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Does leadership only have one gender?

A qualitative study about the influence of gender and leadership roles on the leadership style and use of management controls in Sweden.

Authors:
Christina Papadopoulou
Rebecca Rosenqvist

Supervisor:
Elin Funck

Abstract

Title: Does leadership only have one gender? - A study about the influence of gender and leadership roles on the leadership style and use of management controls in Sweden.

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Authors: Rebecca Rosenqvist and Christina Papadopoulou

Supervisor: Elin Funck

Key words: Social Role Theory, Management Control, Enabling and Coercive Control, Communal and Agentic Characteristics, Feminine Culture, Leadership style and characteristics

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to examine whether gender roles and leadership roles have an influence on leadership style and consequently on the use of management controls. This will be investigated in Sweden, where the culture is considered to be feminine. Thereby it is also investigated whether culture has an effect on leadership style and characteristics. Specifically, a connection between the feminine culture in Sweden and leadership style and characteristics will be examined.

Methodology: A qualitative strategy has been used for this thesis, within which an exploratory study has been conducted to gain new insights into the topic. The data collection method that has been used is semi-structured interviews. Eight different Swedish people in leadership positions have been interviewed about their perception of their leadership style and characteristics.

Theoretical perspectives: Two theoretical frameworks have been used in this study. The first one is the social role theory that is discussing different social roles people have, specifically the gender role. It further discusses different characteristics which are divided into communal and agentic. The communal characteristics are more expected from women and agentic characteristics are more expected from men. Furthermore, the theory about the management controls enabling and coercive are used to look into how these controls are used by the leaders interviewed. These two theories are then combined to see if any connections can be found between gender roles, leadership roles and the use of management controls.

Empirical Findings: All interviewees showed characteristics of being communicative. Both female and male interviewees (6 out of 8) from public as well as private organizations showed more communal characteristics like being relation- and learning-oriented, caring and supportive.

Only two interviewees (one woman from private organization and one man from a public organization) showed more agentic characteristics, such as being task- and result-oriented, and distanced. Enabling controls were used by all interviewees to some extent. Coercive controls, such as set rules and routines were partly used by some interviewees. However, the organizational structure of the different organizations influenced the extensive use of rules and routines.

Conclusions: Concluding from the findings it is evident that there is a positive connection between communal/female characteristics and leadership style and the use of enabling controls. Further it can be assumed that the feminine culture in Sweden has an influence on the leadership style, since the majority of the interviewees had rather communal/feminine traits and there were no differences seen between the genders. However, there was no clear connection found between agentic/male characteristics and leadership style and the use of coercive controls.

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We hope you will enjoy the rest of the reading and find the topic and findings interesting.

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Christina Papadopoulou   Rebecca Rosenqvist

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

"Leadership is about making others better as a result of your presence and making sure that impact lasts in your absence." This quote by Sheryl Sandberg (2013), the COO of Meta, points out how leadership and especially leadership style affects subordinate employees and thereby also the company's outcome. Leadership is an important part for the performance of an organization. Therefore, the type of leadership style is critical for the success of an organization. Leadership is generally associated with specific characteristics like responsibility, problem solving, decision making, effective communication, action taking, etc. (De La Rey, 2005). For years, male leaders were the norm. This could be the reason for why leadership traits often correspond to male character traits. Studies have shown that people in society associate the same types of characteristics to both leaders and males, and thus there is a bigger perceived congruency between men and the leadership role than there is between women and the leadership role (Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt & van Engen, 2003; Eagly & Karau, 2002). Female leaders have tended to be the exception in leadership positions in the past. However, this has changed over the last decades, especially in Sweden, where the percentage of women in management positions has increased from 31.4 % in 2000 to 42.4 % in 2020 (Eurostat, n.d.). According to European Women on Boards (2021) Sweden is even ranked fifth in the Gender Diversity Index. A reason for this increased percentage of women in management positions can be due to government diversity policies and specific policy initiatives that have been introduced in some countries. These were aimed at rectifying previous barriers to women's career advancement in order to reduce gender gaps. Another reason could be the social pressure from the outside world, striving for more equality.

However, since women have been working in leadership positions, several studies have been conducted on their leadership style and the possible new qualities and skills they bring to this position (e.g., Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Bobe & Kober, 2020). Thereby, researchers also explored and defined male as well as female leadership characteristics. Resulting from this, research has shown that leadership style can be influenced by gender (De La Rey, 2005). Male leaders on one hand are considered to have agentic characteristics meaning they are more

controlling, confident, dominant, more tolerant towards risk taking, independent, ambitious, and competitive. Female leaders on the other hand are considered to have communal characteristics meaning they are more nurturing, caring, democratic, helpful, affectionate, participative, and sensitive (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Bobe & Kober, 2020).

According to Nani & Safitri (2021) leadership characteristics and leadership style have an influence on the use of management control systems (MCS). In particular, a transformational leadership style, which is defined by enhancing and improving organizational performance, can have a positive impact on employees' performance and is according to Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt (2001) mostly used by female leaders. Looking further at gender specific characteristics, certain character traits point to certain patterns of behavior and practices that are also reminiscent and similar to specific management control (MC) theories. For instance, characteristics such as democratic and participative are also attributes that are necessary for and support interactive control, as they facilitate autonomy and the involvement of employees (Bobe & Kober, 2020). Despite these likely similarities, only little research has been done in this field in order to establish if a link between gender roles and management control exists. One of these few studies was conducted by Bobe and Kober (2020). They investigated the connection between the diagnostic and interactive controls of Simons Levers of Control (Simons LOC) and gender specific leadership characteristics. Here, diagnostic control refers to a top-down leadership approach, where employees are monitored frequently, standards are clearly set, and corrective actions are taken by management. Interactive control shifts the decision-making instead to the bottom of the organization and thus facilitates employee participation (Simons, 1994). Bobe and Kober (2020) found in their research that interactive controls can be linked to a more feminine leadership style and that female leaders make more use of interactive controls. However, Bobe and Kober (2020) found no evidence that diagnostic controls are linked to more masculine leadership characteristics and that it is used more by male than female leaders. Nonetheless, it can be assumed that gender as a managerial characteristic could have an impact on management accounting and control practices.

Considering this research paper and the resulting findings, the examination of a different management control view related to gender roles and leadership style can therefore also be

worthwhile. In particular, an enabling and coercive management controls perspective in relation to gender leadership can add a valuable contribution to existing studies. This theory is about the use of formalizations and how they influence employees. Enabling controls in this context uses formalizations to provide freedom and flexibility to employees. Coercive controls on the contrary uses formalizations to constrain and direct employees (Adler & Borys, 1996; Ahrens & Chapman, 2004). Taking into account the findings obtained up til now about leadership characteristics and according to gender roles and stereotypes, the assumption could be made that a female leadership style tends to be more enabling whereas a male leadership style tends to be more coercive. Regardless, additional studies on the relationship and connection between leadership style and management control are needed to further elaborate on it.

1.2 Problematization

Besides gender and leadership roles, cultural aspects could also have an impact on leadership styles and the use of management control. According to one of Hofstede's cultural dimensions, countries can be either masculine or feminine. In a masculine society the emotional gender roles are clearly visible since these differ more between men and women. Men are more "...assertive, tough, and focused on material success" (Hofstede, 1998, p. 6) whereas women are perceived to be more "...modest, tender, and concerned with the quality of life" (Hofstede, 1998, p. 6). In a feminine society there are barely noticeable emotional gender role differences between men and women. They both are considered to be "...modest, tender and concerned with the quality of life" (Hofstede, 1998, p. 6) and therefore rather take a more feminine approach. Hofstede has chosen these terms, since, according to studies, men have the tendency to pursue more ego goals, whereas women tend to be more social goal oriented (Hofstede, 1998; Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010). Research has shown that Sweden is seen as having a feminine culture, meaning that the country has rather feminine traits. Thus, characteristics like "...cooperation, modesty, caring for the weak and quality of life" are more present (Hofstede Insights, n.d.b). When looking at the expected and accepted power distribution within a company the Swedish style is characterized by being independent, using hierarchy for convenience only, and having equal rights, power is decentralized, and managers count on the experience of their team members. Communication with superiors is more direct, participative, and informal, and employees are anticipated to be included. Moreover, Sweden is more individualistic, meaning business relationships are based on reciprocal advantage.

Yet, managers are supposed to be supportive, strive for consensus and equality (Hofstede Insights, n.d.a). In other words, Sweden has a rather tender culture (Hofstede Insights, n.d.b). Linking this to the leadership style and the findings from previous studies, it can be assumed that leaders in Sweden pursue a more feminine leadership style and that there are no significant differences between the genders.

Using the social role theory, it provides a description of how men and women are seen in society. Thereby, the theory distinguishes between agentic and communal characteristics and assigns these to the respective gender. Agentic characteristics include traits like assertiveness, competitiveness, and being dominant and are considered to be male characteristics. Communal characteristics contain characteristics such as being friendly, unselfish, and empathetic and are considered to be more female (Eagly & Wood, 2012), which further corresponds to the feminine traits that Hofstede (1998) assigned to feminine countries. Considering these findings about gender specific characteristic traits the question arises to what extent these characteristics have an effect on leadership style, as the characteristics of leaders are often associated or equated with male traits. The influence of specific character traits on the leadership style can therefore also have a corresponding effect on the use of management controls. Whether or not certain management controls are used often depends on the approach leaders choose in regard to their cooperation with subordinates and consequently to the personal character of the leader. This leads to the assumption that there could be differences in the leadership style and therefore also in the use of management controls depending on the gender. Bobe and Kober (2020) have already shown that there could be a correlation related to this assumption. The researchers found that there is a positive correlation between the use of interactive controls and female leaders, meaning female leaders use management controls in a more participative way. Anyhow, no correlation has been found between a male leadership style and diagnostic controls. Accordingly, no clear conclusion could be drawn about the effect and correlation of leadership characteristics on the use of management controls. Yet, to our best knowledge, only few studies have been conducted on the issue of correlation between gender roles and management controls, which makes it especially interesting to investigate. In particular, consideration of other management control approaches could provide a clearer answer to this question. Therefore, the influence and impact of leadership styles and characteristics on the use of enabling and coercive controls will be investigated. This adds a new

perspective to the theory about correlations between gender roles and management control, since the previous study by Bobe and Kober (2020) investigated the use of Simons' levers of control instead of the use of enabling and coercive controls. This study will thus contribute with new theory in the areas of social role theory and management control. Moreover, the importance of country culture related to gender roles according to Hofstede (1998) is included in this study, by focusing on Sweden as having a feminine culture. This adds two new perspectives to theory. Firstly, the study by Bobe and Kober (2020) was conducted in Australia, while there has been no study in Sweden on this topic. Secondly, other studies have not included Hofstede's dimension of masculine versus feminine cultures, and thus this study is contributing with an additional perspective to theory in relation to gender roles and management control. Thus, this study is combining and examining more perspectives than previous studies have done. Moreover, the characteristics identified as communal/female and agentic/male are transferred to management control characteristics such as task-oriented, result-oriented, relationship-oriented, etc. to relate them to enabling and coercive controls. Finally, this study will contribute with more clarification of the influences on leadership style. It will look into if gender roles, leadership roles or culture have an effect.

