone within the network by saying that “I could make a contribution”, and then they usually say, “come along”, according to the respondent. Mrs Älvsäter-Thomasson stresses that this has to be done in a way that cannot be perceived as threatening. She is of the opinion that if women gain more access to these networking groups,
it may lead to more women in international management. The respondent also thinks that it also can be good to have female networks, or as she puts it, “It can be good to keep in with the sisters as well”, but that it can be important to join the male networks for career purposes.

Additional comments: Mrs Älvsäter-Thomasson is of the opinion that it is easier than one might think for a woman to achieve an expatriate assignment. She thinks that women should try to take the initiative, since women who ask for foreign assignments are very positively received by home country management. The respondent thinks that the main reason for the low ratio of female expatriates is that there are so few women in suitable positions, and those who are, might not be able to bring their families.

In this chapter, empirical data collected through six interviews within three companies have been presented. The presentation of each case has started with the data gathered from the company respondent, followed by the data collected from the female expatriate respondent. The structure of each section followed the conceptual framework and the interview guide. In the following chapter, these data will be analysed through comparison with the conceptual framework.
The empirical data outlined in Chapter 5 will in this chapter be compared to the conceptual framework that was developed in Chapter 3. We will start by reducing the data through making a within-case analysis, thus comparing each case with previous studies. Then, the data will be displayed through a cross-case analysis, where the three cases (and the six respondents) are compared to each other. The analysis of data will finally lead to conclusions can be drawn. These will be outlined in Chapter 7.

Each case consists of two interviews; one representing the company’s view and one representing the female expatriate’s view. Both sections start with an analysis of concepts connected to the corporate perspective, followed by concepts connected to the perspective of female expatriates. Thus, the analysis is made from a dual perspective, as shown in the figure below.

![Diagram of Within-Case Analysis](image)

**Figure 6.1: Structure of Within-Case Analysis**

*Source: Authors’ own construction*
6.1 Within-Case Analysis of Scania

In this section, the empirical data collected in Case 1 will be analysed against the concepts outlined in Chapter 3. This will be done as described on the previous page. Regarding the figures of Scania’s expatriates, Mr Lagerström stated that “a few” of the 150 expatriates that are on long-term assignments are women, and he could only mention one specifically. Therefore, we estimate that there are not more than 3 female expatriates, all of which are in managerial positions (MD at finance company or financial manager). Even if this is not the exact figure, an estimation has to be made in order to calculate the ratio of female expatriates at Scania, which then would be 2 percent. This figure should be compared to the ratio of female employees at Scania in Sweden (14.3 percent), and the ratio of women managers located in Sweden (9.4 percent).

6.1.1 Company Respondent – Roland Lagerström

Corporate Perspective

Companies’ hesitation: Regarding Adler’s (1994a) finding that companies are hesitant to send women on international assignments because of assumptions that foreigners’ prejudice against women will make them ineffective as expatriate managers, Mr Lagerström agrees that this is an issue that Scania does consider before sending someone on an assignment. However, he points out that this does not apply to women expatriates only, but that Scania always takes the health and security of the expatriate and his/her family into consideration. The respondent also mentions Saudi Arabia as a country where women’s mobility is restricted, and states that such things cannot be changed. Thus, we find support for this variable.

Reasons for companies selecting males over females: Vance and Paik (2001) suggest that a reason for companies selecting men over women for expatriate assignments is that men have greater qualifications for international assignments. This is not supported by the respondent, who after some hesitation states that Scania bases the selection decisions on the person’s competence and capability. Another reason for selecting men rather than women is according to Vance and Paik (2001) women’s relative inability to adapt to the challenging requirements of foreign assignments. This variable is also rejected by the respondent, who does not consider women to be unable to adapt, and mentions examples of this.

Selection processes: According to Harris (2001), an open system for expatriate selection means that all vacancies are advertised and anyone with appropriate qualifications and experience may apply. In a closed system, headquarters nominate suitable candidates, who are only informed once agreement about acceptability has been reached (ibid.). The “interview” consists of a negotiation about the terms and conditions of the assignment. (Harris, 2001; Linehan & Scullion, 2001b) According to Mr Lagerström, the selection processes at Scania are usually open, except for positions as managing director. Another situation when closed selection is used, is when selectors have identified a “perfect” candidate for a specific assignment. Harris (2001) also suggests that selection processes can be formal or informal, depending on whether there are formalised criteria for expatriate selection or not. Since the respondent states that Scania uses expatriate position profiles, the process can be identified as formal.

Linehan and Scullion (2001b) suggest that the pool of potential expatriate candidates is limited to employees who are well known to the selectors. This variable is rejected by Mr Lagerström, since he states that the candidates are not always well known. He however emphasises that the company must feel confident in the potential expatriate. Regarding the issue of
women having to ask to be included in the selection process for international assignments if they are to be considered at all (Linehan, Scullion & Walsh, 2001), the respondent agrees that women should ask, but he adds that men also need to do this. Since the respondent does not see this variable as something specific to women, we consider it to be rejected.

Women’s qualifications: Mr Lagerström’s answer does not support the statement of Linehan and Walsh (1999b) that female managers need to be more qualified, more ambitious, and more mobile than male managers are in order to be selected for an expatriate assignment. He states that it is the same process for women and men.

Men’s tendency to choose other men: Linehan, Scullion and Walsh (2001) suggest that men holding upper level management positions have a (unconscious) tendency to choose other men for expatriate assignments. Harris (2001; 1995) adds that men’s informal perceptions of women’s suitability may lead to a tendency to “clone” themselves. This variable is supported by Mr Lagerström, who adds that selectors tend to choose people with the same values as themselves.

The estimations of people’s ability and women’s differing career patterns: Women are likely to be disadvantaged by organisational practices that are used to estimate people’s ability and allocate jobs, considering their differing career patterns and initial choice of job, according to Harris (1995). The respondent is uncertain about this statement, but he points to that everyone is at some point new in an organisation regardless of initial choice of job. Thus, we cannot find support or rejection for this variable.

Dual-career/family issues: Harris’ (1995) suggestion that past job achievements and implicit career timetables might create pressure on both men and women not to take career breaks to follow their partners abroad, is supported by Mr Lagerström. If employees decide to take career breaks to go as a trailing spouse, the respondent means that it is good if the couple chooses to have children during this break. Linehan and Scullion (2001b) state that extended maternity leaves and career breaks might not be looked upon favourably by senior management. This is rejected by the respondent, who says that this has never been a problem within Scania.

The respondent’s answer shows moderate support for the variable suggesting that home-country senior managers assume that married women will not be interested in international assignments because of their domestic responsibilities, especially if they have children (Linehan, Scullion & Walsh, 2001; Linehan & Scullion, 2001b). However, he points out that every person has to be asked about their interest, which is made during personal development discussions at Scania. Mr Lagerström adds that there might be more women who reject offers about expatriate assignments for family reasons and that it is not an issue of companies not considering them.

Female Expatriates’ Perspective

Interest/willingness to take foreign assignments: Some studies claim that women and men today are equally interested in international assignments (Adler 1994a; Varma & Stroh, 2001), while others have found that male managers are more receptive than female managers to expatriate assignments (Yurkiewicz & Rosen, 1995). Mr Lagerström’s answer shows support for the first statement, thus dismissing the second, since he thinks that women and men today are equally interested in expatriate assignments. He supports Linehan and Scullion’s (2001a) statement that men and women differ in their willingness to work in specific loca-
Impact of perceived rewards: The respondent is unsure about the impact on female (and male) managers’ motivations by perceived rewards (relocation package offered) from accepting international assignments (Harris, 1995; Yurkiewicz & Rosen, 1995). His answers point to that there is no difference between men and women regarding the impact of rewards. Mr Lagerström suggests that previous experiences and the conditions in the country of destination are factors of higher importance.

Dual-career/family issues: The respondent does not support Linehan and Walsh’s (1999b) statement that additional strains are placed on the female expatriate’s personal relationships when her partner becomes a trailing spouse, when it comes to Swedish expatriates. However, he believes that this might be more valid in other countries, or for women whose husband holds “old-fashioned” values.

According to Linehan and Walsh (1999b), many women managers choose between an international career and family because of the extra strains and guilt feelings that women experience in balancing an international career with childrearing responsibilities. This choice may have to be made because of the organisational and societal assumptions that a woman’s primary role is that of a mother (ibid.). Mr Lagerström believes that women do choose between an international career and family. His answers do however not give support to the variable that this should be due to assumptions in organisations and society that a woman’s primary role is as a mother, since he is of the opinion that women rather makes this choice of their own will and that they have an “extra” dimension in the relationship to the children. The respondent rejects Linehan and Walsh’s (1999b) suggestion that women choose between an international career and family because of career success still being based on a male model, which ignores the influence of marriage, pregnancy, children, and household duties.

Role models: Ruhe and Allen (1997) state that the mobilization of role models at different organisational levels is one of the most important career support programs for women. This variable is strongly supported by the respondent, who emphasises the importance of role model behaviour. He also believes that it is possible that a lack of female role models may lead to women missing opportunities for career advancement (Linehan & Walsh, 1999a), which thereby gives support to this variable as well.

Mentoring: The influence of mentoring is one of the most important informal factors that may affect the participation of female managers in international management (Linehan, Scullion & Walsh, 2001; Ruhe & Allen, 1997). This variable is supported by the respondent’s replies, but he also points out that having a mentor is important for men as well. According to Linehan and Walsh (1999a), part of the reason for the low number of female expatriates might be that women may not seek mentors. Mr Lagerström does not know if this is true; thus, we cannot find rejection or support for this variable. The suggestion that mentors may not select female protégées (Linehan and Walsh, 1999a) is however rejected by the respondent.

Networking: According to Linehan, Scullion and Walsh (2001), female expatriates feel excluded from access to the business discussions and the useful contact making that takes place when male managers network informally. The respondent’s answers provide support for this variable, and he further suggests that a woman need “some nerve” to be able to get into these network groups. Linehan, Scullion and Walsh (2001) also state that if women had more ac-
cess to networking groups, they could be socialised in both the formal and informal norms of the organisation, which in turn may lead to that more women take part in international management. This variable is more dismissed than supported by Mr Lagerström, since he is of the opinion that access to networks does not automatically lead to gained trust.

6.1.2 Female Expatriate Respondent – Inge Persson

Mrs Persson has expatriate experience as a financial manager from the Czech Republic and Denmark, where she worked for three and two years respectively. When Mrs Persson went on her first assignment, she was 52 years of age and had been in the Scania concern for about 25 years. She is married, and her husband (who is retired) followed her on both expatriate assignments as a trailing spouse. The couple has a grown-up son who did not accompany them abroad. Today, she is still active within Scania on part-time. She sometimes takes short-term assignments in foreign locations, where she works with organisational issues and routines.

Corporate Perspective

Companies’ hesitation: Mrs Persson’s answer supports the variable stating that companies are hesitant to send women on international assignments because of assumptions that foreigners’ prejudice against women will make them ineffective as expatriate managers (Adler, 1994a). She is of the opinion that the largest prejudice is at home in Sweden, and she has rather perceived it as more of an advantage to be a woman abroad. The respondent’s experience is that she has been treated with respect due to her age and the fact that expatriates are seen as “experts”.

Reasons for companies selecting males over females: Vance and Paik (2001) suggest that a reason for companies selecting men over women for expatriate assignments is that men have greater qualifications for international assignments. This statement is strongly rejected by Mrs Persson, who thinks that women in fact have personal characteristics that are better suited for international assignments. The respondent also dismisses Vance and Paik’s (2001) notion of women’s relative inability to adapt to the challenging requirements of foreign assignments. She is of the opinion that women are more adaptive than men are, even if attitudes concerning women’s inability to adapt may exist in organisations.

Selection processes: According to Harris (2001), an open system for expatriate selection means that all vacancies are advertised and anyone with appropriate qualifications and experience may apply. In a closed system, headquarters nominate suitable candidates, who are only informed once agreement about acceptability has been reached (ibid.). The “interview” consists of a negotiation about the terms and conditions of the assignment (Harris, 2001; Linehan & Scullion, 2001b). Mrs Persson’s perception is that Scania uses both open and closed selection processes. In her case, the selection was closed in the sense that she was handpicked, but there were also open features since Mrs Persson went through several interviews. Harris (2001) also suggests that selection processes can be formal or informal, depending on whether there are formalised criteria for expatriate selection or not. The respondent’s answers provide support for the usage of formal selection processes at Scania. Mrs Persson adds that the company uses different methods depending on the type of position and the supply of available personnel.

The respondent supports Linehan and Scullion’s (2001b) concept of the pool of potential expatriate candidates being limited to employees who are well known to the selectors. She suggests that companies might be afraid of investing in the “wrong” people, which results in that
a majority of the expatriate candidates are well known. Regarding the issue of women having to ask to be included in the selection process for international assignments if they are to be considered at all (Linehan, Scullion & Walsh, 2001), Mrs Persson is of the opinion that women in general have to make themselves more visible and remind the employer of their existence. Thus, the respondent supports this variable.

Women’s qualifications: Mrs Persson’s answer supports the statement of Linehan and Walsh (1999b) that female managers need to be more qualified, more ambitious, and more mobile than male managers are in order to be selected for an expatriate assignment. She is of the opinion that a woman has to be much more capable than a man in order to get a foreign assignment. According to the respondent, this is due to women’s lack of networks, which makes it necessary for them to attain the assignments on their own merits.