1.3 Purpose

The purpose of this study is to examine whether gender roles and leadership roles have an influence on leadership style and consequently on the use of management controls. This will be investigated in Sweden, where the culture is considered to be feminine. Thereby it is also investigated whether culture has an effect on leadership style and characteristics. Specifically, a connection between the feminine culture in Sweden and leadership style and characteristics will be examined.

1.4 Outline

Previously, the background, the problematization and the purpose of the report were presented, in which also the motivation for the investigation of this study was explained. In the next chapter the theoretical framework of the social role theory is explained and described, as well as different definitions of good leadership and the theory of enabling and coercive controls. Afterwards the connection between these different theoretical parts is demonstrated and different findings from previous literature is presented and their relevance to this study is thereby highlighted. In the

following chapter a thorough explanation of how the study has been conducted is displayed. Following the empirical findings from the conducted interviews are presented and afterwards analyzed. Thereupon, the results are discussed and put into context, on which the conclusion is based. Finally, limitations that restrict our study and potential future research are pointed out.

2. Theory

2.1 Social role theory

Social role theory was first developed and described in Eagly's book *Sex differences in social behavior: A social role interpretation* (1987) which other papers written by the researcher, that are also mentioned and used in this section, are built on. This theory discusses how people have different types of roles in society. There are the gender roles where the role depends on your sex. Further, there are also specific roles such as family roles (e.g., mother, daughter) or occupation (e.g., physician, teacher). In different situations people are thus associated with different roles, since the gender role is always present, and this is combined with other social roles people have (Eagly & Wood, 2012). These different roles start being obtained by people in early childhood and continue to develop during life (Eagly, Wood & Diekman, 2000).

Peoples' perceptions of the social roles of men and women in society affects the way people behave and creates differences and similarities in the behavior between the genders. The social roles of the genders are common beliefs in society about attributes of men and women and these are innately and inherently developed but are also affected by cultural and environmental factors (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Eagly & Wood, 2012). The society has expectations, or norms, on people in different social groups which in the social role theory is divided into two different categories, descriptive norms and injunctive norms. The descriptive norms are common expectations of what people in a specific group actually do, while injunctive norms are common expectations of what people in a specific group should do, or ideally would do. Descriptive and injunctive norms of men and women are combined forming the gender roles (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Differences in behavior between men and women can partly be explained by the social role theory, as this points out the fact that people behave according to these gender roles (Eagly & Karau, 1991; Eagly, Wood & Diekman, 2000). The fact that the different norms and expectations on the genders have the power to influence there being differences and similarities in behavior, come from the reaction of deviations from the expectations. On the one hand deviations from descriptive norms can create feelings of surprise, and on the other hand deviations from injunctive norms can create feelings of moral disapproval (Eagly, Wood & Diekman, 2000).

	Male	Female
Agentic	● Masterful ● Assertive ● Independent ● Forceful ● Competitive ● Dominant	
Communal		● Friendly ● Unselfish ● Concerned with others ● Affectionate ● Helpful ● Emotionally expressive

Table 1. Agentic/male and communal/female characteristics from the social role theory

The society also has different beliefs regarding characteristics of men and women which can be divided into two categories called agentic and communal (see table 1). Agentic characteristics include being masterful, assertive, independent, forceful, competitive and dominant, and communal characteristics include being friendly, unselfish, concerned with others, affectionate, helpful and emotionally expressive. In society, men are expected to be more agentic while women are expected to be more communal (Eagly & Karau, 1991; Eagly & Wood, 2012). If more specifically looking at a setting of employment, the agentic behaviors can on the one hand include influencing others, speaking assertively, and making problem-focused suggestions. Communal behavior can on the other hand include speaking tentatively, accepting others' direction, supporting and soothing others, not drawing attention to oneself and contributing to the solution of relational and interpersonal problems (Eagly & Wood, 2012; Eagly & Johannessen-Schmidt, 2001). When further taking the social role theory to look at organizational environments, specifically at the managerial role women and men take on, it was found that the gender role for men was more similar to the managerial role than it was for women. This is because peoples'

beliefs about leaders are related to agentic qualities such as being assertive and masterful, and thus these are more similar to beliefs about men than about women (Eagly & Wood, 2012; Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt & van Engen, 2003). Moreover, studies using the social role theory have shown that men take on more task-oriented leadership roles while women take on more socially, interpersonally-oriented leadership roles (Eagly & Karau, 1991).

Though, it is apparent that some of the perceptions of what is attributed to men and women has changed, and keep changing, over time. This is the fact since more and more females hold positions that are typically associated with men, such as manager positions, and thus go against the traditional gender roles. It is for example found that women perceive themselves as more agentic than they did before. Further, it has been found that women and men have become more similar in their characteristics since the development of the social role theory and that these similarities will continue to emerge (Eagly, Wood & Diekman, 2000). Accordingly, ongoing adjustments related to different outside factors, like society expectation or culture, can influence leadership styles and characteristics.

2.2 "Good" leadership

Ivanov, McFadden and Anyu (2021) describe a set of key leadership characteristics that has been developed by Ivanov. These characteristics are collaboration, competition, doubletalk, planning, new ideas, flexibility, accountability and treatment of subordinates. The three authors did a study where they tested these characteristics to identify good and bad leaders[1]. They found that good leaders encourage collaboration over competition and care about their employees and their psychological comfort. Further, regarding the treatment of subordinates, the authors found that good leaders provide assistance for subordinates and treat them with respect, dignity and encouragement, which are attributes that also correspond to communal characteristics. Besides treating subordinates in this manner, four other general characteristics for good leaders were found. These were to be good at planning, promoting new ideas, being flexible and taking accountability.

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[1] The authors define what good and bad leaders are according to the opinion of subordinates.

On the contrary, they found that leaders who did not possess these characteristics were perceived as toxic or bad leaders. More specifically, this was the case for especially competitive leaders. Thus, competitiveness was found to be a trait of bad leaders. The characteristic of being competitive has also been seen in agentic leaders and is thus more related to male leaders according to social role theory. Other traits of bad leaders were to not treat subordinates with respect nor show consideration for them, to not take accountability for various poor outcomes, not being open for innovation and new ideas, bad or non-existent planning and a lack of being flexible. Furthermore, Goleman (2017) presents that there is a need for emotional intelligence to become a good leader. To be emotionally intelligent he argues that there is a need to have self-awareness, have the ability of self-regulation, having motivation for the work, being empathetic in the sense that employees' feelings are considered and having social skills.

Earlier in history other preferable leadership characteristics could be identified. Lowman (2022) is in his book *Managerial and leadership abilities* presenting some characteristics and competencies of successful leaders. These are from studies conducted in the 1970's and 1980's and are thus differing in some respects from the ones found many years later by Ivanov. Included in the successful characteristics identified is a positive attitude toward authority and a strive for competition and power. Some of the competencies that were found to be valuable for good leadership were being good at planning, having a need for power and having self-confidence. Here we can see that for example competitiveness was seen as a trait of good leadership in the 1970's and 1980's but now seems to rather have become a trait of bad or toxic leadership. However, there are also some similarities in what is considered good leadership such as being good at planning which was identified both earlier in history and more recently. Once again, it can be seen that societies' perception of various matters changes over time, like for example leadership.

2.3 Leadership development

As mentioned above the perceptions and norms form roles of different kinds, which consequently forms what is perceived as male and female. Therefore, this could have an influence on the gender and leadership roles. Male characteristics have traditionally been seen as good traits in leadership. Due to this, there was also an assumption that women had to acquire and embrace male character traits in order to attain a higher position or a leadership position (Vanderbroeck, 2010). In a study

by Peters and Kabacoff, that Baker (2014) is referring to, they found that the adoption of male character traits was quite promising. According to their findings, the higher the position, the smaller the differences in character traits and leadership style between men and women. Instead, differences were found to be greater between female top-level managers and female middle-level managers than between genders. However, another study by Broughton and Miller, which Baker (2014) is also referring to, revealed that women who exhibit only male character traits are often criticized or viewed negatively. Expectations exist that women will display common female character traits. These expectations can be described as injunctive norms society has on women that is explained in the social role theory, where deviations from these can create feelings of moral disapproval (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Eagly, Wood & Diekman, 2000). Yet, women are also expected to exhibit male traits related to leadership, such as toughness or decisiveness. Thus, both male and female traits are expected of women. However, nowadays female characteristics are becoming more and more important in terms of leadership style. These traits in leadership positions are seen as positive and are increasingly associated with the success of a company. Therefore, it could be assumed that character traits and expectations of leaders are shifting from male to more female characteristics. Adding to the gender roles and leadership roles another influence could be the culture of the country (see figure 1). According to a literature review by Marano, Sauerwald, and Van Essen (2022) several researchers have found that the culture of a country has an impact on the gender roles in a society and on their place of work. Thus, since Sweden is perceived as having a feminine culture, it could be assumed that this femininity is also reflected in the leadership style of managers, whether they are men or women.
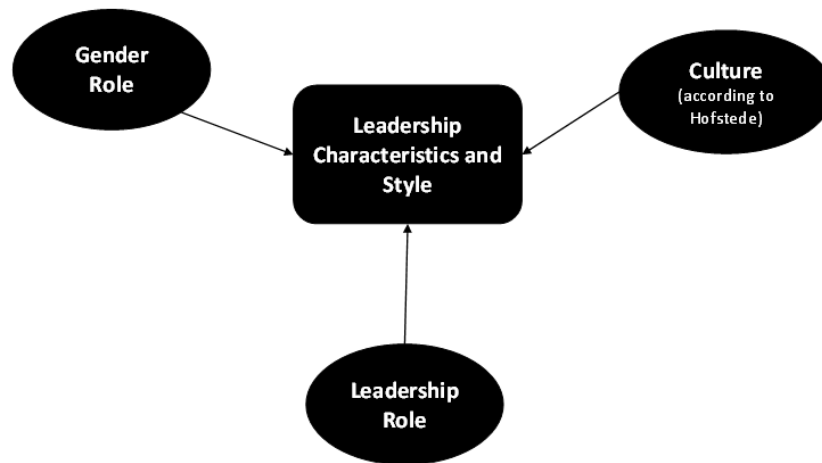
Figure 1. Three factors potentially influencing leadership characteristics and style.

Accordingly, different theses can be made. Firstly, it could be that women will try to be more male, as male characteristics have been assigned to (good) leadership characteristics in the past. Secondly, the gender role could have an influence so that women would be more female in their leadership characteristics and style and men more male. Thirdly, men could become more female in their leadership, as these character traits have gained in importance in leadership positions, and since Swedish culture is more feminine. These leadership styles and characteristics can then further affect the leadership approach of the individuals which can be seen in their use of management controls. Enabling and coercive controls are two possible management control approaches that could depend on the specific characteristics of leaders.

2.4 Enabling and coercive control theory

Based on Adler and Borys (1996) bureaucracy or formal controls within an organization can be either formalized to enable or coerce employees, meaning it can either create personal freedom or constrain individuals. Ahrens and Chapman (2004) have then introduced this theory into a more accounting based view in order to analyze accounting and control issues in organizations. According to both articles coercive controls are defined by having specific organizational rules that prescribe precise procedures to achieve a certain predefined result. Employees have only little flexibility for action and are more restricted in their ability to operate. Enabling controls instead consist of less strict rules. The formal procedures do not have to be designed to be fool proof, but

the company relies on the intelligence of their employees. Employees receive more autonomy, and the formal system serves as a support system rather than a set of rules. In an enabling approach of formal controls, four design principles are integrated: repair, internal transparency, global transparency, and flexibility. Repair means that the possibility exists to break down the control process and rebuild and repair it. It thereby encourages employees to address problems with organizational rules and serves also as a learning opportunity. Internal transparency refers to the understanding of the formalization of local processes. Global transparency, instead, refers to the understanding of where and how local processes are integrated into the organization. Flexibility, in this context, refers to the use of the control system and the degree to which these can be adjusted to adapt it to particular individual work needs or requirements. When formal control systems are designed in this way, it can enable employees and managers to simultaneously strive for efficiency and flexibility (Ahrens & Chapman, 2004; Adler & Borys, 1996).

Adler and Borys (1996) furthermore distinguish enabling and coercive controls into two dimensions: (1) type of formalization and (2) degree of formalization, which refers to the routineness of tasks. Thereby, the researchers determine the use of these controls depending on the type of business. According to that, organizations that have an enabling type of formalization and a low degree of formalization are considered to be an organic organization. Organizations that have a coercive type of formalization and a high degree of formalization are considered to be a mechanistic type of organization (Adler & Borys, 1996). Organic organizations have fewer rules and standardized procedures, facilitate close and open communication, and thereby foster flexibility and vertical relationships within an organization's hierarchy. Mechanistic organizations consist of formal rules, standardized operating procedures and routines (Ahrens & Chapman, 2004).

Lastly, it can be assumed that when enabling controls are used, subordinates are better supported by being involved in decision-making and encouraged to work independently. Thus, leaders who use and apply this type of control empower their employees in their work. They are not indifferent to them, nor are the subordinates controlled and monitored to any great extent. There is no need for clear guidance. Instead, the aim is to have discussions at eye level in which there is a willingness to compromise. Coercive, by contrast, requires a leader who sets rules, gives precise

instructions, and demands specific results. These results are to be achieved along a predefined path set by the leader. Compromise and flexibility are not encouraged. Thus, it can be said that enabling controls are a promising way to foster and encourage subordinates and are in certain circumstances more effective than coercive controls.

2.5 Leadership characteristics translated into management control characteristics

The social role theory creates an understanding of the characteristics of a leader and how these characteristics form their leadership style. Based on their leadership style this fosters a certain use of management controls. Further, by using the enabling and coercive control frameworks, an understanding of the hierarchical relationships between leaders and subordinates can be established in this study. According to this framework, it is evident that by using enabling controls, managers create a supportive environment for subordinates that allows them to work more autonomously and flexibly. The main focus of enabling controls is the provision and promotion of participation. Subordinates should be included in the decision-making and should be able to work independently. By creating global and internal transparency through the use of enabling controls the autonomous work of subordinates is further encouraged, as it fosters open communication within the company that thereupon promotes information sharing and knowledge exchange. Moreover, the flexibility provided to subordinates, which is also a key component of enabling controls, allows them as well to act more autonomously, make their own decisions, and perform tasks more independently. The low level of control and regulation to which subordinates are subject further encourages autonomous work behavior (Ahrens & Chapman, 2004). In this way, employees are simultaneously given freedom and support. Looking at social role theory, it is evident that some of the female traits or communal characteristics described have the same effects (Eagly & Wood, 2012; Eagly & Johannessen-Schmidt, 2001). In an environment where enabling controls are applied, employees are given not only freedom but also the opportunity to be involved in decision-making (Ahrens & Chapman, 2004). A leader who has communal characteristics fosters this participation by offering security to his employees by being empathetic, helpful and supportive. Additionally, they are considered to be more unselfish, which also implies that they are more willing to compromise and have discussions, which further fosters participation. At the same time a leader with communal characteristics provides his/her subordinates with flexibility.

By encouraging autonomy and not setting strict procedures and rules an enabling work environment can be created (Eagly & Wood, 2012; Eagly & Johannessen-Schmidt, 2001). Additionally, communal characteristics as being learning-oriented, collaborative and tolerant can also promote participation, which is also an important part of enabling control. In general, communal traits such as helpful, understanding, compassionate, and unselfish can be attributed to enabling control as both reflect a supportive working environment and foster open communication, which are key characteristics of communal leadership and enabling controls. Thus, these communal leadership characteristics can be assumed to be beneficial to foster and encourage enabling control attributes as flexibility, transparency, and participation.

Conversely, agentic characteristics such as dominant, assertive, competitive, and authoritative can be assumed to create a work atmosphere that is stricter. Under this type of leadership style, subordinates are dominated and directed by their superiors, which can also be determined by the use of precise rules and procedures. There is little use of constructive exchange about improvement in connection with the performance of work, also not during the completion of the task (Eagly & Wood, 2012; Eagly & Johannessen-Schmidt, 2001). This corresponds to a work environment in which coercive controls are used. Coercive controls, restrict subordinates' options and keep them on a short leash. In an environment with coercive controls, subordinates are directed more closely and have fixed rules to which they must adhere. There are more controls and autonomous work is less encouraged. Discussions about how to do their work tasks are rarely held because goals and procedures are more precisely defined (Ahrens & Chapman, 2004). Thus, fewer compromises are made as everything is predefined. Accordingly, there is more emphasis given on the result and outcome of the task than on learning and improvement. Hence, agentic leadership characteristics can foster the use of strict rules and routines and can thus be assigned to more coercive controls (Eagly & Wood, 2012; Eagly & Johannessen-Schmidt, 2001).

	Enabling control	Coercive control
Communal characteristics	● Transparent ● Helpful ● Participative ● Tolerant ● Willing to compromise ● Flexible ● Communicative	
Agentic characteristics	● Independent ● Autonomous	● Assertive ● Forceful ● Restrictive ● Dominant ● Little flexibility ● Specific rules ● Directive

Table 2. Connection between enabling and coercive controls and communal and agentic characteristics.

As elaborated above and seen in table 2, conspicuous correlations can be seen between communal characteristics and enabling control and between agentic characteristics and coercive control. Accordingly, based on the social role theory it is possible that there is a connection or relationship between this theory and the enabling and coercive control theory. Even though studies have been conducted and published on this topic, they do not provide us with clear resolutions, as they point in different directions. Furthermore, to our best knowledge, none of the already existing studies have considered the dimensions of gender role, leadership role, and culture. Therefore, it is still necessary to determine whether this presumed or comfortable connection or relationship depends on the gender role, leadership role or culture of a country, whether it depends on all three factors, on only a part of those three factors, or on a completely different factor.

2.6 Earlier studies on gender and leadership style

Women more than men are attributed with characteristics that are perceived to be related to effective leadership performance, which may also be the reason for why women in top-management positions outperform their male colleagues (Baker, 2014; Treasurer, Adelman & Cohn, 2013). As a response to that, multiple researchers have consequently studied if there are any differences in characteristics and leadership styles between men and women (e.g., Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Bobe & Kober, 2020). Eagly and Johnson (1990) conducted a study where they examined if there were any differences in leadership styles between the two sexes. One aspect of leadership they studied was democratic versus autocratic leadership (or participative versus directive leadership). With the democratic leadership the subordinates are allowed to participate in decision making, while with the autocratic leadership subordinates are discouraged to participate. They found that women tend to use a democratic leadership style to a larger extent than men and men use autocratic leadership more. These findings are consistent with those of Denmark (1993), who also found women to be more democratic and men more autocratic. According to the research study, men acted in an authoritarian manner in particular to control and direct the behavior of the rest of the subordinate employees. Women, meanwhile, have used authoritarian behavior to emphasize and communicate the appropriate rules within a group. When considering the definition of enabling and coercive controls, similarities can be seen between an autocratic leader and coercive controls and between democratic leaders and enabling controls. Coercive controls are used to direct employees to perform specific tasks in a specific way (Ahrens & Chapman, 2004), which corresponds to the meaning of an autocratic leader. Enabling controls, as defined before, are used to foster participation, flexibility and transparency (Ahrens & Chapman, 2004), which complies with the description of a democratic leadership style.

As a complement to their first study from 1990, Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt (2001) conducted another study which added a perspective by examining transformational and transactional leadership styles. Their findings showed that women, more than men, use a transformational leadership style meaning they

> "… (1) manifested attributes that motivated their followers to feel respect and pride because of their association with them, (2) showed optimism and excitement about future

goals, and (3) attempted to develop and mentor followers and attend to their individual needs." (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001, p. 791).

Further, they found that men, more than women, use a transactional and laissez-faire leadership style meaning they

"... (1) paid attention to their followers' problems and mistakes, (2) waited until problems became severe before attempting to solve them, and (3) were absent and uninvolved at critical times." (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001, p. 793).

Transformational leadership also includes a promotion of employees' development and visions, exhibiting charisma, individual consideration and encouragement of questioning the way to do things. In a literature review by Trinidad and Normore (2005) it was concluded that the association of transformational leadership characteristics with female values originates from the socialization process that resulted in women acquiring values like building relationships, communication and working collaboratively. Another study done by Stempel, Rigotti and Mohr (2015) likewise found that female leaders tend to adopt more transformational leadership styles in order to foster collaboration and that they perceive power from the perspective of distributing information and knowledge. However, their findings about a laissez-faire and transactional leadership style did not align with Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt and van Engen (2003), as they came to the conclusion that these kinds of leadership styles are gender neutral. Moreover, unlike the results from both studies, Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt (2001), Stempel, Rigotti and Mohr (2015) and Maher (1997) found that there are no prominent differences between male and female leaders on transformational and transactional leadership.

According to a study by Ibarra and Obodaru (2009) leadership characteristics should include skills like envisioning, empowering, energizing, designing and aligning, rewarding and feedback, team building, outside orientation, global mind-set, tenacity, and emotional intelligence. Through their investigation they discovered that women were ranked higher than their male colleagues in almost all 10 characteristics, despite envisioning. Hence, men are supposingly better in recognizing new opportunities and in developing new strategies. Similarities to these characteristics can be also seen in a study done by Alimo-Metcalfe (2010), where they investigated the decision-making process of men and women in leadership positions. Thereby they characterize male decision-making as fast, analytical, and action based. Female decision makers instead tend to take time

before making a decision, since they become acquainted with the most important aspects of situations.

The different leadership styles identified in these previous studies can be perceived as reflecting typical female and male characteristics and stereotypes in society. Different studies have identified multiple characteristics which they classify as either female or male. Among the female characteristics, some of which also can be classified as communal, are to be compassionate, sensitive, caring, warm, kind, supportive, cooperative, accepting, nursing and empathetic (Kark, Waismel-Manor & Shamir, 2012; Rudman, Moss-Racusin, Phelan & Nauts, 2012; Alvesson & Due Billing, 2011). Among the male characteristics, some of which can be classified as agentic, are to be self-confidence, independence, assertiveness, dominance, rationality, directive and competitive (Kark, Waismel-Manor & Shamir, 2012; Rudman et al., 2012; Alvesson & Due Billing, 2011).