Men’s tendency to choose other men: Linehan, Scullion and Walsh (2001) suggest that men holding upper level management positions have a (unconscious) tendency to choose other men for expatriate assignments. Harris (2001; 1995) adds that men’s informal perceptions of women’s suitability may lead to a tendency to “clone” themselves. Mrs Persson’s answers give strong support to these concepts, and she refers men’s tendency to choose other men to the existence of the male networks, within which a lot of informal selection takes place.

The estimations of people’s ability and women’s differing career patterns: Women are likely to be disadvantaged by organisational practices that are used to estimate people’s ability and allocate jobs, considering their differing career patterns and initial choice of job, according to Harris (1995). The respondent’s opinion is that this concept has been valid previously, but that the situation today is different. Therefore, this variable is dismissed.

Dual-career/family issues: Harris’ (1995) suggests that past job achievements and implicit career timetables might create pressure on both men and women not to take career breaks to follow their partners abroad, while Linehan and Scullion (2001b) state that extended maternity leaves and career breaks might not be looked upon favourably by senior management. Both of these variables are supported by Mrs Persson, who comments that if you look at it from the employer’s view, such breaks are in fact interruptions.

The respondent’s answers do not provide support for the variable suggesting that home-country senior managers assume that married women will not be interested in international assignments because of their domestic responsibilities, especially if they have children (Linehan, Scullion & Walsh, 2001; Linehan & Scullion, 2001b). Mrs Persson means that women are interested, but that they adapt to their family situation. The person who has the highest salary in the family is in control, and that is still the man, according to the respondent.

Female Expatriates’ Perspective
Interest/willingness to take foreign assignments: Adler (1994a) as well as Varma and Stroh (2001) suggest that women and men today are equally interested in international assignments, while Yurkiewicz and Rosen (1995) found that male managers are more receptive than female managers to expatriate assignments. Mrs Persson’s answers support the second statement, as she is of the opinion that men have a greater self-confidence, which seem to make them more inclined to take foreign assignments without hesitation. Women are less prone to take chances, since they have to feel certain that they will be able to manage the assignment, according to the respondent. Mrs Persson supports Linehan and Scullion’s (2001a) statement that men and women differ in their willingness to work in specific locations, and states that
gender differences appear regarding these issues. She mentions Arabic (Moslem) countries as examples of locations where there is likely to be a difference in willingness to accept assignments.

**Impact of perceived rewards:** The respondent thinks that female (and male) managers’ motivation to accept expatriate assignments increases with a higher salary. This supports Harris’s (1995) and Yurkiewicz and Rosen’s (1995) concept concerning the impact of perceived rewards (relocation package offered) from accepting international assignments. Regarding differences between men and women, Mrs Persson is of the opinion that there is no difference regarding the motivation from monetary rewards and benefits, but that men are more status oriented in the sense that they are more inclined to brag about their benefits.

**Dual-career/family issues:** Linehan and Walsh (1999b) suggest that additional strains are placed on the female expatriate’s personal relationships when her partner becomes a trailing spouse. This is supported by Mrs Persson, who refers to that since most trailing spouses are women, a man becomes lonelier in this situation, which might cause strains on the relationship. She further states that it is necessary to have a very good relationship in order to be able to cope.

According to Linehan and Walsh (1999b), many women managers choose between an international career and family because of the extra strains and guilt feelings that women experience in balancing an international career with childrearing responsibilities. Mrs Persson supports this statement, and says that women today might choose to start families later because they want to start their career first. The respondent however dismisses the suggestion that this choice may have to be made because of the organisational and societal assumptions that a woman’s primary role is that of a mother (Linehan & Walsh, 1999b). She states that although this assumption has been prevalent, it is gone by now.

Mrs Persson’s answer provides support for Linehan and Walsh’s (1999b) suggestion that women choose between an international career and family because of career success still being based on a male model, which ignores the influence of marriage, pregnancy, children, and household duties. As an example, the respondent mentions that in the reward system a company car usually is a part of a compensation package, while many women rather would appreciate a maid or a cleaning help instead.

**Role models:** Ruhe and Allen (1997) state that the mobilization of role models at different organisational levels is one of the most important career support programs for women. This variable is strongly supported by the respondent, who adds that a role model does not necessarily have to be a woman. She mentions that she used men as role models herself, as there were no women to look up to. Mrs Persson supports the statement that a lack of female role models may lead to women missing opportunities for career advancement (Linehan & Walsh, 1999a), which then can contribute to explain the low number of female expatriates. The respondent further means that the existence of male role models on expatriate assignments contributes to men thinking, “I can do it as well”.

**Mentoring:** Mrs Persson’s answers support the concept that the influence of mentoring is one of the most important informal factors that may affect the participation of female managers in international management (Linehan, Scullion & Walsh, 2001; Ruhe & Allen, 1997). She suggests that what many women miss is mentorship, and she thinks that role models in the form of mentors are something that Scania should invest in. Mrs Persson dismisses the suggestion
of Linehan and Walsh (1999a) that part of the reason for the low number of female expatriates might be that women are not seeking mentors. She also rejects the suggestion that mentors may not select female protégées (Linehan and Walsh, 1999a), and means that being a mentor to a successful young woman may even be considered a greater honour.

Networking: According to Linehan, Scullion and Walsh (2001), female expatriates feel excluded from access to the business discussions and the useful contact making that takes place when male managers network informally. This variable is supported by Mrs Persson, who is of the opinion that women have no natural support in this form. She further states that in a male network, one makes contacts upward in the company, while in a female network, one “stays at one’s own level”. The respondent also thinks that networks with both men and women are developing among young people who are graduating nowadays.

Mrs Persson supports Linehan, Scullion and Walsh’s (2001) suggestion that if women had more access to networking groups, they could be socialised in both the formal and informal norms of the organisation, which in turn may lead to that more women take part in international management. She suggests that it is important to be known in a certain circle in order to be “seen”.

6.2 Within-Case Analysis of SCA

In this section, the empirical data collected in Case 2 will be analysed against the concepts outlined in Chapter 3. The structure of the section is the same as in the previous section, and as shown in Figure 6.1. Thus, it starts with the analysis of data gathered from the company respondent, followed by an analysis of the female expatriate respondent’s answers.

The company respondent Mr Lindahl stated that 17 out of SCA Hygiene Products’ 100 expatriates are women, which makes the ratio of female expatriates 17 percent. Since most of SCA’s expatriates are in managerial positions, we assume that almost all of these women are managers. This figure should be compared with the ratio of female employees within SCA Hygiene Products (27 percent) and women managers (12 percent).

6.2.1 Company Respondent – Jan Lindahl

Corporate Perspective

Companies’ hesitation: Mr Lindahl does not support the concept of companies being hesitant to send women on international assignments because of assumptions that foreigners’ prejudice against women will make them ineffective as expatriate managers (Adler, 1994a) when it comes to SCA Hygiene Products. However, the respondent believes that companies that send expatriates to Arab countries might have such assumptions, which he thinks is understandable.

Reasons for companies selecting males over females: The respondent strongly rejects Vance and Paik’s (2001) suggestion that a reason for companies selecting men over women for expatriate assignments is that men have greater qualifications for international assignments. He questions in what way qualifications could be perceived as a matter of gender. Mr Lindahl also dismisses Vance and Paik’s (2001) concept of women’s relative inability to adapt to the challenging requirements of foreign assignments.
Selection processes: An open system for expatriate selection means that all vacancies are advertised and anyone with appropriate qualifications and experience may apply. In a closed system, headquarters nominate suitable candidates, who are only informed once agreement about acceptability has been reached. (Harris, 2001) The “interview” consists of a negotiation about the terms and conditions of the assignment. (Harris, 2001; Linehan & Scullion, 2001b) The respondent identifies the expatriate selection process at SCA Hygiene Products as closed. He states that the reason for this is that the company wants to identify people who are perceived to be capable of managing an assignment. Sometimes, there are several candidates who then go through interviews, thus giving the selection process an open feature. Harris (2001) further suggests that selection processes can be formal or informal, depending on whether there are formalised criteria for expatriate selection or not. Mr Lindahl’s answer shows that the company uses informal selection, since there are no formalised expatriate criteria.

The respondent supports Linehan and Scullion’s (2001b) suggestion that the pool of potential expatriate candidates is limited to employees who are well known to the selectors. He adds that this is rather natural when it comes to filling managerial positions. Mr Lindahl’s answer gives some support to Linehan, Scullion and Walsh’s (2001) statement that women have to be included in the selection process for international assignments if they are to be considered at all. He thinks that it is possible that women need to ask, but he is not sure if this is specific to expatriate positions.

Women’s qualifications: Female managers need to be more qualified, more ambitious, and more mobile than male managers are in order to be selected for an expatriate assignment, according to Linehan and Walsh (1999b). This concept is rejected by the respondent, who is of the opinion that women and men need the same qualifications and qualities.

Men’s tendency to choose other men: Linehan, Scullion and Walsh (2001) suggest that men holding upper level management positions have a (unconscious) tendency to choose other men for expatriate assignments. According to Harris (2001; 1995), men’s informal perceptions of women’s suitability may lead to a tendency to “clone” themselves. These suggestions are supported by Mr Lindahl, who adds that this is not specific to expatriate selection but also to recruitment in general.

The estimations of people’s ability and women’s differing career patterns: Women are likely to be disadvantaged by organisational practices that are used to estimate people’s ability and allocate jobs, considering their differing career patterns and initial choice of job (Harris, 1995). The respondent dismisses this variable, as he is of the opinion that even though women partly do have different career patterns than men, this is not a disadvantage to them. He further states that such differences are smaller in Sweden compared to other countries.

Dual-career/family issues: Mr Lindahl supports Harris’s (1995) suggestion that past job achievements and implicit career timetables might create pressure on both men and women not to take career breaks to follow their partners abroad. He suggests that a person who has taken a career break might not be able to make the same career as one who has not taken any break. Linehan and Scullion (2001b) state that extended maternity leaves and career breaks might not be looked upon favourably by senior management. This concept is rejected by the respondent, who thinks that this is not a problem within SCA Hygiene Products. According to Linehan, Scullion and Walsh (2001), and Linehan and Scullion (2001b), home-country senior managers assume that married women will not be interested in international assignments be-
cause of their domestic responsibilities, especially if they have children. Mr Lindahl dismisses this variable, and states that people should be asked if they are interested and mobile.

**Female Expatriates’ Perspective**

*Interest/willingness to take foreign assignments:* Some studies claim that women and men today are equally interested in international assignments (Adler 1994a; Varma & Stroh, 2001), while others have found that male managers are more receptive than female managers to expatriate assignments (Yurkiewicz & Rosen, 1995). Mr Lindahl’s answer provides some support for both statements, as he is of the opinion that even though women are equally interested, they are less likely to accept an expatriate assignment. This is due to that they feel a larger responsibility for the children and that they experience greater difficulties in getting their men to follow abroad. Linehan and Scullion (2001a) suggest that men and women differ in their willingness to work in specific locations. This is supported by the respondent, who means that women might be more hesitant to tough countries that involve handling of hardship. Within SCA, the respondent thinks that Russia (Moscow) and Philippines (Manila) might be perceived as tough.

*Impact of perceived rewards:* Female (and male) managers’ motivations are impacted by perceived rewards (relocation package offered) from accepting international assignments, according to Harris (1995) and Yurkiewicz and Rosen (1995). Mr Lindahl agrees with this concept, and states that rewards might have a large impact depending on the salary and tax levels in the potential expatriate’s home country. The respondent does not perceive that there are any significant differences between men and women regarding this issue. He does however suggest some smaller differences, since his impression is that men seem to push salary issues harder, while women seem to put more emphasis on flexibility and shorter work hours.

*Dual-career/family issues:* The respondent thinks that it is true that additional strains are placed on the female expatriate’s personal relationships when her partner becomes a trailing spouse, thus supporting the concept of Linehan and Walsh (1999b). He believes that it is harder for men than for women to accept the role as a trailing spouse. Mr Lindahl supports the suggestion that many women managers choose between an international career and family because of the extra strains and guilt feelings that women experience in balancing an international career with childrearing responsibilities (Linehan & Walsh, 1999b). He also agrees to the notion that this choice may have to be made because of the organisational and societal assumptions that a woman’s primary role is that of a mother (Linehan & Walsh, 1999b), and adds that this is more true outside Sweden. Linehan and Walsh (1999b) further suggest that women choose between an international career and family since career success still is based on a male model, which ignores the influence of marriage, pregnancy, children, and household duties. Mr Lindahl’s answer gives some support to this concept, even though he does not perceive it as an especially important factor in Sweden today.

*Role models:* According to Ruhe and Allen (1997), the mobilization of role models at different organisational levels is one of the most important career support programs for women. The respondent supports this concept, as well as the suggestion of Linehan and Walsh (1999a) that a lack of female role models may lead to women missing opportunities for career advancement.

*Mentoring:* The influence of mentoring is one of the most important informal factors that may affect the participation of female managers in international management (Linehan, Scullion & Walsh, 2001; Ruhe & Allen, 1997). This concept receives some support from Mr Lindahl,
since he is of the opinion that “mentoring might have some affect”. Mr Lindahl is not able to answer if part of the reason for the low number of female expatriates might be that women are not seeking mentors (Linehan and Walsh, 1999a); thus, we cannot find rejection or support for this variable. Mr Lindahl’s answer provides strong rejection for the notion that mentors may not select female protégées (Linehan and Walsh, 1999a). He is rather of the opinion that men are more motivated to be mentoring women.