Some connections between the different leadership styles identified by different authors presented above and the characteristics identified can be made. For example, the democratic leadership style is found to be used more by women in leadership positions. This can be related to characteristics identified as female such as being cooperative, accepting and supportive. Further, the autocratic leadership style is more used by men in leadership positions, which can be related to characteristics identified as male such as independence, dominance and directiveness. Two other leadership styles that in some studies have been found to be more related to either men or women are the transformational and transactional leadership styles. On the one hand women have been found to use transformational leadership to a larger extent which can be associated with characteristics identified as female such as being compassionate, cooperative, nursing and empathetic. On the other hand, male characteristics such as being directive, independent and dominant can be associated with transactional leadership style which has been found to be used more by men.

Concluding from prior studies connections between gender characteristics, leadership style and the use of management controls can already be seen. The studies have shown that leadership styles that are more female are connected to management controls that are more inclusive and participative. Thus, it can be assumed that more connections can be found between leadership

styles and the use of management controls. However, the previous results from different studies have pointed in different directions, where some studies have shown no connections between gender or characteristics and leadership style. Therefore, additional investigations about this topic are needed to obtain a clearer outcome.

3. Method

3.1 Research strategy

The purpose of the study was to examine whether gender roles and leadership roles have an influence on leadership style and consequently on the use of management controls. To conduct this kind of study different interviews have been conducted to examine leaders' perception of their leadership style and characteristics. Thus, the focus of the collection and analysis of data in this study has been on words rather than on quantification and numbers and hence a qualitative research strategy has been conducted. There are some limitations with using a qualitative strategy such as the risk of the study being too subjective and it being difficult to replicate and generalize (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019). Though, the qualitative strategy still was the best suit for the purpose of this study since it is to examine different perceptions of leadership, which is why it was chosen.

Within the qualitative research strategy an exploratory study has been conducted. Recent studies on this topic have shown results pointing in different directions. Thus, the phenomena of gender impact on leadership style, characteristics and management control is not completely clear which is why an explorative study has been conducted to be able to get new insights to the problem and get a clearer understanding (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009).

3.2 Research design

The research design for the exploratory study has been an interview study. Doing interviews was suitable for this study since the purpose was to examine whether gender roles and leadership roles have an influence on leadership style and consequently on the use of management controls. Thus, it was relevant to get different leaders' perceptions of their leadership style, which could best be done through interviews (Silverman, 2013). What additionally could have been done is to conduct a survey among subordinates of the leaders to also get their perception of the leadership style and characteristics. This would have given a deeper understanding and the credibility of the study would have been enhanced. Though because of time and accessibility constraints this was not possible.

Another method that would have been suitable for the data collection for this study and that would have reduced some of the limitations with conducting interviews, is participant observations. By observing the participants behavior and work this could have given a more credible picture than just getting their own view and perception (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019). Though, observations are very time consuming so due to time and accessibility constraints, this was not possible and thus interviews were a better suit. Additionally, participant observations can lead to reactive effects due to the fact that the participants know that they are being observed. This problem is avoided to a quite large extent by instead conducting interviews, which is a further reason for the choice of this research design (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019).

Furthermore, in the study by Bobe and Kober (2020), which had a similar purpose as this study, a survey method was used where a questionnaire was sent out to heads of schools in Australian universities. The results were then statistically compiled and analyzed. It was therefore thought to be interesting to take another approach to get the perception of different leaders' leadership style, which led to the choice of conducting an interview study.

3.2.1 Interviewee selection

When selecting the interviewees for this study a purposive sampling was used, meaning that the selection of objects to collect data from was not done randomly. Rather the sampling was made with the purpose of choosing people who fitted to the study, so that the research purpose could be fulfilled (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019). Therefore a few criteria were created that needed to be fulfilled in the search for interviewees. Since the purpose of the study was to examine whether gender roles and leadership roles have an influence on leadership style and consequently on the use of management controls, the first criteria were that only people who possessed a leadership position, such as a manager with subordinates, were asked to participate. Secondly, since the purpose includes a comparison between men and women in leadership positions a second criteria was that the same number of both genders should be interviewed. In the selection process it was also important to get at least one man and one woman from each organization, instead of from different, to rule out the possibility of the organizational structure or culture affecting the potential difference in leadership style and characteristics between men and women. Thirdly, only people from Swedish organizations were selected since Hofstede's findings about the Swedish culture as

feminine was part of the analysis of the findings. Thus, the third criteria were for the persons to be Swedish and working in Sweden. Lastly, both public and private organizations were selected, to add a layer to the analysis in the form of seeing if there were any differences in leadership styles and characteristics among leaders from the two types of organizations. Further, this also led to one more contingency, beside the gender of the leader, being able to be controlled when analyzing and making conclusions from the findings. Thus, the last criteria were to find interviewees from both public and private organizations.

In total eight people in leadership positions have been interviewed for this study, see more information about each interviewee in table 3 in chapter 4. All of the interviewees fulfilled the criteria that were set up, except for one exception discussed below. The interviews varied in time and lasted between 25-45 minutes. All of the interviewees were interviewed separately and both interviewers were present throughout all interviews.

Difficulties occurred when trying to find interviewees for this study and we faced many rejections to our requests due to different reasons such as time constraint. Since the study was dependent on people willing to participate in interviews, one of the criteria had to be overlooked for some of the interviewees. This criterion was that there should be at least one man and one woman from each organization to rule out the possibility of organizational structure or culture affecting the results. In one of the organizations there was no female leader with subordinates available for interviews and thus this criterion was not fulfilled for interviewee 3 and 8.

3.2.2 Data collection

As mentioned before, interviews have been conducted to collect the empirical data of this study. The interviews were conducted via zoom and teams, with both audio and video on so that the interviewees could both be seen and heard. Being able to see the person gives the opportunity to read the person better when it comes to body language and mimic, in the different answers to the questions which can be beneficial. To conduct the interview via zoom also opens up the possibility to conduct interviews with people who are located further away, which was the case for some participants of this study. Though, there are also some limitations with not conducting the interviews in person that were faced during the study such as disturbances in the internet

connection. Thus, it could have been beneficial to conduct the interviews in person since this could have been avoided, but in general it worked smoothly.

The interviews conducted were semi-structured since an interview guide (see appendix 1) was used with pre-set questions to discuss with the interviewees. Though this was mainly a guide, and it did not need to be strictly followed. This type of interview was chosen since it brings on a flexibility that was advantageous since the interviewees had the possibility to freely answer the questions asked. Additionally, the interviewers had the possibility to ask follow-up questions when different things were unclear or if something else that was not included in the interview guide came up during the interviews (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019). Furthermore, semi-structured interviews are a fitting data collection method for exploratory studies like this one. This type of interview also allowed for the interviewees to more thoroughly explain their thoughts of the different questions and for the interviewers to ask them to elaborate more on different answers (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). The reason why a totally unstructured interview was not chosen was because the purpose of the study included a comparison of female and male leadership styles and characteristics. To be able to do a successful comparison it is beneficial to have the same questions for each interviewee, thus some kind of structure in the interviews were needed.

Moreover, the interviews conducted were recorded and transcribed. This was done since otherwise there is the risk of missing something the interviewees said or forgetting the way the interviewees said certain things, which could change the meaning of it. Hence, it brings on the opportunity to more thoroughly analyze the data collected from the interviews. It also facilitates the possibility to make quotations from the interviews and the risk of the data being influenced by values or biases from the researchers is decreased (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019). Furthermore, the interviewers could put greater focus on the things being said during the interview, than would be the case if focus would be needed for taking notes. In this way there was a bigger opportunity for the interviewers to catch up on things that were unclear and ask follow-up questions, which in turn led to a better outcome of the interviews.

3.2.3 Interview guide

When creating the interview guide (see appendix 1) that was used for the interviews conducted the baseline was existing theory and literature. From this, different questions were formulated from which the answers could help fulfill the purpose of this study. In the interview guide there was a mix of questions, including introductory ones to collect more general background information about the interviewee in question. Additionally, more open and indirect questions were included as well as more straightforward and direct questions (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019). To get as well formulated questions as possible, they were revised a couple of times to make sure they were relevant for the purpose of the study. The revising of the questions was also important to make sure that they were not formulated in a framing or leading way. This could help getting out better information from the interviews and in turn enhance the general quality of the study.

The theory that was used when developing the interview guide was mainly the social role theory and the theory of enabling and coercive control. These are the main theories used throughout the study and thus these were important to use when formulating the questions. From the interviews the purpose was to find out what leadership characteristics the different leaders possess, more specifically if they were more agentic/male or more communal/female in their leadership. It was also to see if their leadership style is more of the coercive or the enabling nature and if any connections between the characteristics and leadership styles could be found. Thus, the interview guide was developed by looking into these theories and creating questions that could provide answers to this.

3.3 Theory selection

The theory selected for this study is the social role theory and the theory of enabling and coercive control. The theory of enabling and coercive control was selected with inspiration from the study conducted by Bobe and Kober (2020). In their study they examined management control in relation to gender and leadership but focused on the theory of Simons' levers of control. It was therefore thought to be interesting to take another management control perspective in this topic and instead examine enabling and coercive controls. The use of this theory in these kinds of studies were also found to be a gap in the existing literature which was an additional reason for selecting this theory.

The social role theory was chosen since the purpose of this study included getting a gender perspective to leadership and to study different gender characteristics which is discussed in this theory and thus fits the purpose well. The theory has also been widely used in similar studies before (e.g., Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Baker, 2014) which is a further confirmation of the fit to this study. Hence, a choice was made to take the same theoretical direction as these previous studies.

3.4 Search for literature

A thorough search for literature has been done to review previous studies in the chosen topic for this thesis. This was conducted in databases such as LUBsearch and Google Scholar by using different keywords related to the topic. Examples of keywords that were used are leadership, gender role, characteristics, management control, social role theory, and enabling and coercive control. This led to the finding that there was a gap in the research field when it comes to gender perspective on leadership related to management control. There was one study made by Bobe and Kober (2020) that was found, who had studied this but besides from that not much else could be found. Hence this was an area found to need further research and that is where the purpose of this study grew from. Furthermore, Hofstede's study about national cultures were looked into and were thought to bring an additional interesting perspective to this area. This is also a perspective that is lacking in most previous studies which is why it was thought to be interesting to add it to this study and contribute to research.

3.5 Presentation of empirical data

The empirical discussion is presented in two overall theoretical themes. These themes were developed from the theory used for this study. In the social role theory, characteristics are discussed to a large extent, which are also attributed to men and women. Thus, one of the themes under which the empirical findings are presented, is characteristics. Further, another main focus in this study has been to examine how the use of management controls are affected by leadership style and characteristics. Hence, the second theme under which the empirical findings are presented is management controls. The interviewees were then categorized under these theoretical themes, into more specific subgroups depending on which characteristics and management controls they were found to display in their answers. That was done by coding the answers of the

interviewees. Both, direct and indirect questions were considered when allocating the interviewees to the different themes. Precise distinctions, based on the theoretical background and attributes of each theme, were sought in the answers and formed the basis for the allocation. The definitions of those theories presented in the theoretical chapter assisted in the distribution of the answers to the separate themes and subgroups.

3.6 Analysis of empirical data

A thematic analysis has been used in this thesis. This means that when examining the answers from the interviews different themes were searched for that would be used to discuss the findings (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019). A six-step process that has been developed by Braun and Clarke (2006) has been followed when this thematic analysis was done. These steps have not been followed strictly step-by-step though, but rather have been used as a process during the analysis phase, going back and forth between the steps. The first step according to the authors is "Familiarizing yourself with your data" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 87). Here the interviews have been transcribed and the data from them have been structured so it was easy to read through. After this, the data has been reviewed a couple of times to get an initial view of the findings. The next step is according to the authors "Generating initial codes" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 87). In this step, the data was read through, and different codes were created in the data collection. An example of how this coding was conducted is shown in figure 2 below. From these codes different themes were identified, which is where step 3, 4 and 5 entered. These steps are "3. Searching for themes: 4. Reviewing themes: 5. Defining and naming themes" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 87). These steps were all conducted with the theoretical framework in mind and the different themes that were identified and developed were derived from the theories. The themes that were developed were thus connected to the communal/female and agentic/male characteristics that have been identified in the social role theory, and also to the management controls that are discussed in the theories about enabling and coercive control. These four themes were then further combined and created the final themes, under which the analysis is presented in chapter five, to see if any connections between them could be found. Lastly step 6 was to produce the report, where the final analysis was made and concluded.

Figure 2. Example of coding of data

3.7 Ethical perspective

When taking an ethical perspective in business research there are four areas that are often discussed. These are "...whether there is *harm to participants*; whether there is a *lack of informed consent*; whether there is an *invasion of privacy*; whether *deception* is involved." (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019, p. 114). One precaution that has been taken to assure that the people participating in this study are not being harmed is to keep them and the organization they are working at anonymous. In some cases, there is the possibility to figure out the identity even though it is kept anonymous, for example by a presentation of the organization and the position the person in question is holding in that organization. Though for this study there was not a need to disclose much information about the organizations the participants are working at. Further, only a short presentation about the position the different participants are holding has been included and thus it would be difficult to figure out the persons' identity and this is limiting the risk of harm to the participants.

Moreover, to assure there was an informed consent from the interviewees to participate in this study an email was first sent out where the topic and purpose of the study, how the interview would be conducted and how long it would take were presented, with the question of whether or not they were willing to participate. Further, the interview guide that was used in the interviews were sent to the participants before the interviews, so that they were able to prepare themselves, but also to give them more ground to make an informed decision of whether to participate or not. Furthermore, all interviewees were asked, before starting the interview, if they gave their consent to record the interview or not.

To limit the risk of there being an invasion of privacy for the participants of this study, the questions asked in the interviews were formulated in a way that they would not be too private. Some questions that were asked can be perceived as personal, since characteristics and leadership style of individual leaders were studied, but not in particular private. Though, as stated by Bell, Bryman and Harley (2019) it is difficult to know beforehand what individual participants will perceive as too private. Humans work differently and thus there was a need to handle each case separately from the others and make sure each interviewee had the opportunity to not answer all questions or to withdraw answers they were not comfortable to give. Furthermore, as already mentioned, all participants are being kept anonymous, which also lowers the risk of invasion of privacy.

For deception to be involved the research is presented as something other than what it is (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019). To avoid this, caution has been taken to as clearly as possible, both through email contact and during the interviews, explain what the study is about and the actual purpose of it. Additionally, the consent for recording of the interview was given before the interview questions were asked rather than after, so that the interviewees were aware of the recording from the beginning.

The topic of anonymity is also discussed in a report about good research practice by the Swedish Research Council (2017). Four concepts in the area of research ethics are discussed, with anonymity being one of them. It is explained as not being able to connect an individual person to

a specific answer or result. As explained above all participants of this study are anonymous and no answers are able to be connected to a specific person. Furthermore, the concept of confidentiality is also discussed in the report in the sense that information given in confidence should not be passed on. If there was any information some of the participants wished not to be included in the study, this wish was met, to keep the confidentiality.

3.8 Research quality

When assessing the quality of a conducted research the criteria of reliability and validity is often used. These are more applicable for quantitative research though, and therefore these criteria need to be adjusted for qualitative studies. Two alternative criteria have been developed for assessing qualitative research, which are trustworthiness and authenticity, with trustworthiness being the one mostly looked at. This criterion is further divided into four sub-criteria which are credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019).

To enhance the credibility of this study multiple interviews were conducted. In total eight interviews have been done and this led to the ability to make more generalized and credible conclusions from our findings. Furthermore, follow up questions were asked to ensure that there are no misunderstandings, which also increases the credibility of this study. Though the generalization is limited since only Swedish leaders have been studied, and thus it is hard to make any generalizations to leaders in other countries.

The second criteria of transferability refer to in which extent the results of the study can be transferred to other settings. One way to enhance the transferability is to have thick descriptions of the study. This way others can more easily judge if the findings can be transferred to other settings or not (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019). The study has, mostly in this chapter, been explained and described as thoroughly as this kind of thesis allows for. Thus, it should be transferable to a large extent. Possible settings this study could be transferred to, are other countries to study the same thing and see if there are different results. This could give a sense of how much the cultural aspect affects leadership style.

To increase the dependability a thorough documentation of the process of this study has been done, which is presented in this chapter. Additionally, the interviews were recorded and transcribed to make sure the exact sayings of the interviewees were captured, and nothing was missed. Further, Bell, Bryman and Harley (2019) mean the dependability of a research study can be enhanced by sending a copy of the interview guide to the participants, which also has been done.

The last criterion is confirmability which applies that there should not be too much subjectivity in the research study conducted, and it should be done in good faith (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019). It is not possible to rule out subjectivity completely, but the authors of this study have tried to the largest extent possible to not include personal values.

Furthermore, since semi-structured interviews were conducted there is the risk of a decreased reliability of the data collected. This since it can be difficult to conduct the same kind of interviews again in a new study when the structure of the different interviews has not been completely the same. Additionally, there is the risk of interviewer bias influencing the data collected. The tone of the interviewer or different comments made can affect the answers the interviewees provide, and this can thereby affect the data quality (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). The interviewers of this study though have to as large extent as possible tried to avoid biases influencing the interviews to make the data quality as high as possible. This was done by trying to not comment too much on the answers that were provided, except if some clarification was needed, having a neutral tone and asking open questions.

4. Empirical discussion

The eight interviewees in this study were all people in management and leadership positions in Swedish organizations. An equal number of men and women were interviewed. All interviewees had significant work experience in leadership positions. Even though some of them had only a few years of experience in the organization they are currently working, they had previous experience from other organizations they worked in before. More information about the specific organizations and their role and responsibilities as leaders can be found below in table 3.

Interviewee	Gender	Years as manager in the organization	Organization	Role as manager
Interviewee 1	Man	18 years	Private organization in the elderly care sector.	Responsibility for economics, employee environment and development of facilities.
Interviewee 2	Man	12 years	Public organization responsible for healthcare, public transport, culture and business development in Skåne, Sweden.	Head of a unit working with knowledge-based medicine.
Interviewee 3	Man	3 years	Private consultancy organization providing a platform for data structuring.	Responsible for the consultants at the company and for the delivery as a whole from the company.

Interviewee 4	Man	13 years	Public organization responsible for healthcare, public transport, culture and business development in Skåne, Sweden.	Head of a department. Responsible for developing subordinates' skills, coaching them and planning different projects.
Interviewee 5	Woman	1 year as manager in the organization but have prior experience in a leadership position.	Private organization in the elderly care sector.	Responsible for a unit in the company and making sure everything is functioning.
Interviewee 6	Woman	1 year as manager in the organization but totally 15 years of experience in a leadership position.	Public organization responsible for healthcare, public transport, culture and business development in Skåne, Sweden.	Head of a unit. Responsible for leading the subordinates in this unit.
Interviewee 7	Woman	1,5 years as manager in the organization but totally 7 years' experience of being in a leadership position.	Public organization responsible for healthcare, public transport, culture and business development in Skåne, Sweden.	In charge of a supportive unit, with three other managers as subordinates, who in turn have other employees in the units as subordinates.

Interviewee 8	Woman	6 years	Private organization providing products in the areas of heat transfer, separation and fluid handling.	Responsible for the finance department and to lead, manage and develop her team.

Table 3. Information about the interviewees.

Drawing from the interviews and the interviewees' answers to the direct and indirect questions, specific characteristics could be seen in their leadership style. The shown leadership characteristics can then be further aligned with characteristics that are either seen as communal (e.g., being relation-oriented, supportive, etc.) or agentic (e.g., being result-oriented, distanced, etc.). Moreover, the use of different management control tools that can be classified as either enabling or coercive controls were made evident within their answers. Especially within the direct questions, it could be seen that most of the interviewees felt more in line with enabling controls, as they classified themselves as participative, learning-oriented, and being flexible. However, agentic controls such as restricting subordinates by using rules and routines could also be seen throughout the subordinates.

4.1 Leadership characteristics

4.1.1 Characteristics shown among all interviewees

In the interviews conducted in this study, all interviewees showed some communal characteristics whereas some showed more than others. By their answers to the more direct questions asked, interviewees 1, 3, 4, 6, 7 and 8 choose the answers that are more aligned with communal characteristics. They for example answered that they perceive themselves to be relation-oriented, tolerant and compassionate. Further they perceive themselves as learning-oriented, flexible and collaborative which also points to them having more communal than agentic characteristics.

There was one characteristic that stuck out since it was shown by all of the interviewees. This characteristic was to be communicative which is one of the communal characteristics identified in the theory. Communication between the interviewees and their subordinates was taking place in

both a formal and informal way. They all discussed how they have frequent meetings with their subordinates, both individually and in groups, and how they send out different information through emails and other forums to keep transparency within the departments and units.

> *"I do send out emails. And then of course with the staff meetings, the bigger staff meetings where I'm at and smaller staff meetings. And I also have a weekly letter that I send out."* - Interviewee 5

> *"We have a mixture of meetings. We have our unit meetings every second week and then we have a lot of communication by email, and we also have a home page where we try to post big news."* - Interviewee 2

4.1.2 Interviewees characterized as caring and relationship-oriented

Two male and two female interviewees (interviewee 1, 3 and 6), one from a public and the rest from a private organization, emphasized that they think it is important to pay attention to their subordinates by listening, seeing, and acknowledging them.

> *"To see people is to make them grow in their job and make them develop."* – Interviewee 1

> *"They need my attention, I think. I think they need my listening, that's what I mean with the attention, that they need me to listen. They don't need my advice all the time, but they need my ear."* - Interviewee 6

This indicates that they are concerned with others and are unselfish which are communal/female characteristics. The interviewees demonstrate with this that they care about their subordinates, not only on a working level but also personally. Thereby, they also show respect towards their subordinates, as they take them seriously and acknowledge their thoughts and ideas within discussions. Interviewee 8 also showed clear communal characteristics by stating that relationship and interpersonal connections in the team are very important to her. She mentioned thereby that subordinates should fit in the team, since this is necessary for enhancing a communicative and cooperative work environment.

> *"It is very important that this person you are hiring fits in the team. Because otherwise you will maybe have a person knowing everything about the topic, but if it's not working with the team, you can create issues with other people."* - Interviewee 8

One of the women from the public organization (interviewee 7) was the interviewee who showed the most communal traits in her leadership. She emphasized how she thinks it is important to be understanding towards the subordinates. With this she meant to understand and see them when they for example are going through a rough time in their personal life, if they are sick or the like. She means that this can affect the subordinates' ability to perform their work and thus having an understanding from the manager in these situations can facilitate for them. If this understanding is not there, she meant it could create an additional problem which would add up to what is already going on in that person's life.