Networking: The respondent agrees to that female expatriates may feel excluded from access to the business discussions and the useful contact making that takes place when male managers network informally (Linehan, Scullion & Walsh, 2001), at least in certain environments. According to Linehan, Scullion and Walsh (2001), if women had more access to networking groups, they could be socialised in both the formal and informal norms of the organisation, which in turn may lead to that more women take part in international management. This variable is more dismissed than supported by Mr Lindahl, who does not perceive the lack of access to networks as a significant barrier.

6.2.2 Female Expatriate Respondent – Annika Nordin

Mrs Nordin is a plant manager for SCA Hygiene Products’ tissue mill in Mainz-Kostheim, Germany, where she has been for two years. She went on her first expatriate assignment, which also was in Germany, in 1997. At that point, Mrs Nordin was 42 years old and had worked within SCA for 13 years. Mrs Nordin is married, and her husband is with her in Germany as a trailing spouse. The couple has an eight-year-old daughter who lives with them.

Corporate Perspective

Companies’ hesitation: Mrs Nordin rejects the variable stating that companies are hesitant to send women on international assignments because of assumptions that foreigners’ prejudice against women will make them ineffective as expatriate managers (Adler, 1994a). She has not perceived any such worries within the company, nor has she experienced any prejudice in Germany.

Reasons for companies selecting males over females: Vance and Paik’s (2001) suggestion of men having greater qualifications for international assignments as a reason for companies selecting men over women, is dismissed by Mrs Nordin. The respondent also rejects the notion of women’s relative inability to adapt to the challenging requirements of foreign assignments (Vance and Paik, 2001). She thinks that women have better ability to adapt than men, due to women’s better listening skills.

Selection processes: According to Harris (2001), an open system for expatriate selection means that all vacancies are advertised and anyone with appropriate qualifications and experience may apply. In a closed system, headquarters nominate suitable candidates, who are only informed once agreement about acceptability has been reached (ibid.). The “interview” then consists of a negotiation about the terms and conditions of the assignment (Harris, 2001; Linehan & Scullion, 2001b). Mrs Nordin states that in her case, the selection process was closed, since she was contacted and more or less persuaded to move to Germany. In addition, no interviews were made. Selection processes can also be formal or informal, depending on whether there are formalised criteria for expatriate selection or not (Harris, 2001). The respondent identifies the selection process that brought her to Germany as informal.
Mrs Nordin’s answer supports Linehan and Scullion’s (2001b) concept of the pool of potential expatriate candidates being limited to employees who are well known to the selectors, as she thinks that this usually is the case. The respondent also supports the concept stating that women have to ask to be included in the selection process for international assignments if they are to be considered at all (Linehan, Scullion & Walsh, 2001). She suggests that it is not taken for granted that women want a career of their own, while it is always assumed that men want a career.

Women’s qualifications: The respondent agrees to the statement of Linehan and Walsh (1999b) that female managers need to be more qualified, more ambitious, and more mobile than male managers are in order to be selected for an expatriate assignment. Mrs Nordin is of the opinion that women have to “show more”, but she also thinks that this is not valid only for expatriate assignments.

Men’s tendency to choose other men: Linehan, Scullion and Walsh (2001) suggest that men holding upper level management positions have a (unconscious) tendency to choose other men for expatriate assignments. Harris (2001; 1995) adds that men’s informal perceptions of women’s suitability may lead to a tendency to “clone” themselves. These concepts are strongly supported by Mrs Nordin’s answers, since she considers these tendencies to be “what it is all about”. She points out that when selectors do not choose someone who is similar to themselves, they probably consider that they are taking a larger risk. Thus, one has to be more competent to decrease this perceived risk, according to the respondent. Mrs Nordin adds that there are also tendencies that females choose females.

The estimations of people’s ability and women’s differing career patterns: Harris (1995) suggests that women are likely to be disadvantaged by organisational practices that are used to estimate people’s ability and allocate jobs, considering their differing career patterns and initial choice of job. This variable is dismissed by Mrs Nordin, who is of the opinion that a woman’s longer, troublesome career path makes her more mature, thus giving her the ability to handle the expatriate assignment better.

Dual-career/family issues: Past job achievements and implicit career timetables might create pressure on both men and women not to take career breaks to follow their partners abroad, according to Harris (1995). The respondent supports this concept, but suggests that this pressure is more common among men as they would see such a break as a loss of time. Mrs Nordin does not agree to Linehan and Scullion’s (2001b) statement that extended maternity leaves and career breaks might not be looked upon favourably by senior management. Her answer points to that she has no experience of such assumptions within her organisation, but she thinks that such unfounded arguments are still used by some companies.

Home-country senior managers often assume that married women will not be interested in international assignments because of their domestic responsibilities, especially if they have children, according to Linehan, Scullion and Walsh (2001), and Linehan and Scullion (2001b). The respondent’s answer shows support for this concept, since she believes that companies may have such assumptions. She does not however think that there is any real difference between married and unmarried women regarding their willingness to go on foreign assignments.
Female Expatriates’ Perspective

Interest/willingness to take foreign assignments: Adler (1994a) and Varma and Stroh (2001) suggest that women and men today are equally interested in international assignments, while Yurkiewicz and Rosen (1995) found that male managers are more receptive than female managers to expatriate assignments. Mrs Nordin does not think that there is any difference between women and men when it comes to interest to take expatriate assignments, but she believes that there are more men who succeed in overcoming the practical problems connected to a foreign assignment. Thus, we find some support for both variables.

Regarding Linehan and Scullion’s (2001a) statement that men and women differ in their willingness to work in specific locations, the respondent’s answer is supportive. She mentions Russia and Arab countries as examples of locations that would make her “think twice” before accepting an assignment, primarily because of consideration for her family.

Impact of perceived rewards: Mrs Nordin supports Harris’s (1995) and Yurkiewicz and Rosen’s (1995) concept concerning the impact of perceived rewards (relocation package offered) from accepting international assignments. A motivating factor for Mrs and Mr Nordin was the better standard of living. The respondent is of the opinion that if one would not get anything extra for moving abroad, then nobody would go on expatriate assignments. Regarding differences between men and women, Mrs Nordin does not perceive that there is any substantial difference, but that men might be even more motivated by money and status symbols than women.

Dual-career/family issues: Linehan and Walsh’s (1999b) suggestion that additional strains are placed on the female expatriate’s personal relationships when her partner becomes a trailing spouse is supported by the respondent. However, Mrs Nordin adds that this situation is not only negative, since one cannot work overtime every evening and leave the family alone. Thus, it is necessary to accomplish a balance in life, according to the respondent.

According to Linehan and Walsh (1999b), many women managers choose between an international career and family because of the extra strains and guilt feelings that women experience in balancing an international career with childrearing responsibilities. Mrs Nordin’s answers do not support this variable, at least not when it comes to Swedish conditions. She thinks that whether a woman has to make this choice is dependent on the backup she receives from her husband. The respondent rejects the suggestion that this choice may have to be made because of the organisational and societal assumptions that a woman’s primary role is that of a mother (Linehan & Walsh, 1999b), and says that she has never experienced such assumptions.

Linehan and Walsh’s (1999b) suggestion that women choose between an international career and family because career success is still based on a male model is not supported by Mrs Nordin’s answers. She is however of the opinion that this might be valid in other European countries, while the conditions in Sweden are more beneficial for mothers.

Role models: The respondent shows support for Ruhe and Allen’s (1997) statement that the mobilization of role models at different organisational levels is one of the most important career support programs for women. She thinks that role models for women also can be male. Mrs Nordin’s answer shows more support than rejection to the statement that a lack of female role models may lead to women missing opportunities for career advancement (Linehan & Walsh, 1999a). She is of the opinion that it is more demanding not to have a predecessor.
Mentoring: The influence of mentoring is one of the most important informal factors that may affect the participation of female managers in international management, according to Linehan et al. (2001) and Ruhe and Allen (1997). Mrs Nordin does not have any experience of having a mentor, but she believes that there are many positive things to gain from mentoring. This variable cannot be supported or dismissed, since the respondent is uncertain about the importance of mentoring for the participation of women in international management.

The respondent is uncertain about Linehan and Walsh’s (1999a) suggestion that part of the reason for the low number of female expatriates might be that women may not seek mentors. She believes that it is a possible explanation, which then seems to give somewhat more support than rejection to this variable. Mrs Nordin does however not agree to the suggestion that mentors are not selecting female protégées (Linehan and Walsh, 1999a), and suggests that it rather might be connected with a larger honour for a man to be mentoring a woman.

Networking: According to Linehan, Scullion and Walsh (2001), female expatriates feel excluded from access to the business discussions and the useful contact making that takes place when male managers network informally. The respondent supports this concept, even though she has not experienced this kind of exclusion personally. She points out that she has been working with networks instead of mentoring, which has been useful to open doors and to get another perspective on problems. Mrs Nordin’s supports Linehan, Scullion and Walsh’s (2001) suggestion that if women had more access to networking groups, they could be socialised in both the formal and informal norms of the organisation, which in turn may lead to that more women take part in international management. She contends that network groups are important because they provide examples and role models.

6.3 Within-Case Analysis of Volvo Car Corporation

The empirical data collected in Case 3 are in this section analysed against the concepts outlined in Chapter 3. The analysis follows the same order as in the previous two sections.

According to the company respondent Mr Eckerstein, about 15 out of 500 expatriates at Volvo Car Corporation (hereafter referred to as Volvo CC) are women, which makes the total ratio of female expatriates 3 percent. These expatriates are placed in different positions, not only managerial. This figure can be compared to the ratio of women employees at Volvo CC in Sweden (23 percent), and to the ratio of female managers located in Sweden (0-11.5 percent, depending on leadership level).

6.3.1 Company Respondent – Sven Eckerstein

Corporate Perspective

Companies’ hesitation: According to Adler (1994a), companies are hesitant to send women on international assignments because of assumptions that foreigners’ prejudice against women will make them ineffective as expatriate managers. This variable is rejected by Mr Eckerstein, who states that the question concerning women having difficulties in certain countries has never been raised. The respondent however points out that the company does not operate in Arab countries, where this kind of prejudice possibly could be an issue.

Reasons for companies selecting males over females: Mr Eckerstein strongly dismisses Vance and Paik’s (2001) suggestion of men having greater qualifications for international assignments as a reason for companies selecting men over women. He thinks that women have at
least as good qualifications as men. The notion of women’s relative inability to adapt to the challenging requirements of foreign assignments (Vance and Paik, 2001) is also rejected by the respondent.

Selection processes: An open system for expatriate selection means that all vacancies are advertised and anyone with appropriate qualifications and experience may apply. In a closed system, headquarters nominate suitable candidates, who are only informed once agreement about acceptability has been reached. (Harris, 2001) The “interview” then consists of a negotiation about the terms and conditions of the assignment (Harris, 2001; Linehan & Scullion, 2001b). Mr Eckerstein’s answers reveal that Volvo CC primarily uses closed selection processes for expatriate selection. Expatriate positions are usually not advertised; candidates are identified internally, and usually no interviews are made since the candidates are well known. There is however no “negotiation”, since terms and conditions are already set by company policies and regulations. Harris (2001) further states that selection processes also can be formal or informal, depending on whether there are formalised criteria for expatriate selection or not. The respondent’s answers points to a formal selection process.

Mr Eckerstein supports Linehan and Scullion’s (2001b) concept of the pool of potential expatriate candidates being limited to employees who are well known to the selectors. He states that this is often the case. According to Linehan, Scullion and Walsh (2001), women have to ask to be included in the selection process for international assignments if they are to be considered at all. This concept is more supported than dismissed. Mr Eckerstein thinks that even though men have to ask as well, women tend to be less “visible” than men, and therefore the respondent would like women to be more active in this sense.

Women’s qualifications: Linehan and Walsh (1999b) suggest that female managers need to be more qualified, more ambitious, and more mobile than male managers are in order to be selected for an expatriate assignment. This variable is supported by Mr Eckerstein, who refers to that since women are holding a lower profile, they may have to perform better in order to be noticed. He also points out that this concept is based on that men handle the selection.

Men’s tendency to choose other men: According to Linehan, Scullion and Walsh (2001), men holding upper level management positions have a (unconscious) tendency to choose other men for expatriate assignments. Men’s informal perceptions of women’s suitability may also lead to a tendency to “clone” themselves (Harris, 2001; 1995). The respondent supports these statements, and states that men “recruit toward their own reflection image”. Mr Eckerstein adds that the same behaviour can be seen in women, which he views as very positive.

The estimations of people’s ability and women’s differing career patterns: Mr Eckerstein dismisses the concept of women being likely to be disadvantaged by organisational practices that are used to estimate people’s ability and allocate jobs, considering their differing career patterns and initial choice of job (Harris, 1995). He thinks that these notions are built on traditional patterns, and he does not perceive that women nowadays have very different career patterns than men.

Dual-career/family issues: Harris (1995) suggests that past job achievements and implicit career timetables might create pressure on both men and women not to take career breaks to follow their partners abroad. The respondent supports this concept, and states that it is always a struggle to handle dual careers and to fit job and children together. Mr Eckerstein also supports Linehan and Scullion’s (2001b) statement that extended maternity leaves and career
breaks might not be looked upon favourably by senior management, and refers to that absence never is appreciated. However, Volvo CC provides an extra compensation for parental leave, in order to facilitate for men and women to share the parental leave.

Home-country senior managers often assume that married women will not be interested in international assignments because of their domestic responsibilities, especially if they have children (Linehan, Scullion & Walsh, 2001; Linehan and Scullion, 2001b). The respondent’s answer does not give any support for this concept. Rather, he suggests that women themselves tend to “back off” and choose the development of the family instead of investing in their own career, and points out that people have to be aware of this situation so that women will not lose their careers.