> *"That's all about the empathic things and then to start working with the situation and that person's abilities, or what situation or what the baggage you have with you, or you know, you can't just be one person at work. It all depends on your life, more or less. If you have a cold that day or if you have problems at home, or you know different stages in life…"* - Interviewee 7

This shows that interviewee 7 is caring for others and is compassionate and has a lot of empathy towards her subordinates which are also communal/female characteristics. Furthermore, she is emotionally expressive and demonstrates a concern about the overall well-being of their subordinates, not only in a work-related matter. Interviewee 1 also showed similar traits when stating that he thinks it is important to stand behind his subordinates and have their backs in the things they do. By this, he also makes clear that he is supportive towards his subordinates and thereby builds team spirit and enhances a feeling of equality. Further, he said how he thinks it is important to make sure that the subordinates feel safe.

4.1.3 Interviewees characterized as helpful and supportive

Female as well as male leaders among the interviewees have displayed how they are helpful and supportive with their subordinates, which are further communal characteristics. Interviewee 1 mentioned in the interview that when subordinates have problems and need help, he is there to support and help them and sees this as important. This is shared by interviewees 3, 4, 6 and 8, who work in both public and private organizations. They also think it is important to coach the subordinates and help them develop and find their ways. These interviewees thereby show communal/female characteristics, by making evident that supporting their subordinates is a key attribute of their leadership style. Moreover, interviewees 7 and 8 see themselves as informal

managers and want to send a signal to their subordinates to always be able to come to them if they need anything.

> *"And then we talk about it and I'm quite an informal boss, so I don't want people to be afraid of me or afraid of asking."* - Interviewee 7

This again points out that these interviewees are supportive and helpful which are communal characteristics identified.

4.1.4 Interviewees characterized as uncompetitive and learning-oriented

Moreover, one male from a private organization and one female from the public organization (interviewees 3 and 7), mentioned that they do not like to measure people and compare subordinates with each other. Interviewee 3 is of the opinion that measuring and rating the performance of subordinates is counterproductive and does not create any progress or value for the organization or the individual. Additionally, he was describing that he is more concerned about a forward-looking approach than a summative assessment where the past performance of subordinates is rated, which shows he is more learning-oriented.

> *"We don't measure performance because performance is not easy to measure at all and it becomes counterproductive to measure it because it takes more time to define a measure than it takes to work with performance."* - Interviewee 3

Furthermore, interviewee 7 states clearly that comparing and measuring people has no value, as everyone is different and thus, she does not like to put a stamp on people by rating them and their performance and create the impression that one subordinate is better than the others.

> *"You have to be quite equal I think, but that's what I think is so difficult because then every person is special. So, you can't put everyone in a box. Because what is a high achiever? Some people can never, if you take those measurements, be a high achiever. Is that good or bad? That doesn't have to be bad because you always try to achieve as good as you can. So that's why I don't like to put stamps on people because we get a society that is just high achievers and maybe that's 1% of the staff in those measurements. But you can be very good with your colleagues. You can be very social. You can work very well by trying to get a good feeling in the office and you're nice to others. That's also an achievement, but you never take that comparison, so I don't."* - Interviewee 7

By stating that, the interviewees make evident that they do not like to pick one measure to measure everyone, as performance can differ a lot between subordinates and measures do not necessarily reflect the performance of a subordinate. Measuring the performance of an employee is therefore challenging, especially with a specific measurement. Both interviewees 3 and 7 show with their answers communal characteristics. Not comparing and considering each subordinate as an individual in his or her own right, indicates as well that they accept others and others' direction. Furthermore, it shows that they support their subordinates and treat them with respect and that they do not possess competitive traits.

Additionally, one of the female leaders from one of the private organizations (interviewee 8) mentioned that she does not think that it is necessary for a subordinate to know everything at the beginning, since knowledge is gained over time and subordinates can develop an understanding for work-related tasks over time. Thereby, she also analyzes and discusses the improvements of each subordinate and focuses on providing them positive feedback and communication development opportunities. This is also showing that she is learning-oriented which further demonstrates that she has communal/female characteristics. She thereby stated that the organization she is working in does not have a blaming culture. With this she means that they do not focus on who did something wrong but rather why something went wrong and trying to find a solution to the problem. She expressed that she likes this kind of culture and thinks this creates more trust among the employees, which further facilitates learning. Thereby she shows additional communal characteristics such as being tolerant and friendly.

4.1.5 Leaders characterized as task- and results-oriented

One male and one female interviewee, one from a private and one from a public organization, reveal more agentic than communal characteristics in the interviews conducted. These were interviewees 2 and 5 who showed to be task-oriented, results-oriented, demanding and assertive. There were also some agentic characteristics identified among the interviewees who predominantly showed communal characteristics. Interviewee 6, who is working in a public organization, perceived herself to be more outcome-oriented than learning-oriented which is more leaning towards the agentic characteristics. Further, interviewee 4, who is also working in a public organization, perceived himself to be more task-oriented than relation-oriented, something that

was also evident throughout the entire interview, in that he placed considerable emphasis on the effective and solution-oriented way of working. Moreover, he stated that being directive and giving directions is one of three things subordinates need the most from him when conducting their work, meaning that they need clear direction on how to conduct their work. This again demonstrates an agentic leadership approach, where he is speaking assertively and being directive.

> *"But we need direction as well, so it's important for me that we have a shared understanding about goals and directions, so to speak. So, we know where we're heading."*
> - Interviewee 4

4.1.6 Interviewees characterized as distanced

Interviewee 5 considered herself to be more distanced in her leadership which is an additional agentic trait identified. Moreover, interviewee 2 mentioned that in his opinion it can be inefficient to have too much of an open-door policy where employees can come to him whenever. With this he meant that there is not enough time for him to involve himself too much in the subordinates. Too much open-door policy could lead to discussions going too far beyond their actual work which he meant there is not really time for.

> *"Sometimes you need to just say to people that well, sorry you will have to handle this for yourself. I can't help you more than this. So, I've seen some examples of management where people have a very much open-door policy, but those people tend to get overloaded with very low-grade information because then people will start using that open door and you know they will tell you about anything."* - Interviewee 2

This demonstrates traits such as him being more restrictive and not very personally concerned with his subordinates which are additional agentic characteristics. Furthermore, the answers of interviewee 2 show that he is more distanced towards his subordinates, even though he did not select this in the direct questions. Moreover, although he showed some communal characteristics or has placed himself as rather communal in some of the direct questions, at the same time, he saw it as a weak point, thereby showing again agentic character traits in his leadership style.

> *"I think I would have been more flexible. Sometimes it's a weakness too because things get more complicated."* - Interviewee 2

4.2 Management controls

4.2.1 Transparency and knowledge transfer

All of the interviewees mentioned the importance of open communication and transparent knowledge transfer. Frequent meetings in smaller and larger groups are used to transfer information and provide all employees with the knowledge needed to understand local processes and their role and location in the organization, as well as to create global and internal transparency. Besides meetings, other channels like emails, newsletters, or the intranet are used for this purpose. Information is also shared with different units to provide subordinates and managers with the knowledge that is needed to conduct their work and to create a general understanding.

> *"One of the key reasons behind the organization that we have is actually knowledge transfer"* - Interviewee 3

Interviewee 1 explained how different employees were lifted in meetings they have when they for example had gone through an education, to be able to share the gained knowledge with the rest of the team.

> *"For example, if somebody is going through an education, we're lifting that person up in the meeting, so they can share what they have learned and they think is good for the other staff to know, and that's really relevant. But also in smaller meetings, they're sharing their knowledge."* - Interviewee 1

Interviewee 2 also mentioned a similar way of working with knowledge transfer. He explained how every second week they have meetings where they have one or two people in the team who present the tasks and projects they are currently working on. In this way their work and different things they learn throughout the process is shared with their colleagues and knowledge can in this way be transferred. In addition, interviewee 4 and 6 emphasized the importance of knowledge transfer in their departments and provided examples of how this is done.

> *"So I think it's very important since they are experts in different fields, so our approach is to take a day and provide for internal workshops where they sort of share knowledge and insights and also before assigning a task to someone, if there is possibility to join a task even though it's not their sort of main area, when it comes to education or stuff like that, but they find it interesting and want to sort of learn more. So, on the job learning is very important as it potentially can broaden what they can do. And since we were working with*

a huge organization, there is a huge possibility to learn a lot, right? So, it's very important that we provide for that." - Interviewee 4

"I think that's quite an important thing. We put a lot of energy into that, and we do it in different ways. So, we promote it. I think that's a higher priority that we should promote knowledge exchange between us. So that is in different meetings we have, that could be films, that could be on that we write to each other when we've been somewhere and so yeah, knowledge exchanges are something that we put effort into. "- Interviewee 6

Interviewee 8 also emphasized how she thinks it is important to have an open working environment, where knowledge transfer is promoted. By having this, she has the opinion that trust can be built within the team which can enhance problem solving and communication.

4.2.2 Participation

Many of the interviewees made evident that participation of subordinates in different organizational decisions is an important part of their leadership style. Interviewees 1, 3 and 4, consisting of male leaders from both public and private organizations, in particular showed that they rely on the intelligence and competencies of their subordinates. Problems are addressed directly and learning opportunities are achieved, whereby formulizations can also be repaired. Interviewee 1 spoke of his subordinates taking part in setting up how to reach different goals. In this process, solutions are sought together to overcome obstacles and subordinates participate in the decision-making process. This was also stated by interviewee 3, who said that his subordinates take part in setting procedures and processes. In doing so, they are empowered to realize their own potential and to continuously learn and improve. He further explained how he gives his subordinates mandates to work independently and freely since he believes they have the potential to do this and that they understand some things better than he does since they are the ones directly working with the tasks. Though he also explained how a self-management strategy is used in the organization he is working in, which thus could be a reason for this involvement of the employees. Interviewee 4 also emphasized the importance of employee participation in process development and the formulation of procedures, as well as the importance of coming up with possible improvements.

"If I say how they are supposed to do things, it often goes wrong" - Interviewee 1

"We have a number of set procedures, of course, and the key thing is that people have been, or the team has been involved in setting all of those processes." - Interviewee 3

4.2.3 Flexibility

In addition, interviewees 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7 and 8 mentioned flexibility many times in their interviews. Although most companies have implemented rules and routines, flexibility within these routines is welcomed and, in some cases, even required by the leaders. Of course, the degree of flexibility varies from leader to leader. Interviewee 5, who is more agentic in her characteristics, has shown she uses enabling controls. She explained how she sets clear goals for subordinates, but the procedure for achieving this goal is left to the subordinates themself. They also have the possibility to make changes in the procedures in place for their work. Though she also mentioned how they first need to come to her before changing their work processes and how she in some cases says no to the suggested change. Both interviewees 7 and 8, emphasized the importance of giving their employees trust in their work and relying on their capabilities, which further shows on enabling controls. Interviewee 7 said that her employees are competent enough to make their own decisions, which is why she gives them the freedom to create their own way of doing things. She explained how she sets a vision to guide her subordinates, but that she then trusts them to work towards this vision freely. She thinks it is important to give them this trust and freedom because she then thinks it will be more enjoyable for the subordinates to work. Additionally, she explained how she is not a rules person and does not like to set too many rules which further shows on enabling features in her leadership style. Interviewee 6 also emphasized that she gives her subordinates a lot of trust and flexibility in their work. She thinks this can create more engagement among her subordinates which she thinks is very important. Interviewee°3 even said in his interview that rules restrict subordinates and that it's more effective with fewer rules in place.