Female Expatriates’ Perspective

Interest/willingness to take foreign assignments: Adler (1994a) and Varma and Stroh (2001) suggest that women and men today are equally interested in international assignments, while Yurkiewicz and Rosen (1995) found that male managers are more receptive than female managers to expatriate assignments. Mr Eckerstein’s answers show more support for the second variable than the first, since his impression is that women seem to regard family issues more, which might make them less interested in foreign assignments. The respondent strongly supports Linehan and Scullion’s (2001a) statement that men and women differ in their willingness to work in specific locations. He refers to that women are more concerned than men with e.g. the country’s legal system and how women and children are treated in the society.

Impact of perceived rewards: Harris (1995) and Yurkiewicz and Rosen (1995) suggest that managers’ motivations are impacted by perceived rewards (relocation package offered) from accepting international assignments. Mr Eckerstein’s answer provides support for this concept. Regarding differences between men and women, his impression is that men put more emphasis on a high salary, while women see to other things, e.g. how the family will be affected by the foreign assignment. He also believes that many men accept assignments in rough environments since the reward is higher in such locations.

Dual-career/family issues: According to Linehan and Walsh (1999b), additional strains are placed on the female expatriate’s personal relationships when her partner becomes a trailing spouse. The respondent supports this concept, and further states that even though this should not be the case, the situation probably is like this.

Many women managers choose between an international career and family because of the extra strains and guilt feelings that women experience in balancing an international career with childrearing responsibilities, according to Linehan and Walsh (1999b). This variable is supported by Mr Eckerstein, whose answers also show some support for the idea that this choice may have to be made because of the organisational and societal assumptions that a woman’s primary role is that of a mother (Linehan & Walsh, 1999b). The respondent further agrees to Linehan and Walsh’s (1999b) suggestion that women may choose between an international career and family because of the fact that career success is still based on a male model. He adds that this model assumes that career success is measured in money and status, and his perception is that women have different value bases.

Role models: Ruhe and Allen (1997) suggest that the mobilization of role models at different organisational levels is one of the most important career support programs for women. Mr Eckerstein supports this variable, and adds that role models are a way of transferring compe-
Mentoring: The influence of mentoring is one of the most important informal factors that may affect the participation of female managers in international management, according to Linehan et al. (2001) and Ruhe and Allen (1997). Mr Eckerstein supports this variable, and points out that this could be a way of breaking the traditional pattern of male domination. He also thinks that it is good if women have male mentors and vice versa. The respondent rejects the suggestion that women are not seeking mentors, as well as the suggestion that mentors are not selecting female protégées (Linehan and Walsh, 1999a).

Networking: Mr Eckerstein strongly supports the notion that female expatriates feel excluded from access to the business discussions and the useful contact making that takes place when male managers network informally (Linehan, Scullion & Walsh, 2001). He also agrees to Linehan, Scullion and Walsh’s (2001) statement that if women had more access to networking groups, they could be socialised in both the formal and informal norms of the organisation, which in turn may lead to that more women take part in international management.

6.3.2 Female Expatriate Respondent – Britt Älvsäter-Thomasson

Mrs Älvsäter-Thomasson is currently working as vice president for human resources at Volvo Car Corporation (Volvo CC). In 1998, she went on an expatriate assignment as personnel director in Moscow, Russia, where she stayed for one year. When Mrs Älvsäter-Thomasson left for the assignment, she was 48 years old and had been working within Volvo CC for 20 years. The respondent is married and has a grown-up daughter. Her family stayed in Sweden during her expatriate period.

Corporate Perspective

Companies’ hesitation: Mrs Älvsäter-Thomasson does not think that Volvo CC is hesitant to send women on international assignments because of assumptions that foreigners’ prejudice against women will make them ineffective as expatriate managers (Adler, 1994a). Instead, she suggests that the reason for the low number of female expatriates might be that many women are not able to take foreign assignments due to family and dual-career issues. Since the respondent has not perceived any hesitation, this variable can be dismissed.

Reasons for companies selecting males over females: The respondent’s answer does not provide support for Vance and Paik’s (2001) suggestion of men having greater qualifications for international assignments as a reason for companies selecting men over women. However, she believes that men are perceived to be more qualified due to that they advance quicker within organisations and therefore are more visible and audible. She further suggests that women work in a different manner and thus are not as easy to identify in this context. Mrs Älvsäter-Thomasson rejects the idea that women are less able to adapt to the challenging requirements of foreign assignments (Vance and Paik, 2001). Her opinion is that women rather have a better ability to adapt than men.

Selection processes: An open system for expatriate selection means that all vacancies are advertised and anyone with appropriate qualifications and experience may apply. In a closed system, headquarters nominate suitable candidates, who are only informed once agreement about acceptability has been reached. (Harris, 2001) The “interview” then consists of a nego-
tiation about the terms and conditions of the assignment (Harris, 2001; Linehan & Scullion, 2001b). According to Mrs Älvsäter-Thomasson, the selection processes at Volvo CC have both open and closed features. She was interviewed before attaining the expatriate position; however, the assignment was not advertised. Selection processes can also be formal or informal, depending on whether there are formalised criteria for expatriate selection or not (Harris, 2001). The respondent is of the opinion that Volvo CC uses both formal and informal selection.

Linehan and Scullion (2001b) suggest that the pool of potential expatriate candidates is limited to employees who are well known to the selectors. This is supported by Mrs Älvsäter-Thomasson, who refers to that she was well known to the selectors at Volvo CC before she got the Russian assignment. The respondent’s answer provide some support for the concept that women have to ask to be included in the selection process for international assignments if they are to be considered at all (Linehan, Scullion & Walsh, 2001). She suggests that capable women who strive to be visible and are showing good results actually will be offered assignments.

**Women’s qualifications:** Linehan and Walsh (1999b) suggest that female managers need to be more qualified, more ambitious, and more mobile than male managers are in order to be selected for an expatriate assignment. This concept is rejected by the respondent, whose perception is that the demands on men and women are equal.

**Men’s tendency to choose other men:** Linehan, Scullion and Walsh (2001) suggest that men holding upper level management positions have a (unintended) tendency to choose other men for expatriate assignments. According to Harris (2001; 1995), men’s informal perceptions of women’s suitability may lead to a tendency to “clone” themselves. Mrs Älvsäter-Thomasson supports these concepts, and means that the reason for men choosing other men is that this makes them feel confident in that things will turn out the way they want to; there will be no surprises.

**The estimations of people’s ability and women’s differing career patterns:** Women are likely to be disadvantaged by organisational practices that are used to estimate people’s ability and allocate jobs, considering their differing career patterns and initial choice of job, according to Harris (1995). This concept is supported by the respondent, who is of the opinion that men move faster within organisations, and also that women do not readily accept “tougher” jobs. However, Mrs Älvsäter-Thomasson adds that this situation is starting to change now.

**Dual-career/family issues:** Harris (1995) suggests that past job achievements and implicit career timetables might create pressure on both men and women not to take career breaks to follow their partners abroad. Mrs Älvsäter-Thomasson does not agree to this concept. She suggests that with the younger generation, things are changing to the benefit of women. The respondent supports Linehan and Scullion’s (2001b) statement that extended maternity leaves and career breaks might not be looked upon favourably by senior management. She refers to that the fast pace of today, especially for people with technical jobs, makes it difficult for people to get back on track again after a long absence.

Home-country senior managers often assume that married women will not be interested in international assignments because of their domestic responsibilities, especially if they have children (Linehan, Scullion & Walsh, 2001; Linehan and Scullion, 2001b). We find this con-
cept to be more supported than dismissed by Mrs Älvsäter-Thomasson, who mentions that such assumptions might also occur concerning married men who are fathers.

**Female Expatriates’ Perspective**

*Interest/willingness to take foreign assignments:* According to Adler (1994a) as well as Varma and Stroh (2001), women and men today are equally interested in international assignments, while Yurkiewicz and Rosen (1995) suggest that male managers are more receptive than female managers to expatriate assignments. Mrs Älvsäter-Thomasson is of the opinion that men and women are equally interested, thus supporting the first statement. Linehan and Scullion’s (2001a) statement that men and women differ in their willingness to work in specific locations is rejected by the respondent. She further states that she does not have any such considerations herself.

*Impact of perceived rewards:* The respondent supports Harris’s (1995) and Yurkiewicz and Rosen’s (1995) concept concerning the impact of perceived rewards (relocation package offered) from accepting international assignments. She does however not think that there are any differences between men and women concerning this, and states that “everybody is equally greedy”. Mrs Älvsäter-Thomasson however suggests the possibility that women might be more concerned with quality of life than in which country they can earn most money.

*Dual-career/family issues:* Linehan and Walsh (1999b) suggest that additional strains are placed on the female expatriate’s personal relationships when her partner becomes a trailing spouse. Mrs Älvsäter-Thomasson’s answer provides more support than rejection for this variable, since she suggests that this situation might be hard for the man but not for the woman. According to the respondent, the vast majority of trailing spouses are women and it might not be that easy to be the only man in this environment.

The respondent does not support Linehan and Walsh’s (1999b) suggestion that many women managers choose between an international career and family because of the extra strains and guilt feelings that women experience in balancing an international career with childrearing responsibilities. She does not think that this applies to women in general, and suggests that it varies from individual to individual. Mrs Älvsäter-Thomasson’s answer does not support the suggestion that this choice may have to be made because of the organisational and societal assumptions that a woman’s primary role is that of a mother (Linehan & Walsh, 1999b), even though she agrees to that such assumptions may still exist. Likewise, Mrs Älvsäter-Thomasson agrees to Linehan and Walsh’s (1999b) suggestion that career success is still based on a male model, even though she does not think that women choose between an international career and a family because of this. Therefore, this variable is also rejected.

*Role models:* The respondent’s answer supports Ruhe and Allen’s (1997) statement that the mobilization of role models at different organisational levels is one of the most important career support programs for women. She further suggests that even though role models are important regardless of their gender, female role models facilitate for women through the confirmation of behaviour and ideas. Mrs Älvsäter-Thomasson also supports the statement that a lack of female role models may lead to women missing opportunities for career advancement (Linehan & Walsh, 1999a).

*Mentoring:* Linehan et al. (2001), and Ruhe and Allen (1997) suggest that the influence of mentoring is one of the most important informal factors that may affect the participation of female managers in international management. The respondent strongly supports this concept,
and states that mentoring is “extremely important”. She further suggests that a mentor can inspire and give courage so that people dare to go on expatriate assignments. Mrs Ålvsäter-Thomasson’s perception is that there is no lack of male mentors for women. However, her answer gives some support to Linehan and Walsh’s (1999a) suggestion that women may not seek mentors. The respondent however also believes that there are as many young men as women who do not seek mentors. She dismisses the concept that mentors are not selecting female protégées (Linehan and Walsh, 1999a), since her perception is that male mentors are proud to have female protégées.

**Networking:** The respondent supports Linehan, Scullion and Walsh’s (2001) suggestion that female expatriates feel excluded from access to the business discussions and the useful contact making that takes place when male managers network informally. However, Mrs Älvsäter-Thomasson does not think that it is hard to gain access into these groups, but that it is rather an issue of identifying them and convincing the network members of that one could make a contribution. Linehan, Scullion and Walsh (2001) suggest that if women had more access to networking groups, they could be socialised in both the formal and informal norms of the organisation, which in turn may lead to that more women take part in international management. This concept is supported by the respondent, who also thinks that it can be good to have female networks, but that it is important to join male networks for career purposes.
6.4 Cross-Case Analysis

In this section, the data obtained from the six interviews in the three cases will be displayed through a cross-case analysis where the respondents’ perspectives are compared to each other. This is first done graphically by putting together all concepts and data in a table, and then narratively where the information in the table is analysed in text. The first cross-case analysis is conducted concerning concepts related to the first research question about the corporate perspective, while the second analysis concerns the second research question that deals with the female expatriates’ perspective. Before going into the analysis of the studied concepts, basic data from each case are presented in order to give an overview of some facts about the companies and expatriates. These data are displayed in the table below.

Table 6.1: Basic Company and Expatriate Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATA</th>
<th>Scania Company</th>
<th>Expatriate</th>
<th>SCA Hygiene Products Company</th>
<th>Expatriate</th>
<th>Volvo Car Corporation Company</th>
<th>Expatriate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of employees</td>
<td>Total: 28,600</td>
<td></td>
<td>15,000 (SCA Group: 39,800)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Total: 32,200 Sweden: 22,500</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sweden: 12,000</td>
<td></td>
<td>12,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ratio of female employees</td>
<td>14 %</td>
<td></td>
<td>27 %</td>
<td></td>
<td>23 %</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ratio of female managers</td>
<td>9 %</td>
<td></td>
<td>12 % (in the 200 highest positions)</td>
<td></td>
<td>0-11.5 % depending on level</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of expatriates</td>
<td>150</td>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
<td>500</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ratio of female expatriates</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>17 %</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positions in which expatriates are placed</td>
<td>Managerial (and some mechanics)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Primarily managerial</td>
<td></td>
<td>Different. Managerial and experts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentorship programs</td>
<td>Only for trainees</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Expatriate location       | Czech Republic, Denmark |            | Germany |            | Russia                   |            |
| Position while on assignment | Financial manager |            | Plant manager at tissue mill |          | Personnel director | |
| Age on departure          | 52 years               |            | 42 years |            | 48 years                |            |
| Time within the organisation on departure | 25 years (in the concern, came from VAG) | | 13 years |          | 20 years                |            |
| Family situation on assignment | Retired husband as trailing spouse | | Husband as trailing spouse, 8 year old daughter | | Married. Husband stayed in Sweden | |
| Current position          | Works part-time with organisational issues | | Expatriate assignment as plant manager at tissue mill | | Vice president for human resources in Sweden | |
| Has (had) mentor          | No                      |            | No      |            | Yes                      |            |
6.4.1 Corporate Perspective

The respondents’ answers are in the table below compressed to “support” or “rejection” of the tested concept/variable, except for the answers to the concept of open/closed and formal/informal selection processes. If the respondent has showed especially strong or just a weak support or rejection for a concept, this is marked with a + or – in the table.

*Table 6.2: Cross-Case Analysis of Research Question 1*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONCEPTS</th>
<th>Scania Company</th>
<th>Scania Expatriate</th>
<th>SCA Hygiene Products Company</th>
<th>SCA Hygiene Products Expatriate</th>
<th>Volvo Car Corporation Company</th>
<th>Volvo Car Corporation Expatriate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Companies’ hesitation:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Hesitation due to foreigners’ prejudice</td>
<td>Support</td>
<td>Support</td>
<td>Rejection</td>
<td>Rejection</td>
<td>Rejection</td>
<td>Rejection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasons for companies selecting males over females:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Men’s greater qualifications</td>
<td>Rejection</td>
<td>Rejection (+)</td>
<td>Rejection (+)</td>
<td>Rejection (+)</td>
<td>Rejection (+)</td>
<td>Rejection (+)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Women’s inadaptability</td>
<td>Rejection</td>
<td>Rejection (+)</td>
<td>Rejection (+)</td>
<td>Rejection (+)</td>
<td>Rejection (+)</td>
<td>Rejection (+)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selection processes:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Open / closed</td>
<td>Open and closed</td>
<td>Open and closed</td>
<td>Closed (primarily)</td>
<td>Closed</td>
<td>Closed</td>
<td>Open and closed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Formal / informal</td>
<td>Formal</td>
<td>Formal</td>
<td>Informal</td>
<td>Informal</td>
<td>Formal</td>
<td>Formal and informal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Women have to ask</td>
<td>Rejection</td>
<td>Support</td>
<td>Support (–)</td>
<td>Support (–)</td>
<td>Support (–)</td>
<td>Support (–)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women’s qualifications:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Women need more qualifications etc.</td>
<td>Rejection</td>
<td>Support</td>
<td>Rejection</td>
<td>Support</td>
<td>Support</td>
<td>Rejection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men’s tendency to choose other men:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The estimations of people’s ability and women’s differing career patterns:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Women’s differing career patterns = disadvantage</td>
<td>Uncertain</td>
<td>Rejection</td>
<td>Rejection</td>
<td>Rejection</td>
<td>Rejection</td>
<td>Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dual-career/family issues:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Pressure not to take breaks</td>
<td>Support</td>
<td>Support</td>
<td>Support</td>
<td>Support</td>
<td>Support</td>
<td>Rejection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Maternity leaves and career breaks = negative</td>
<td>Rejection</td>
<td>Support</td>
<td>Rejection</td>
<td>Support</td>
<td>Support</td>
<td>Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Married women not interested</td>
<td>Support (–)</td>
<td>Rejection</td>
<td>Rejection</td>
<td>Support</td>
<td>Rejection</td>
<td>Support (–)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Companies’ hesitation: The concept concerning companies’ hesitation to send women on international assignments due to assumptions that foreigners’ prejudice will make them ineffective, is rejected by all respondents in SCA and Volvo CC. However, both Scania respondents support this variable. The company respondent at Scania refers to that the health and security of the expatriate and his/her family always is taken into consideration, and mentions Saudi Arabia as a country where women’s mobility is restricted. On the other hand, the female expatriate respondent states that the largest prejudice is at home in Sweden. It can also be noted that both company respondents at SCA and Volvo CC thought that these issues might be relevant for corporations operating in Arab countries.

Reasons for companies selecting males over females: The two reasons for companies selecting males over females are rejected by all six respondents. None of the cases show any support for the concept that men have greater qualifications for international assignment, nor did anyone support the notion of women’s relative inability to adapt to the challenging requirements of foreign assignments. It is noteworthy that the three female expatriates dismissed this concept even more strongly than the company respondents did, as they perceived women to be more adaptive to foreign assignments than men.

Selection processes: Regarding the first two concepts concerning the selection processes, both the company respondent and the expatriate respondent at Scania defined the process as formal, with both open and closed features. Also in the SCA case, both respondents gave the same definition of the process, namely closed and informal. However, Volvo CC showed some deviation between the two respondents regarding the definition of the selection process, since the expatriate respondent perceived it as a mixture of all four categories, while the company respondent identified the process as primarily closed and formal. In summary, the dominating categories in the three researched companies are closed and formal, with SCA as the only company that admittedly uses informal processes.

Five of the six respondents supported the concept of expatriate candidates being well known to the selectors. The Scania company respondent was the only one who rejected this. Likewise, he was the only respondent who did not support the variable suggesting that if women do not ask to be included in the selection process for international assignments, they might not be considered at all. However, three of the five respondents supporting this concept showed only weak support. Some of them mentioned that men also need to ask, and that women have to make themselves more “visible”.

Women’s qualifications: The concept stating that female managers need to be more qualified, more ambitious, and more mobile than male managers are in order to be selected for expatriate assignments, received ambiguous replies. Two of the company respondents rejected this, while two of the expatriate respondents supported the concept. Interestingly, the two respondents in each case contradicted each other.

Men’s tendency to choose other men: The ambiguity shown above is non-existent in the variable suggesting that men holding upper level management positions have a (unconscious) tendency to choose other men for expatriate assignments, or actually “clone” themselves. Here, all six respondents showed support for the concept. Some of them stressed that this tendency is unconscious, while some just stated that such tendencies do exist. In addition, it was also suggested that women tend to choose women as well.
The estimations of people’s ability and women’s differing career patterns: Organisational practices that are used to estimate people’s ability and allocate jobs (and training) are said to disadvantage women due to their differing career patterns and initial choice of job. This concept is rejected by four of the respondents. One is uncertain, while the only respondent showing support, a female expatriate, mentioned that she thought that this situation is changing. Therefore, this variable is mainly dismissed.

Dual-career/family issues: Five of the six respondents support the concept suggesting that past job achievements and career timetables might create pressure on both men and women not to take career breaks to follow their partners abroad. The SCA company respondent argued that it might be difficult for a person who has taken such a break to make the same career as someone who has not taken any break. Moreover, the SCA expatriate respondent suggested that this pressure is more common among men, as they would see such a break as a loss of time. The only respondent who disagreed to this concept was the expatriate at Volvo CC, who was of the opinion that with the younger generation, things are changing to the benefit of women.

The variable stating that extended maternity leaves and career breaks might not be looked upon favourably by senior management received ambiguous answers with equal numbers of support and rejection. Within Scania, this was rejected by the company respondent but supported by the female expatriate. Both SCA respondents rejected the variable, while both respondents at Volvo CC supported it. However, Volvo CC offers an extra compensation for parental leave, in order to facilitate for parents to share this period of absence, thus shortening the leave. Among the three respondents that supported this concept, it was suggested that absence is never appreciated, but also that the fast pace of today makes it difficult for people to get “back on track” again after a long absence.

Home country senior managers often assume that married women will not be interested in foreign assignments, especially if they have children, according to the last concept studied in research question one. This variable also received ambiguous answers; in fact, in none of the three cases, the respondents had the same opinion. Two of the three company respondents rejected this concept, and the third gave only weak support. The female expatriates gave some more support – one rejected the variable, and one gave it weak support. Overall, we perceive this variable to be more rejected than supported.

Overview of research question 1: When comparing the overall perspectives of company and female expatriate respondents, we find that the respondents within Scania and Volvo CC show a higher frequency of difference in perspectives. The Scania respondents are displaying different opinions in six of the 13 tested variables, while the Volvo CC respondents show a clear difference in four concepts, and a smaller difference regarding the definition of the selection process. In contrast, the two respondents at SCA had the same perspective on all concepts except the variable stating that women need to be more qualified in order to be selected. Regarding the views of the three company respondents, it can be noted that SCA and Volvo CC have the same opinion concerning all concepts but two (with the exception of the first two variables of the selection process, which refers to company specific policies). The views of the company respondent at Scania however differ from the other two respondents in five variables. Finally, the female expatriate respondents’ perspectives show a high frequency of correspondence between each other. The largest deviation is found at Volvo CC, where the expatriate respondent’s views differ from the other two in three variables.
In Table 6.3 below, the respondents’ answers are summarised in order to provide an overview of the similarities and differences in opinions between the company respondents as a group and the female expatriates as a group.

Table 6.3: Overview of Support and Rejection – Research Question 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Companies</th>
<th>Expatriates</th>
<th>Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2 rejection, 1 support</td>
<td>2 rejection, 1 support</td>
<td>=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>3 rejection</td>
<td>3 rejection</td>
<td>=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>3 rejection</td>
<td>3 rejection</td>
<td>=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>4-5 not comparable</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>1 rejection, 2 support</td>
<td>3 support</td>
<td>Expatriates more support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>1 rejection, 2 support</td>
<td>3 support</td>
<td>Expatriates more support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>2 rejection, 1 support</td>
<td>1 rejection, 2 support</td>
<td>Expatriates support, companies rejection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>3 support</td>
<td>3 support</td>
<td>=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>2 rejection, 1 uncertain</td>
<td>2 rejection, 1 support</td>
<td>Similar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>3 support</td>
<td>1 rejection, 2 support</td>
<td>Companies more support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>2 rejection, 1 support</td>
<td>1 rejection, 2 support</td>
<td>Expatriates support, companies rejection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>2 rejection, 1 support</td>
<td>1 rejection, 2 support</td>
<td>Expatriates support, companies rejection</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Concepts where the only difference in answers between company and expatriate respondents is that one respondent is uncertain, have been estimated as having “similar” results.)

In five of the variables, the company respondents and the expatriate respondents answered in the same way, that is, they show an equal frequency of support or rejection. However, female expatriates show stronger support for two concepts, and in three instances, they support variables that are rejected by the company respondents. Only concerning the pressure not to take career breaks do the company respondents’ views give more support to the concept than the expatriates’ views. Even though these results should not be measured quantitatively due to the low number of respondents, such comparisons give an overview of tendencies to differing opinions between company respondents and female expatriates, which in itself might contribute to explain the low ratio of women among Swedish MNC expatriates.

6.4.2 Female Expatriates’ Perspective

The respondents’ answers are outlined in Table 6.4 on the following page. This is done in the same manner as in Table 6.2 in the previous section. Regarding some concepts, it is not possible to compress the answers to “support” or “rejection”. In those instances, the answers have been shortened down to express their essence, thus making them comparable.
Table 6.4: Cross-Case Analysis of Research Question 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONCEPTS</th>
<th>Scania Company</th>
<th>Expatriate Men more receptive</th>
<th>SCA Hygiene Products Company</th>
<th>Expatriate Equal interest but men more able to accept</th>
<th>Volvo Car Corporation Company</th>
<th>Expatriate Men more receptive</th>
<th>Interest/willingness to take foreign assignments:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Equal interest or men more receptive</td>
<td>Equal interest</td>
<td>Men more receptive</td>
<td>Equal interest</td>
<td>Equal interest but men more able to accept</td>
<td>Men more receptive</td>
<td>Equal interest</td>
<td>Support (–)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Difference in willingness to specific locations</td>
<td>Support</td>
<td>Support</td>
<td>Support</td>
<td>Support (+)</td>
<td>Support</td>
<td>Rejection</td>
<td>Rejection (–)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact of perceived rewards:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Motivations impacted by rewards</td>
<td>Uncertain</td>
<td>Support</td>
<td>Support</td>
<td>Support</td>
<td>Support</td>
<td>Support</td>
<td>Support (–)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Gender differences</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>No significant</td>
<td>No significant</td>
<td>No significant</td>
<td>Some differences</td>
<td>No significant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dual-career/family issues:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Additional strains on relationship</td>
<td>Rejection</td>
<td>Support</td>
<td>Support</td>
<td>Support</td>
<td>Support</td>
<td>Support</td>
<td>Support (+)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Choice between international career and family</td>
<td>Support</td>
<td>Support</td>
<td>Support</td>
<td>Support</td>
<td>Rejection</td>
<td>Support</td>
<td>Rejection (–)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Primary role as a mother</td>
<td>Rejection</td>
<td>Rejection</td>
<td>Support</td>
<td>Rejection</td>
<td>Support</td>
<td>Rejection</td>
<td>Rejection (–)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Career success based on male model</td>
<td>Rejection</td>
<td>Support</td>
<td>Support (–)</td>
<td>Rejection</td>
<td>Support</td>
<td>Rejection</td>
<td>Rejection (–)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role models:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentoring:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Importance of affecting participation of women</td>
<td>Support</td>
<td>Support</td>
<td>Support (–)</td>
<td>Uncertain</td>
<td>Support</td>
<td>Support</td>
<td>Support (+)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Women do not seek mentors</td>
<td>Uncertain</td>
<td>Rejection</td>
<td>Uncertain</td>
<td>Uncertain</td>
<td>Rejection</td>
<td>Support</td>
<td>Rejection (–)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Networking:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. More access = more women as expatriates</td>
<td>Rejection (–)</td>
<td>Support</td>
<td>Rejection (–)</td>
<td>Support</td>
<td>Support</td>
<td>Support</td>
<td>Support</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Interest/willingness to take foreign assignments: The question of whether men and women are equally interested and willing to take foreign assignments, or if men are more receptive, received quite different answers. Four of the six respondents perceive women to be equally interested, but both of the SCA respondents thought that even though women are interested, they are less able to accept offers of expatriate assignments due to family issues. Of the two respondents who suggested that men are more receptive, the Volvo CC company respondent also referred to family issues, as he thought that this seems to make women less interested. The female expatriate at Scania on the other hand suggested that the reason for men being more receptive was that they have a larger self-confidence, which makes them less hesitant.