"I think as few rules as possible and common sense. It is better to evolve a common sense kind of approach." - Interviewee 3

Moreover, the interviewees see the formal systems in the company more as a means of support than as a strict set of rules. Even in the organizations that work in the elderly care sector, where rules play a major role, interviewee 1 says that his subordinates have the opportunity to work outside these routines and that this is expected if necessary.

Furthermore, interviewee 2, who showed mainly agentic characteristics, also uses some enabling controls in his leadership. He does not have a lot of set rules and procedures for how tasks should be performed, and thus freedom is given for conducting these. He also explained how his subordinates have the possibility to make changes in their work processes if this is needed which further shows on an enabling leadership style. Though he also mentioned that since the type of work tasks they have in his department can be quite complex it can be hard to set rules and procedures for the work.

4.2.4 Rules and routines

Most of the interviewees showed enabling control characteristics. Nevertheless, some leaders use coercive controls when it comes to the accomplishment of work tasks. All interviewees reported rules and routines that are applied in their work environment. Some interviewees were quite flexible with these and saw these rules and routines as rather restrictive (e.g., interviewee 3). Other interviewees, however, felt that rules and routines were beneficial. For example, interviewee 4 considered that a lack of structure and rules can lead to inefficient work. Interviewee 1 also stated in his interview that routines and rules are important to give employees security by knowing what to do. This interviewee and interviewee 2 expressed the opinion that more rules and routines are needed than currently exist in the respective company. Further, showing the use of coercive controls, interviewee 2 clearly stated in the interview that achieving results is the most important thing. He explained how he is very results driven in his leadership and put focus on how to solve different tasks. Precise results are defined in advance, and these must be fulfilled independently by the subordinates. Even if the subordinates have some freedom and flexibility in their approach, they must consult him about it. Interviewee 5 also expects her subordinates to discuss their approach with her before making decisions, providing them with little flexibility and restricting their ability to operate.

>*"Of course, they have the freedom to change the procedures of how the goals are acquired, but they always have a discussion with me first. Sometimes I say no."* - Interviewee 5

Moreover, interviewee 8 explained how they have set job descriptions and procedures for every employee, which also show coercive features of control of the leadership. When asked if the employees have the possibility to make changes in these procedures, she said that there is the possibility to raise suggestions of changes and other things the employees would like to do.

However, this has to be discussed with the manager first before any changes can be made and thus the flexibility is a bit restricted.

> *"So, they come up with suggestions, but it's still me as a manager that decides how we do it because I know what everybody is capable of"* - Interviewee 8

The interviewee also explained though how the managers in the organization she is working in also get a bit directed, and there are some mandatory assignments for all managers, such as performance measures in place. This could thus have an effect on the controls that are used in her leadership.

5. Analysis

Drawing from the empirical findings the characteristics and management controls that were evident among the interviewees are displayed in table 4.

	Communal	**Agentic**	**Enabling**	**Coercive**
Interviewee 1	Communicative Relation-oriented Concerned with other / Caring Helpful Supportive		Participative Flexibility Transparency Knowledge transfer	Rules and Routines
Interviewee 2	Communicative	Task-oriented Result-oriented Distanced	Flexibility Transparency Knowledge transfer	Rules and Routines
Interviewee 3	Communicative Relation-oriented Concerned with other / Caring Learning-oriented Helpful Supportive		Participative Flexibility Transparency Knowledge transfer	
Interviewee 4	Communicative Learning-oriented Helpful Supportive	Task-oriented	Participative Transparency Knowledge transfer	Rules and Routines
Interviewee 5	Communicative	Task-oriented Result-oriented Distanced	Flexibility Transparency Knowledge transfer	Rules and Routines
Interviewee 6	Communicative Relation-oriented Concerned with other / Caring Helpful Supportive	Result-oriented	Flexibility Transparency Knowledge transfer	
Interviewee 7	Communicative Relation-oriented Concerned with other / Caring Learning-oriented Helpful Supportive Empathetic		Flexibility Transparency Knowledge transfer	

| Interviewee 8 | Communicative
Relation-oriented
Concerned with
other / Caring
Learning-oriented
Helpful
Supportive | | Flexibility
Transparency
Knowledge transfer | Rules and Routines |

Table 4. Characteristics and management controls shown among the interviewees.

5.1 Connection between gender and characteristics

The social role theory explains how there are different perceptions and expectations from society on gender roles which has an effect on the way people behave. It is explained that since there are different reactions from society when people deviate from these expectations people tend to behave according to them (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Eagly & Wood, 2012). Thus, from this theory it could be expected that the men interviewed would show characteristics which are more agentic/male, since this is, or at least has been, in the expectations from society. Further, the women interviewed could be expected to show characteristics that are more communal/female (Eagly & Karau, 1991; Eagly & Wood, 2012). Nevertheless, this is not what has been found from the interviews conducted. In total, eight participants were interviewed, four men and four women. Among these, only two showed predominantly agentic/male characteristics, one being a woman and one being a man (interviewee 2 and 5). The rest of the interviewees mainly showed communal characteristics such as being helpful, tolerant, flexible and communicative, and some of them barely showed any agentic characteristics at all. The agentic characteristics that stood out the most, by them being shown by the most interviewees, were to be task- and results-oriented. Four of the interviewees were found to possess these characteristics (interviewee 2, 4, 5 & 6), among which there were as many women as men, and thus no differences between the genders could be found.

Moreover, one woman and one man among the interviewees (interviewee 3 & 7) explained how they do not like to compare different subordinates to each other since people are different and have different things, they are good at and thus they do not see a point in a comparison. To be competitive and comparing are agentic/male characteristics (Eagly & Karau, 1991; Eagly & Wood, 2012) and thus these interviewees show the opposite of this and can be seen as more communal/female. Since there is both a man and a woman showing these characteristics, it can not

be said that any differences between the genders can be found when it comes to these characteristics either.

From the results of the empirical findings of this study it can thus not be said that there is a connection between women and communal/female characteristics or men and agentic/male characteristics. Thus, the traditional gender roles explained in the social role theory did not show to have an effect on the leadership characteristics. Though as discussed in the theory chapter, perceptions of what is attributed to men and women has changed over time (Eagly, Wood & Diekman, 2000). Hence, the more traditional perception of what is expected from men and women that is explained in the social role theory is not necessarily the same as in today's society. This might be one explanation to why the results do not show this pre-expected connection between the gender roles and leadership characteristics.

Even though the findings have not shown that there are these connections between the traditional gender roles and leadership characteristics, as explained above, some features of it could still be seen. Interviewee 7, who is a woman, stood out from the other interviewees when it comes to some communal/female characteristics. She clearly showed characteristics such as being friendly, affectionate, empathetic and caring for others. These are typical communal/female characteristics, which according to theory is more expected from women than from men. Additionally, she explained how she does not like to compare subordinates to each other since everyone is different and thus, she thinks there is no point in ranking people. This further shows her possessing communal/female characteristics (Eagly & Karau, 1991; Eagly & Wood, 2012). The fact that it is a woman who most clearly is possessing these characteristics falls under the expectations in the social role theory. Hence, even though no clear connection can be made between the gender roles and communal and agentic characteristics, it is an interesting finding that the person who is most clearly showing characteristics attributed to females, is a woman.

Moreover, studies using the social role theory have found a connection between gender roles and leadership roles. These results have shown that men usually are more task-oriented in leadership while women are more interpersonally-oriented. These results are more in line with what the social role theory is saying (Eagly & Karau, 1991), and thus the findings from the study of this thesis

could also be expected to show similar results. As previously explained though, this is not the case. It can be seen that there is not a significant difference between the genders in the likelihood to take on a specific leadership style. According to our results, men take on a more communal/female leadership style, such as being more relation-oriented, to the same extent as women do (e.g., interviewee 1, 3, 6 & 7).

Furthermore, as discussed in the theory chapter, the perception of what is good leadership has changed over time. Nowadays it can be seen that traits that are classified as communal/female, such as encouragement of collaboration, being flexible and showing empathetic traits such as caring for the subordinates, are seen as good leadership traits (Ivanov, McFadden & Anyu, 2021). These are traits that have been shown by all of the interviewees, and thus also by as many women as men. Hence, a possible explanation for the findings in this study could be that both genders are taking on more communal/female characteristics in their leadership as this is seen as good. This would also be in line with one of the theses made above, about men becoming more female. In this study it can be seen that the majority of the interviewed men show communal/female characteristics in their leadership style. Therefore, it can be assumed that these traits have gained in importance for leadership positions and thus are more visible in male leaders nowadays. Another explanation for these findings could be Swedish culture. Since Swedish culture is perceived as feminine there might be cultural norms and expectations on the leadership style and characteristics. This could possibly influence the selection of leaders in Swedish companies, leading to there not being significant differences between genders and leaders showing more communal/female traits.

5.2 Connection between characteristics and management control

5.2.1 Communal characteristics and enabling control

At the outset, it was assumed that leaders with communal characteristics would be more likely to use enabling controls. After conducting our interviews, most interviewees were found to have communal characteristics. This was evident not only from the direct questions but also from the indirect questions, where the interviewees were able to give open-ended answers. In doing so, many of them pointed out communal attributes that are in line with the theory (Eagly & Karau, 1991; Eagly & Wood, 2012). Accordingly, communication is one of the communal characteristics

that all interviewees have shown and can therefore be assumed to be one of the most important characteristics for the leaders. Moreover, most interviewees (e.g., interviewee 1, 7 & 8) also put emphasis on being helpful and supportive, which can be seen as another important communal trait.

Communal behaviors, such as speaking tentatively, accepting others' opinions and direction, or not paying attention to oneself (Eagly & Wood, 2012; Eagly & Johannessen-Schmidt, 2001), were demonstrated by most interviewees (e.g., interviewee 1 & 7). Attributes of good leaders, such as collaborative working and employee participation (e.g., Ivanov, McFadden & Anyu, 2021) were especially considered by male interviewees as one of the most important tools when working with their subordinates (e.g., interviewee 3). In particular, the collaborative way of working, which most interviewees follow, is one of the main attributes of enabling controls. Participation is at the center of the use of enabling controls. By involving subordinates in decision-making and in setting rules and routines, as well as incorporating the opinions of subordinates in the implementation of their work, an efficient exchange of knowledge is possible. In addition, the knowledge of subordinates can be used in decision-making (Ahrens & Chapman, 2004; Adler & Borys, 1996). In order to create an environment in which this exchange is possible and encouraged, subordinates must be treated with respect and be encouraged. Additionally, it is beneficial to foster a surrounding in which employees are not being blamed for mistakes but rather encouraged to try different approaches (e.g., interviewee 8). The interviewees who demonstrated these communal/female characteristics also worked in an environment where, according to their statements, employees were involved in decision-making (e.g., interviewees 1, 3, 4, 6, 7). In this context, the type of the company, private or public, did not show to have an impact on the extent to which participation and collaboration has been used.