Five of the six respondents agreed to that there are differences between men and women when it comes to working in specific locations. Two of the company respondents suggested that women might consider the location more than men when it comes to for example the environment for children and the country’s legal system. The company respondent at SCA mentioned that women might be less likely to accept assignments in “tough” locations. Two of the female expatriates mentioned Arab countries as examples of places where a gender difference in willingness might appear. The only respondent who rejected this variable was the female expatriate at Volvo CC, who herself had been on an assignment in Russia, a country that was perceived as “tough” by both SCA respondents.

Impact of perceived rewards: All respondents except the Scania company respondent (who was uncertain about this) thought that motivations to go on international assignments are impacted by the perceived rewards, or relocation package offered, from accepting an assignment. There does not seem to be any significant differences between men and women regarding the impact of rewards, according to five of the respondents. The company respondent at Volvo CC suggested that men put more emphasis on a higher salary, while women see to other things, e.g. how the family will be affected by the foreign assignment. Several of the other respondents mentioned similar factors, but they did not perceive these differences to be significant.

Dual-career/family issues: The variable stating that additional strains are placed on the female expatriate’s personal relationships when her partner becomes a trailing spouse, was supported by five of the six respondents. It was suggested that these strains are related to the loneliness that a man might experience as a trailing spouse, since most partners in this situation are women. In addition, such strains might be caused by men’s difficulty to accept the role as a trailing spouse, according to the SCA company respondent. The issue of whether women choose between an international career and a family is supported by all company respondents, but only by one expatriate respondent, who refers to that women today might choose to start families later because they want to start their careers first. All female expatriates rejected the concept stating that women might make this choice because of organisational and societal assumptions that a woman’s primary role is that of a mother. However, this was supported by two company respondents, even though one of these only showed weak support. Regarding the variable stating that women choose between international career and family because of career success being based on a male model, the respondents did not have the same opinion within any of the three cases. Two of the expatriate respondents rejected this concept, while two of the company respondents supported it.

Role models: There was strong support for the suggestion that the mobilization of role models at different organisational levels is one of the most important career support programs for women. All respondents agreed to this, and some of them also suggested that role models for
women do not necessarily have to be female. Another comment was that female role models facilitate for women since they confirm their behaviour and ideas. The next concept related to role models was also supported by all respondents. That is, everyone agreed to that a lack of female role models might lead to women missing opportunities for career advancement.

**Mentoring:** Regarding the influence of mentoring on the participation of women in international management, five of the six respondents showed support. The only respondent that did not support this variable was the female expatriate at SCA, who was uncertain about this issue since she had no experience from having a mentor. The expatriate respondent at Scania had not had any mentor either, but was still quite sure of the positive effects of mentoring. It can also be noted that the only female expatriate who had been using a mentor (and in fact also had been mentoring others), showed the strongest support for this concept. The company respondent at Scania also considered mentoring as an important factor, even though the answers from the two Scania respondents revealed that the company currently is not using mentoring, except within its trainee programs.

The responses to the question of whether part of the reason for the low number of female expatriates might be that women are not seeking mentors, are so vague and ambiguous that the concept basically must be rejected. The female expatriate at Volvo CC, who showed some support for this variable, also added that many young men are not seeking mentors either. However, the suggestion that mentors may not select female protégées is clearly rejected, since all respondents agreed on that this was not the case. Several of them also thought that male mentors in fact seem to be more proud of being mentor to a woman than to a man.

**Networking:** All respondents supported the variable stating that female expatriates feel excluded from access to the business discussions and useful contact making that takes place when male managers network informally. Some differences appear regarding the last variable tested in research question 2, namely that if women had more access to networking groups, their socialisation into formal and informal norms could lead to that more women take part in international management. This concept was supported by all three female expatriates, but only by one of the company respondents. The company respondents at Scania and SCA, who showed more rejection than support for this variable, suggested respectively that more access does not automatically lead to gained trust, and that the lack of access to such networks is not a significant barrier.

**Overview of research question 2:** The concepts in this research question evoked a higher degree of differences between respondents within each company than the first research question did. Company and expatriate respondents show different views on between five and seven concepts in each case. However, the three female expatriates seem to have the same perspective to a large extent, since their answers differed very little from each other, except concerning the concept of women not seeking mentors, which received quite vague answers in general. The three company respondents also held quite similar views about the tested variables, since the respondent whose answers deviated the most from the others’ only did so in four of the 15 concepts.

In Table 6.5 on the following page, the respondents’ answers are summarised in order to provide an overview of the similarities and differences in opinions between the company respondents as a group and the female expatriates as a group.
Table 6.5: Overview of Support and Rejection – Research Question 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Companies</th>
<th>Expatriates</th>
<th>Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2 equal, 1 men more receptive</td>
<td>2 equal, 1 men more receptive</td>
<td>=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>3 support</td>
<td>1 rejection, 2 support</td>
<td>Companies more support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1 uncertain, 2 support</td>
<td>3 support</td>
<td>Similar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>2 no significant, 1 some differences</td>
<td>3 no significant</td>
<td>Similar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>1 rejection, 2 support</td>
<td>3 support</td>
<td>Expatriates more support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>3 support</td>
<td>2 rejection, 1 support</td>
<td>Companies support, expatriates rejection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>1 rejection, 2 support</td>
<td>3 rejection</td>
<td>Companies support, expatriates rejection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>1 rejection, 2 support</td>
<td>2 rejection, 1 support</td>
<td>Companies support, expatriates rejection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>3 support</td>
<td>3 support</td>
<td>=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>3 support</td>
<td>3 support</td>
<td>=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>3 support</td>
<td>2 support, 1 uncertain</td>
<td>Similar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>1 rejection, 2 uncertain</td>
<td>1 rejection, 1 uncertain, 1 support</td>
<td>Ambiguous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>3 rejection</td>
<td>3 rejection</td>
<td>=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>3 support</td>
<td>3 support</td>
<td>=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>2 rejection, 1 support</td>
<td>3 support</td>
<td>Expatriates support, companies rejection</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Concepts where the only difference in answers between company and expatriate respondents is that one respondent is uncertain, have been estimated as having “similar” results.)

In eight of the tested concepts, the company respondents and the expatriate respondents answered in exactly the same, or a very similar, way. But in contrast to research question one, company respondents tend to show more support. They support three variables that the expatriates reject, and in one instance, they show more support than the expatriates do. There is only one concept that is supported by expatriates but rejected by companies, namely the last variable, which states that women’s increased access to networks would lead to more women in international management. Expatriate respondents also show more support than company respondents concerning the statement of additional strains being placed on female expatriates’ relationships when the partner becomes a trailing spouse.

The empirical data presented in Chapter 5 have now been compared to the conceptual framework outlined in Chapter 3. The analysis started by data reduction in a within-case analysis of each case. Then, the data was displayed through cross-case analyses of the two research questions. Now that the data have been analysed, findings can be outlined and conclusions can be drawn. All findings, conclusions and implications will be presented in the following chapter.
7. FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

In this final chapter, the research questions that were posed in Chapter 1 will be answered by expressing our findings. Thereby, the purpose of the study will be fulfilled. First, a general discussion regarding issues that have arisen during the study will be presented. Then, each of the two research questions will be answered in separate sections. Specific conclusions will be drawn with basis in the empirical data, the analysis and the findings. Finally, implications for practitioners, for theory, and for further research will be suggested. It must be noted that the conclusions are derived from this study’s limited sample of companies within the pulp and paper, automotive, and heavy transport industries. Hence, due to the qualitative character of the study, the findings and conclusions are not generalisable. However, the specific conclusions presented in connection to each research question can be transferred into hypotheses that may be tested quantitatively and thus become generalisable.

7.1 General Discussion

This general discussion will point out some issues that we have encountered during our research. Many of them were included in our conceptual framework, and were therefore specifically asked about. However, the respondents also made additional comments and suggestions during the interviews. We perceive many of these issues to be valuable in contributing to gaining a deeper understanding of the reasons behind the low ratio of Swedish female expatriates, especially since they were frequently mentioned by different respondents. Therefore, we want to raise some of these issues to a general discussion before focusing specifically on the findings derived from the research questions and the conceptual framework. In addition, since many of the findings regarding the corporate and the female expatriate perspective are intertwined, we want to start this chapter by discussing them jointly.

The studied companies are operating within traditional, male-dominated industries, where the total number of female employees is rather low. However, we do not think that the specific amount of women within the organisations is of any special importance, but it is their ratio on employee and managerial levels in comparison with their ratio in expatriate manager positions that is of interest to our study. Two of the studied companies had very few female expatriates in comparison with the ratio of female managers, and, as could be expected, even fewer compared to the ratio of female employees. The third company, SCA, was however showing a substantially higher share of female expatriates – 17 percent is actually a higher figure than in any of the international studies referred to in this thesis. One could speculate in whether this could be dependent on branch or product. The business area in which our SCA respondents are active, Hygiene Products, has a large product range aimed for women, even though the female expatriate in our case was not working with feminine hygiene products. However, in comparison with the total share of female employees and the share of women managers (in the 200 highest positions), the ratio of female expatriates is still unusually high. This points to that the company might be more active than the other two in identifying capable female managers and offering them expatriate assignments.

What factors, then, could explain the low ratio of Swedish female expatriates? First, we have to reflect on the fact that all respondents spontaneously mentioned the importance of dual-career and family issues. Factors related to dual careers and family situation were emphasised by all respondents as the most frequent barriers to women’s participation in international management. Even though it is not uncommon that men also reject offers about expatriate assignments due to the above-mentioned reasons, women clearly seem to be more affected.
The reasons for this are multiple. For example, it is still much more common that female managers have partners who also are making a career, than vice versa. It is usually harder for a woman to convince her husband to move abroad with her, than for a man to convince his wife to follow as a trailing spouse. Women also seem to carry a larger responsibility for child rearing, not just during the children’s infancy. It seems like the total responsibility for the family situation still lies heavier on women. This could be shown by the requests about flexible work hours that women make more frequently than men, and also by the respondents’ perceptions that women consider the “family friendliness” of the specific location more than men before accepting an assignment.

Some of the respondents pointed to that the traditional values that are shaping the perceptions of women’s role in the family, the organisation, and the society are changing with the younger generation that is entering the workplace. Evidence for this ongoing change could be seen in men’s increased partaking in parental leave, and the fact that women to an increasing extent choose to have children later. The latter points to that women seem to be trying to establish themselves in their professional lives before they start to raise a family. In summary, we can conclude that these changes might be altering the traditional image of the man as the family’s breadwinner, which in turn might affect women’s participation in management and expatriation. However, there is not much evidence that these changes are proceeding at an especially fast pace. Organisations can of course try to affect this situation, for example by the usage of supportive systems for parents, such as Volvo CC’s extra compensation for parental leave, which facilitates for parents to share the period of absence. In addition, it was suggested that companies more easily give women leave of absence to follow their men abroad, while men might be hesitant to even ask about such leaves. Therefore, it might be necessary for companies to alter the image of a successful career as being linear, uninterrupted and based on men.

Factors contributing to the low ratio of Swedish female expatriates could also be found within organisations’ selection procedures. There seems to be a strong domination of informal mechanisms that together may affect the selection toward a high level of subjectivity. First, the common practice of using closed selection processes raises the question that the field of expatriate candidates is limited to those that are already well known to the selectors. Since there is an established tendency of men unconsciously choosing other men, women are likely to be overlooked because the absolute majority of managerial positions that involve the selection and recruitment of expatriates are held by men. In addition, women seem to have a tendency to hold a lower profile than men, which further decreases their chances to be selected. The need for women’s increased visibility is mentioned by all three female expatriates, and also by one of the company respondents. Finally, male networks that are difficult to identify and gain access to may in combination with all the above-mentioned factors work to enhance the barriers that seem to restrain the possibilities for female managers to pursue an international career. It could be noted here that two of the female expatriates in this study were actually selected through a closed process, which may seem to contradict one of the described factors. However, these two women had been working within the concerns for 25 and 13 years respectively at the time when they were offered the assignments. One of them was very well known to the selector, while the other was well known within the organisation and had very good references from (and networks with) her previous supervisors who had been climbing within the company.

The informal nature of the described factors make it difficult to point out exactly what could be done in terms of organisational policies in order to reduce the barriers for women to attain expatriate positions. When occurring one by one, these factors might not necessarily result in
significant obstacles, but taken together, they could make up a substantial part of the reasons to the low participation of women in international management. The only variable that can be connected to formal company policies is the usage of closed selection, which then could be replaced with an open selection process. However, as shown by the case studies in this thesis, an open process does not automatically increase the number of female expatriates, but at least it makes more women aware of that such positions exist. It must be noted that we are not suggesting that conscious discrimination is taking place, and that we do not think that companies should place women in expatriate positions with the purpose to fill a quota. It is simply a matter of equal opportunity for application or offers. If women then choose not to apply, or to reject offers about expatriate assignments, due to for example family issues or dual-career problems, companies cannot be held responsible – unless their policies are making it more difficult for female managers to bring their families, which does not seem to be the case in Swedish MNCs.

If there are restraining factors, there should of course also be prompting factors. Our findings suggest that networks, mentoring, and role models may have a positive impact on the participation of women in international management. Even though these occurrences could have an influence one by one, it can be assumed that their joint impact would be stronger. Regarding the importance of gender in these different variables, we can conclude that the following would have the largest positive affect on the ratio of female expatriates: Role models are preferably female, while mentors could be of either sex – the important thing is having a mentor. When it comes to networks, our findings suggest that male networks may help women to advance upwards – and outwards, when aiming for expatriate assignments – while the primary benefit of female networks might be to provide support on the existing hierarchical level. Possibly, the best situation would be to have different networks for different purposes.

This general discussion has dealt with findings derived from the empirical data as well as the analysis. Some of these issues were beyond the scope of the conceptual framework, but were still considered to be of value. In the following two sections, the research questions originally posed in Chapter 1 will be answered by expressing our findings and conclusions.

7.2 How are the Reasons for the Low Ratio of Women Among Swedish MNC Expatriates Described from a Corporate Perspective?

Among the three studied companies, only one showed explicit hesitation to sending women on international assignments because of assumptions that foreigners’ prejudice will make them ineffective as expatriate managers. However, the two company respondents who did not perceive that any hesitation caused by such assumptions existed within their companies, added that it is understandable if corporations that are active in Arab countries hesitate to send women there. The female expatriate who stated that this kind of hesitation existed within her company meant that the largest prejudice was found at home in Sweden. None of the three female expatriates had experienced this kind of prejudice from locals on their assignments, despite the fact that they all work within traditional, male-dominated industries.

With basis in these findings and suggestions from our respondents, we think that Adler’s (1994a) study, from which the concept of companies’ hesitation was derived, shows a weakness due to the focus on South East Asian countries. Adler (1994a) was able to dismiss the foundation for this kind of hesitation by stating that women expatriates are seen as foreigners first and women second, thus concluding that foreigners do not have prejudice that hinders female expatriates on their assignments. However, five of the six respondents in our study
have pointed to Arab countries as likely to be difficult for women, first in connection to this first tested variable, and then concerning gender differences in willingness to work in specific locations. Therefore, we find that it is not unreasonable to assume that companies might hesitate to send female expatriates to some of these countries where women’s mobility is perceived to be restricted.

Two concepts connected to the first research question were rejected by all six respondents, namely that men have greater qualifications and that women are unable to adapt to the challenging requirements of foreign assignments. Therefore, none of these variables can be used as a reason for the low ratio of women among Swedish MNC expatriates. In fact, all of the female expatriates were of the opinion that women are more adaptive to foreign assignments than men due to better interpersonal skills.

Regarding factors in selection processes, we have found that closed processes dominate among the three studied companies. In two of the three cases, this is combined with formal factors. This means that selectors are assessing candidates against formal criteria, but also that the selectors handpick the potential expatriates, thus risking missing potential suitable candidates. In addition, Scania also uses open/formal processes, which is said to the most likely combination to produce equality of opportunity in selection. Even if this is true in theory, we can state that Scania in fact has the lowest ratio of female expatriates among the researched companies. Moreover, the only company (SCA) that admittedly uses a combination of closed and informal systems, which is supposed to be the worst situation for equality of opportunity, has by far the highest ratio of female expatriates as well as female managers.

The common usage of closed selection, in combination with the fact that candidates usually are well known to the selectors, makes it important for female managers who want to attain expatriate assignments to become more visible within the organisation. This is also connected to the issue of women having to ask to be included in the selection process for international assignments, if they are to be considered at all. Five of the six respondents were of the opinion that women need to be active in the sense that they must ask to be included. Moreover, even though the concept of female managers needing to be more qualified in order to be selected for expatriate assignments was supported only by half of the respondents (of which one was a company respondent), this might be a factor that also is related to women’s lower visibility in organisations. Hence, we do not suggest that women are consciously discriminated, but that they might be overlooked due to their tendency to hold a lower profile than men.

All respondents thought that there is a tendency for men to choose other men for expatriate assignments, or even select “clones” of themselves. This tendency, in combination with the domination of closed selection processes, may create a significant barrier to the participation of women in international management. The managerial positions that involve the selection and recruitment of expatriates are primarily held by men. According to Linehan and Scullion (2001b), between 85 and 95 percent of international managers are currently men. This is also indicated by the fact that all of the company respondents in this study turned out to be male. This situation implies that when male managers select expatriate candidates, they unconsciously tend to choose people who are similar to themselves, which limits the candidate pool to other men. In addition, a closed selection does not give women the opportunity to apply for such positions unless they are handpicked.

Regarding the supposed disadvantage that women may have due to their differing career patterns and initial choice of job, we can conclude that this does not seem to be a problem, and
therefore it would not negatively affect the ratio of Swedish female expatriates. A factor that may have such an affect could be the pressure not to take career breaks to follow partners abroad, which seems to be experienced by both men and women. Since dual-career couples are increasingly common in Sweden as well as in other countries, this kind of pressure makes it more difficult for people to accept foreign assignments if they want their partner to follow them abroad. Most likely, it would be difficult to convince a working partner to take a career break if he/she feels that this would affect his/her own career negatively. This situation is more likely to affect female managers who want to go on international assignments than men, since women more often have men who are making a career for themselves, than men have women who are making careers.

This issue is related to the supposed tendency of senior management to look unfavourably upon extended maternity leaves and career breaks. Even though unambiguous support for this concept was only found in one case (Volvo CC), it is worth noting that this company actually tries to shorten periods of absence by offering employees an extra compensation for parental leave in order to encourage parents to share this period. Finally, the assumption that married women will not be interested in foreign assignments, especially if they have children, does not seem to affect the participation of women in international management, since the responses to this concept were too ambiguous and weak.

In general, we have found that the three female expatriate respondents had relatively similar views, as well as the three company respondents tended to hold similar opinions. When overviewing the cross-case analysis (as previously shown in Table 6.3), there are tendencies of female expatriates showing stronger support for the tested concepts connected to research question one. This implies that female expatriates perceive that there are certain assumptions within organisations, while these assumptions are not perceived to exist by human resource managers to the same extent. Interestingly, the company that has the by far highest ratio of female expatriates, SCA, also shows a very high correspondence between the two respondents’ perspectives – only one variable resulted in different answers in that case.

Thus, with the basis in the analysis and our findings, we have arrived at the following specific conclusions regarding research question one:

- Companies might hesitate to send female expatriates to countries where women’s mobility is perceived to be restricted
- The predominant usage of closed selection processes implies that selectors risk missing potential suitable female candidates for expatriate positions
- Expatriate candidates are usually well known to selectors, which in combination with the common usage of closed selection makes it important for female managers who want to attain expatriate assignments to become more visible within the organisation
- Women need to ask to be included in the selection process for international assignments
- Male managers’ unconscious tendency to choose other men for expatriate assignments may create a barrier to the participation of women in international management
- Both men and women seem to feel a pressure not to take career breaks to follow partners abroad. This may hinder female managers from accepting foreign assignments, since their partners are less likely to be willing (and possibly able) to take a career break
- The perspectives of human resource managers and female expatriates seem to differ regarding the reasons for the low ratio of women among Swedish MNC expatriates as described from a corporate perspective. There are tendencies toward female expatriates perceiving that there are certain assumptions within organisations, while these assumptions are not perceived to exist by human resource managers to the same extent
7.3 How are the Reasons for the Low Ratio of Women Among Swedish MNC Expatriates Described from the Female Expatriates’ Perspective?

Our findings suggest that even though women probably are as interested in expatriate assignments as men, women’s tendency to consider family issues more might give the impression that they are less interested. In addition, the concept connected to the first research question concerning women having to ask to be included in the selection process and the finding that women tend to be less visible in organisations, enhances the necessity for women to work more actively and to “promote” themselves so that companies recognize their interest more clearly. However, gender differences in willingness to accept foreign assignments seem to appear when taking specific locations into consideration. It seems like women give priority to less “tough” locations where the environment does not place too many strains on women’s mobility and on her family and children. This can for example involve that women consider the country’s legal system, what the schools and housing are like, and how women and children are treated in the society.

Regarding the impact of rewards on motivations, we have found that both men’s and women’s decisions to accept expatriate assignments are influenced by the relocation package offered. There does however not seem to be any substantial gender differences in motivations from rewards, even though it was suggested that men emphasise a higher salary more, while women put more emphasis on quality of life; that is, benefits that facilitate for the family to have a more comfortable life, rather than purely monetary rewards. These differences are not large enough to be perceived to affect the ratio of Swedish female expatriates.

The additional strains that are likely to be placed on the female expatriate’s personal relationships when her partner becomes a trailing spouse, might be a factor that contributes to that women reject offers about, or do not apply for, expatriate assignments. Since most of the trailing spouses are female, a man in this situation would probably be more exposed to loneliness and isolation. Possibly, men also experience difficulties in accepting the role as a trailing spouse. This is connected to the traditional image of an expatriate manager as a man bringing his wife as a trailing partner.

It is possible that female managers feel that they have to choose between an international career and a family. It seems to be difficult to convince husbands to take career breaks to follow them abroad, and it could also be troublesome to bring children to a new environment, at least when they are in a certain age. However, our findings suggest that this choice might be temporary, since women who want an international career might adjust their career patterns with the point where they start to raise a family. This could be shown by the fact that Swedish women today choose to have children later in life. Therefore, it is possible that women who choose between an international career and a family only do so at some point in life, which means that the choice is not necessarily a definite one.

We have found that even if women actually do choose between an international career and a family, it cannot be related to organisational and societal assumptions that a woman’s primary role is that of a mother. Neither do our findings support the idea that this choice would be made because of career success still being based on a male model, even though several of the respondents thought that the linear career pattern and hierarchical climbing that is associated with success in fact is based on a male model.
A factor that seems to have an impact on the ratio of female expatriates is the existence of role models. Our case studies showed that role models are important as career support, and that a lack of female role models actually may lead to women missing opportunities for career advancement. This also implies that a lack of role models may lead to that fewer women accept or try to attain expatriate assignments, since there is no one there to look up to. Even though male expatriates also can be used as role models, it is more important for a female manager to have women role models, especially if these women have managed to combine a foreign assignment and a family. Without these female role models, there is no predecessor who can give women the motivation and inspiration to strive toward an international career. If women cannot identify themselves with someone who is similar to them, they might start to believe that they will not ever be selected for an international assignment, which results in that they do not even try to pursue international positions. Thus, the lack of role models may lead to self-fulfilling prophecies.

Closely related to the importance of role models is mentoring, which is seen as an important factor when it comes to affecting the participation of women in international management. A mentor can be seen as a role model and a career support, due to his or her higher position and long experience. Our findings do not give any support to the notion that women are not seeking mentors, which means that this could not be seen as a reason to the low ratio of female expatriates. Neither can part of the reason for the low participation of women in international management be explained by that mentors do not select female protégées. The case studies clearly show that male mentors are perceived to be very likely to select women as protégées. It can be noted that even though we just used the term “mentors” without specifying gender when asking about this concept, the respondents spontaneously talked about mentors as being male. We can therefore assume that the majority of the mentors available today are men. However, the gender of the mentor does not seem to be of any importance when it comes to his or her function as career support. The important issue is that having a mentor in the first place may facilitate for female managers to attain expatriate positions.

The findings from our case studies show that female managers are very likely to feel excluded from access to informal male networks, where male managers discuss business and make useful contacts. This lack of access to male networks might in fact adversely influence the ratio of female expatriates. It was suggested that the hardest part for women might not be to gain access, but to identify these networks in the first place, which can be attributed to their informal nature. When a woman is able to identify male networks, she will however not automatically be invited; she has to gain trust from the network members and convince them that she could make a contribution. If women are able to gain access to such networks, they could be socialised into both the formal and informal norms of the organisation, which is seen to facilitate for them in attaining expatriate positions.

A general finding regarding research question two is that in similarity with the first research question, the three female expatriate respondents tended to hold similar opinions, just as the three company respondents had relatively similar views. The overview of the cross-case analysis (provided in Table 6.5) showed some deviations between the expatriates’ and the company respondents’ perspectives. This implies that company respondents perceive that female expatriates hold certain perceptions, while these perceptions do not seem to be held by the female expatriates to the assumed extent. It is also interesting to note that there is a higher difference in opinions between respondents within each company (as seen in Table 6.4) than it was in the first research question.
Thus, with the basis in the analysis and our findings, we have arrived at the following specific conclusions regarding research question two:

- Women seem to be as interested as men in expatriate assignments, but their tendency to consider family issues more might give the impression that they are less interested.
- There are gender differences regarding the willingness to accept foreign assignments at specific locations. It seems like women give priority to less “tough” locations where the environment does not place too many strains on the woman’s mobility and on her family and children.
- The perception that additional strains are likely to be placed on the female expatriate’s personal relationships when her partner becomes a trailing spouse might be a factor that contributes to that women reject offers about, or do not apply for, expatriate assignments.
- Female managers might feel that they have to choose between an international career and a family. This choice seems to be done because of the difficulties to convince husbands to take career breaks to follow abroad, and also because it could be troublesome to bring children to a new environment.
- A lack of female role models may lead to women missing opportunities for career advancement, which also implies that this may lead to fewer women accepting or trying to attain expatriate assignments.
- Mentoring could be an important factor when it comes to affecting the participation of women in international management. Mentors are perceived to be important as career support, regardless of their gender.
- Women seem to be excluded from informal male networks, which might adversely influence the ratio of female expatriates.
- The perspectives of human resource managers and female expatriates seem to differ regarding the reasons for the low ratio of women among Swedish MNC expatriates as described from the perspective of female expatriates. There are some tendencies toward company respondents perceiving that female expatriates hold certain perceptions, while these perceptions do not seem to be held by the female expatriates to the assumed extent.
7.4 Implications for Practitioners

The implications for practitioners can be seen as advise to companies, as represented by human resource managers and senior management, and to female managers aiming for expatriate positions. The following implications are based on the empirical data, analysis and conclusions conducted during this study.

7.4.1 Implications for Companies

First, we must address the issue of why it is important for multinational corporations to increase the participation of women in international management. As stated in Chapter 1, women can be seen as an underused resource. In addition, men are to an increasing extent rejecting expatriate assignments due to dual-career and family considerations. There will also be demographic changes in the Swedish workforce during the decade to come, since the large generation born in the 1940s is about to retire. Therefore, since human resource managers already are pointing to problems in finding enough qualified people who are willing to go on expatriate assignments, companies will have to make use of their total work pool.

Dual-career and family issues are constantly mentioned as the most significant barriers to women’s participation in international management. Even though such matters may have to be solved primarily within the families, companies also need to make the conditions for dual-career couples and families more beneficial in order to be able to send the most qualified and suitable people on expatriate assignments. For example, the pressure not to take career breaks has to be relieved, so that people feel that they can follow their partner abroad as a trailing spouse without risking their own career. This implies that the image of a successful career as linear and uninterrupted has to be changed. When one part in a dual-career couple is offered an expatriate assignment, it is of course possible that his/her partner will accept to follow abroad with the prerequisite that he or she also will be able to work on the location. If the couple is employed in the same organisation, we can assume that it would not be impossible to solve the situation by offering the partner a position as well. But even if the partners have different employers, a solution might be found if companies cooperate in order to find a suitable position.

Selection processes are seen to often make it difficult for women to attain expatriate positions, unless they have been within the organisation for a long time and are well known to the selectors. An increased usage of open and formal systems for selection can result in an increased transparency that would facilitate for women in applying for expatriate assignments, since they then would become aware of available positions. Therefore, the seemingly widespread usage of informal decision- and contact making that occur in male networks would also have to be reduced or become more transparent so that women are not excluded.

The fact that men tend to choose other men for expatriate positions as well as for other positions is difficult to counteract since it is not a conscious process – it is more a matter of identification and reducing perceived risks. It seems however like the same behaviour is found among women. Therefore, an increased number of women in domestic management and in positions where decisions about expatriate selection are made is likely to increase the number of female expatriates.

Corporations could also contribute to women’s participation in international management by putting the spotlight on successful women expatriates and thereby making them visible as role
models to other women with aspirations on an international career. Another way of providing career support that could give female managers the courage and motivation to go on expatriate assignments is the usage of mentoring. Having a male mentor might actually help women to open doors into informal networks in addition to the support that is offered from this experienced, higher-ranking manager.

7.4.2 Implications for Female Managers

The most important factor for female managers aiming for an international career seems to be that they have good back up from their partner and family. This might be facilitated by taking a long-term perspective in planning and involving the family in these plans so that the family is prepared for an international move. Two of the female expatriates in this study suggested that practical problems can be solved, and that it in fact could be easier than one might think to go on an expatriate assignment. Even though women may feel that they have to choose between an international career and a family, this choice does not have to be made definitely, which is proven by the women in this study. Female managers may choose to wait until a phase in life where the family situation put fewer strains on their possibilities to work abroad.

Since women tend to be less noticed within organisations, it is important that they become more active and visible. They have to show more clearly that they are interested in taking expatriate assignments. Therefore, women must not be afraid of promoting themselves and telling their managers that they are competent, capable and ready to handle a foreign assignment. It could be helpful to find a role model to identify with, and if there are no women in expatriate positions to find inspiration from, female managers may have to learn from the men.

Having a mentor might also provide useful career support, as described in the previous section. It could therefore be advisable that female managers who are offered a mentor accept this, or that they seek one themselves. Finally, networking is seen as an important contributing factor in women becoming socialised into both the formal and informal norms of organisations. It might be worthwhile for female managers to try to identify these networks and where the decisions are made within them. A woman might be able to gain access by allying with a network member and convince him that she can make a contribution. Another way is to build a network with former colleagues and managers, which can provide career support and recommendations to future supervisors.

7.5 Implications for Theory

The purpose of this study has been to explore, but mainly to describe, a phenomenon within a specific area of research. We have aimed to gain a better understanding of this phenomenon by answering the research questions connected to the reasons behind the low ratio of Swedish female expatriates. By increasing the understanding of this phenomenon, we have made a contribution to previous research, primarily by using concepts from these studies and testing them in Swedish conditions. We have also begun to explain certain phenomena while drawing conclusions at the end. Many of these phenomena however deserve further research consideration, which is what we will propose in the following section.
7.6 Implications for Further Research

During our research, we have uncovered areas that were not within the scope of the study. Since we find many of them to be interesting propositions for other researchers, we include them as implications for further research.

- Informal elements of selection processes for expatriate assignments seem to frequently result in barriers to women’s participation in international management. A closer examination of these elements, that often appear to be intertwined, could help mapping out transparent embedded barriers.
- A comparison of the perspectives of male and female expatriates deserves further research in order to find differences and similarities. It would for example be interesting to investigate whether male and female expatriates have similar background within the organisations before going on assignments, and if they hold similar or different views on dual-career and family issues.
- Since all respondents in this study have emphasised the importance of dual-career and family issues, a suggestion for further research would be to focus entirely on these variables. For example, what kind of organisational factors would facilitate for people to partake in international management as expatriates?
- A suggestion that might be suitable for researchers in social science or sociology is to look into dual-career relationships from the couple’s perspective. Questions could be raised concerning whether the male career is given priority, and how the partners cooperate to enable them both to reach their career goals.
- The impact of mentoring deserves further research. All respondents pointed out the benefits of having a mentor, including the two female expatriates that had not been mentored themselves. We suggest that the impact of mentors in international as compared to domestic management could be studied.
- Networks seem to function in different ways. The influence of networks might be studied by a comparison of male and female networks. For example, what are their impact as career support and how could they help in problem solving?
- Comparisons between the participation of women in international management might be done with the focus on different industries. Is the ratio of female expatriates in e.g. banking higher than in the heavy transport industry, and if so, why?
- Comparative studies could also be made within one certain industry, for example by comparing the ratio of female expatriates in three different companies in the forest industry. This kind of comparison could also be done between companies within the same industry, but in different countries.
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General information – companies

- Respondent’s position
- Locations to which expatriates are sent
- Positions in which expatriates are used
- Total amount of expatriates currently on assignments
- Number/per cent of expatriates who are women

General information – female expatriates

- Age
- Civil status/family situation
- Educational background and professional experience
- Years of employment within the company
- Position before the international assignment(-s)
- Position and location during the international assignment(-s)
- Current position

RQ 1: How are the reasons for the low ratio of women among Swedish MNC expatriates described from a corporate perspective?

What is your opinion/experience regarding the following issues?

- **Companies’ hesitation**:  
  - Assumptions about foreigners’ prejudice against women

- **Reasons for companies selecting males over females**:  
  - Men’s greater qualifications for international assignments  
  - Women’s relative inability to adapt

- **Selection processes**:  
  - Open/closed  
  - Formal/informal  
  - Expatriate candidates are well known to the selectors  
  - Women must ask to be included in the selection process for international assignments

- **Women’s qualifications**:  
  - Female managers need to be more qualified, more ambitious, and more mobile than male managers

- **Men’s tendency to choose other men**:  
  - Men’s (unconscious) tendency to choose other men or to “clone” themselves

- **The estimations of people’s ability and women’s differing career patterns**:  
  - The usage of past education and job achievement (perceived status), and evaluation of career velocity for estimations of people’s ability and allocation of jobs and training disadvantage women due to differing career patterns and initial choice of job
• **Dual-career/family issues:**
  - Past job achievements and implicit career timetables – pressure on both men and women not to take career breaks to follow spouse
  - Extended maternity leaves and career breaks not favourable
  - Companies assume that married women are not interested in international assignments, especially if they have children

**RQ 2:** How are the reasons for the low ratio of women among Swedish MNCs’ expatriates described from the female expatriates’ perspective?

What is your opinion/experience regarding the following issues?

• **Interest/willingness to take foreign assignments:**
  - Women and men equally interested in international assignments or male managers more receptive/interested
  - Men’s and women’s differing willingness to work in specific locations

• **Impact of perceived rewards:**
  - Impact of perceived rewards from accepting international assignments/the contingency of the relocation package offered
  - Differences between men and women

• **Dual-career/family issues:**
  - Additional strains on female expatriate’s personal relationships when partner is trailing spouse
  - Women managers choose between an international career and family (extra strains, guilt feelings) because of:
    - Organisational and societal assumptions that a woman’s primary role is “mother”
    - Career success still based on a male model

• **Role models:**
  - Importance of role models as career support
  - Lack of female role models may lead to missed opportunities for career advancement

• **Mentoring:**
  - Usage of mentoring (yes/no)
  - Importance for the participation of female managers in international management
  - Part of the reason for the low number of female expatriates might be:
    - Women may not seek mentors
    - Mentors may not select female protégées

• **Networking:**
  - Female expatriates excluded from access to men’s informal business discussions and useful contact making
  - More access to networking groups could help women to be socialised in the formal and informal norms of the organisation – may lead to more women in international management

*Additional comments?*
Allmän information – företag

- Respondentens befattning
- Platser/länder man sänder expatriater till
- Positioner som tillsätts med expatriater
- Totalt antal expatriater på uppdrag just nu
- Antal/andel kvinnliga expatriater

Allmän information – kvinnliga expatriater

- Ålder
- Civilstånd/familjesituation
- Utbildning och arbetslivserfarenhet
- Antal år inom företaget
- Befattning före det internationella uppdraget/-en
- Befattning och placering under det internationella uppdraget/-en
- Nuvarande befattning

RQ 1: Hur kan anledningarna till den låga andelen kvinnor bland svenska företags expatriater beskrivas från ett företagsperspektiv?

Vad är din åsikt om/erfarenhet av följande frågor/ämnen?

- **Företagens tveksamhet:**
  - Antaganden om den lokala kulturens fördomar mot kvinnor

- **Huvudsakliga anledningar för företag att välja män före kvinnor:**
  - Mäns bättre kvalifikationer för internationella uppdrag
  - Kvinnors relativa oförmåga att anpassa sig

- **Urvalsprocesser:**
  - Öppna/slutna
  - Formella/informella
  - Köpare för utlandsuppdrag är välkända för de som gör urvalet
  - Kvinnor måste själva fråga för att få vara med i urvalsprocessen för utlandsuppdrag

- **Kvinnors kvalifikationer:**
  - Kvinnliga chefer måste vara mer kvalificerade, mer ambitiösa, och mer mobila än manliga chefer

- **Mäns tendens att välja andra män:**
  - Mäns (omedvetna) tendens att välja andra män eller att “klona” sig själva
Bedömning av människors förmåga och kvinnors annorlunda karriärmönster:
- Användningen av utbildning och prestationer på arbetet (upplevd status), och utvärdering av hur snabb karriär individen har gjort för att bedöma människors förmåga och fördela jobb och utbildning, är en nackdel för kvinnor pga. deras annorlunda karriärmönster och inledande val av yrke

Dual-career/familjesituation:
- Tidigare prestationer på arbetet och outtalade “karriärtidtabeller” skapar press på män och kvinnor att inte ta uppehåll i karriären för att följa sin partner
- Lång mammaledighet och uppehåll i karriären uppskattas ej
- Förutag antar att gifta kvinnor inte är intresserade av internationella uppdrag, speciellt om de har barn

RQ 2: Hur kan anledningarna till den låga andelen kvinnor bland svenska företags expatriater beskrivas från kvinnliga expatriaters perspektiv?

Vad är din åsikt om/erfarenhet av följande frågor/ämnen?

Intresse/vilja för att åka på utlandsuppdrag:
- Kvinnor och män är lika intresserade av internationella uppdrag eller: manliga chefer är mer mottagliga/intresserade
- Skillnader i mäns och kvinnors vilja att arbeta på särskilda platser

Inverkan av upplevd belöning:
- Inverkan av upplevd belöning för att acceptera ett internationellt uppdrag/betydelsen av erbjuden lön och förmåner
- Skillnader mellan män och kvinnor

Dual-career/familjesituation:
- Ökade påfrestningar på den kvinnliga expatriatens personliga relationer när partnern är medföljande make (trailing spouse)
- Kvinnliga chefer väljer mellan internationell karriär och familj (ökade påfrestningar, skuldkänslor) pga.:
  - Organisationens och samhäßlets antaganden att en kvinnas primära roll är som mor
  - Framgång i karriären är fortfarande baserad på en manlig “modell”

Förebilder:
- Vikten av förebilder som “karriärsupport”
- Brist på kvinnliga förebilder kan leda till missade möjligheter till avancemang i karriären

Mentorskap:
- Användning av mentorskap (ja/nej)
- Vikten av mentorer för kvinnors ökade medverkan på internationella uppdrag
- En del av anledningen till det låga antalet kvinnliga expatriater kan vara att:
  - Kvinnor kanske inte söker mentorer
  - Mentorers kanske inte väljer kvinnliga protegéer
• *Networking:*
  - Kvinnliga expatriater är utestängda från tillgång till mäns informella affärsdiskussioner och användbara kontaktskapande
  - Mer tillgång till nätverksgrupper kan hjälpa kvinnor att socialiseras in i formella och informella normer i organisationen – kan leda till fler kvinnliga chefer på utlandsuppdrag

*Ytterligare kommentarer?*