Another component that can be seen as one of the more important ones, that is perceived as good leadership according to literature (Ivanov, McFadden & Anyu, 2021), but also as an enabling control (Ahrens & Chapman, 2004; Adler & Borys, 1996), is flexibility. Flexibility in the performance and approach of their work activities enables creative and efficient work. Here, too, the interviewees who showed communal character traits have emphasized how important flexibility is to them. Subordinates should have the freedom to act independently and are required to make decisions and find solutions when performing their work activities. Even the interviewees

(interviewee 2 & 5) that showed more agentic characteristics made use of flexibility as an enabling control to some extent, which further highlights the importance of flexibility. Thereby, no differences were seen between public and private organizations.

Furthermore, the interviewees that were found to have communal characteristics like being communicative and caring, were also found to be more transparent. Information sharing and knowledge transfer was realized by frequent meetings and through several other channels like emails or the intranet. It was also found to be an important tool for all interviewees, as all of them, regardless gender or organization type, made use of communication and transparency to some extent. This open communication fostered knowledge transfer and again enabled subordinates to work independently and enhanced the decision-making process. Thus, a connection between the use of enabling controls and communal character traits is recognizable here.

When using enabling controls, rules and routines are kept to a minimum. Strict rules are seen as counterproductive. Instead, rules and routines should serve as a framework within which action can be taken rather than as fool proof systems. Leaders who apply this approach rely on the intelligence and competence of their employees and on their independent work (Ahrens & Chapman, 2004; Adler & Borys, 1996). In the interviews, it became apparent that most of the interviewees who demonstrated communal characteristics such as supportive, flexible, tolerant, and above all collaborative or willing to compromise, also give their subordinates the freedom to make decisions independently. These leaders also set as few rules as possible. Trust played a major role for most leaders, as the majority of them mentioned. The rules set often serve only as a support system and not as strict rules. Some of the interviewees made almost no use of rules (e.g., interviewee 3) and thus took a very open and autonomous approach.

Elaborating on previous studies (e.g., Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Bobe & Kober, 2020), it could be seen that a democratic leadership style which has been found to mostly be used by women, shows similarities to enabling controls, which can draw the conclusion that leaders with female characteristics are more likely to use enabling controls in their leadership style. According to the results from the conducted interviews, the conclusion can be made that there is a conspicuous correlation between communal/female characteristics and enabling controls. All interviewees that

showed communal characteristics, such as compassionate, sensitive, caring, cooperative, accepting, and empathetic, also made an extensive use of enabling controls, depending on the organizational structure, by fostering especially flexibility and participation in their leadership style. Though it could not be found that there was a specific correlation between the gender roles and the use of enabling controls. Men in leadership positions use enabling controls as much as women do. This again could be the case due to Swedish culture, as this could affect the selection of leaders in Swedish companies, leading to less differences between genders.

5.2.2 Agentic characteristics and coercive control

A few of the interview partners showed characteristics of agentic behavior in their answers (interviewee 2 & 5), both from different gender and different types of organizations. These interviewees described their leadership style as direct, demanding, and task- and result-oriented. In the indirect questions it also became apparent that they tend to make problem-focused suggestions, which also showed that they are mainly focused on the results and outcome of a task. Thereby, less of a cooperative and participative leadership approach was followed, but rather a more directive one. Particularly noticeable was that being distanced was one of the agentic characteristics that was shown the most by these two leaders (Eagly & Wood, 2012; Eagly & Johannessen-Schmidt, 2001) and that the use of rules and routines was one of the most important tools used from the coercive controls, which was also shown by interviewee 1, 4 and 8 (Ahrens & Chapman, 2004; Adler & Borys, 1996). In this context, it was also found that these leaders use a few controls that can be classified as more coercive, such as setting predefined results. Both interviewees tended to leave their subordinates to their own devices. The subordinates must independently give feedback to the leaders after completing a task and also independently approach the leader if problems arise. Further, both leaders have expressed that subordinates should only consult them if necessary and that they do not always have the time to help or support their subordinates, again highlighting agentic characteristics. One of the interviewees said that her subordinates are given some degree of flexibility but must first discuss decisions with her, which again indicates that coercive controls are being used. The other interviewee, instead, also described that he likes to give his subordinates the freedom to make decisions independently and that he prefers to provide them with a certain degree of flexibility, which corresponds to the use of enabling controls. Thereby it could be seen that even though both interviewees were showing more

agentic characteristics, not only coercive controls were used but also enabling controls. Both interview partners also explained that they require their subordinates to work autonomously. Although this is a characteristic of agentic behavior, it also corresponds to the use of enabling controls.

As in previous studies (e.g., Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Bobe & Kober, 2020), where similarities between autocratic leaders and coercive controls could be seen, a slight connection between agentic characteristics and coercive controls is recognizable here as well. This since the two interviewees who showed the most agentic characteristics, also seemed to use coercive controls to the largest extent. Nevertheless, the findings were inconclusive, as these two interviewees have not exclusively made use of coercive controls. They have also shown that enabling controls, such as giving their subordinates freedom in how to work towards different goals were used to some extent. This is also in line with the findings of other studies, in which for example no clear relationship between agentic characteristics and diagnostic controls was discernible. However, even though there is no clear relation between agentic characteristics and the use of coercive controls, it is still visible that the two interviewees that showed the most agentic characteristics also made the most use of coercive controls. Therefore, there could be a correlation between these, though it is questionable to make any conclusions about this since the sample size is too small and only two out of the eight interviewees were seen as agentic.

5.2.3 Organizational structure and rules and routines

Throughout the interviews, most interviewees referred to the organizational structure in the company they are working with and made evident how this influences their leadership style, especially the use of rules and routines. It has been shown that the organizational structure can either support or constrain the leadership style of the different interviewees. An organic organizational structure opens the way for fewer rules and less standardized procedures and an open communication (Ahrens & Chapman, 2004). Thus, the widespread use of enabling controls could be affected by both leadership characteristics and style but also by organizational structures and procedures. For example, interviewee 3 explained that a self-management strategy is used in the organization he is working with. Hence, this can have an effect on his leadership style, as this

organizational factor affects his ability to use more enabling controls such as employee participation.

In addition, it was also found that leaders who predominantly showed communal/female characteristics partly had specific organizational rules in place. Especially one interviewee (interviewee 4) considered that rules and routines made work more efficient. This opinion of his could give an explanation for why he was also the only one that was not considered as flexible. However, the degree in which rules and routines are used, can also be explained by the organizational structure in which the leaders were active (e.g., interviewee 1 & 8). Some interviewees who demonstrated communal/female characteristics did offer their employees freedom to carry out their work, but there were significantly more rules and routines in place. In particular, the interviewees who work with people and in the care sector (e.g., interviewee 1) are dependent on rules and routines. Thus, they are working in a more mechanistic organization, where rules and routines are necessary to ensure the people are taken care of (Ahrens & Chapman, 2004). But even with these interviewees, the subordinates are given a certain degree of freedom in their way of acting, which again shows the use of enabling controls. Nevertheless, it was apparent that the use of coercive controls was not necessarily part of their leadership style but was rather imposed by the organization. Hence, the use of rules and routines was more dependent on the organizational structure than on whether the organization is a private or public one, or on the leader per se. Accordingly, it is important to consider the organizational structure and hierarchy while analyzing the answers of the interviewees.

5.3 The role of Swedish culture

In the social role theory, it is explained that the development of gender roles are partly influenced by cultural and environmental factors (Eagly & Wood, 2012). Since culture can have an influence, Hofstede's cultural dimensions have been looked into, specifically the dimensions of a masculine versus feminine culture. According to studies, Sweden has been found to have a feminine culture. In feminine cultures, it is explained that there are barely any noticeable differences between men and women in their gender roles (Hofstede, 1998; Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010). Since all interviewees participating in this study were Swedish people working in Sweden, and most of them, regardless of the gender, showed predominantly communal/female characteristics, the

cultural aspect could be an additional explanation to the results that were found. Only two of the interviewees showed mainly agentic/male characteristics in their leadership, one being a man and one woman, and it can thus be said to be found that there are no significant differences between the gender roles in their leadership. Furthermore, Hofstede's studies have shown that Swedish managers trust their subordinates and their experience and are more informal in their leadership. They also use participation by including subordinates in different decisions and processes and their communication is direct between leaders and subordinates (Hofstede Insights, n.d.a). This description of the Swedish leadership has also been seen in the findings from the interviews conducted. Many of the interviewees emphasized the importance of trusting their subordinates (e.g., interviewee 1, 3, 6 7 & 8), including subordinates in decision making (e.g., interviewee 1, 3 & 4) and explained that they have extensive communication within their departments (all interviewees). This is an additional result showing how Swedish culture seems to have an effect on the leadership style among the Swedish leaders interviewed.

Considering the findings above, it is also interesting to look at the distribution of men and women in leadership positions in Sweden. As stated in the introduction, the percentage of female managers was 42.4% in 2020 (Eurostat, n.d.). Accordingly, men continue to make up the majority in leadership positions. Even though the percentage of women in leadership positions is relatively high, equality is not yet present. This is particularly interesting since no significant differences were found between men and women in their leadership style and communal/female characteristics were found to be more present than agentic/male among all interviewees.

Moreover, not all characteristics identified from the literature have been shown by the interviewees. The characteristics that are most clearly absent are the typical agentic/male characteristics of being forceful and dominant. Even among the interviewees who showed the most agentic/male characteristics these traits could not be seen as being present in their leadership style. This could imply that these traits are not common among Swedish leaders, at least when looking at the results from the eight people interviewed in this study. In turn, this could show additional findings being in line with what literature says about Swedish culture as feminine, since it says more communal/female characteristics are expected among Swedish leaders. Hence the fact that some of the traits that are most typical agentic/male have been shown to not be present in Swedish

leadership styles, are adding to the results showing how culture has an effect on leadership styles and characteristics. For this to be fully validated though, additional studies need to be done, where a comparison could be made with leaders in a country where the culture is more masculine. This possible research is further discussed in the next chapter.

5.4 The Swedish leadership style

As discussed above, Swedish culture has shown to have an influence on the leadership styles among the men and women that have been interviewed in Sweden, in the way that differences between the genders cannot be found. Since Swedish culture is considered as feminine this could have an effect on the selection of leaders in Swedish companies. Consequently, there is a possibility that these cultural and societal aspects are a reason for there not being significant differences between the genders and leaders to be showing more communal/female traits. Thereby, typical characteristics for Swedish leaders in general, rather than male and female leaders, can be summarized from the findings. There were some characteristics that could be seen more than others among the interviewees. Accordingly, it can be said the majority of the eight Swedish leaders interviewed possess more communal/female characteristics in their leadership style. They are communicative and think it is important to have transparency in their departments. Further, the interviewed leaders can be said to be mainly relationship-oriented, and they care about their subordinates more than on a task/job-related level. They are also helpful and supportive towards their subordinates when they meet different obstacles in their work. The agentic characteristics task- and results-oriented, has also been found to be a trait possessed among the eight Swedish leaders interviewed, and thus they are not exclusively communal/female in their leadership style. Additionally, according to the findings among the eight interviewees, leaders in Sweden have shown to use enabling controls to a significantly larger extent than coercive controls. The enabling controls that have been shown to be used the most are knowledge transfer and transparency in their departments and units. There is also a big emphasis on the importance of flexibility for subordinates and thus this is an additional enabling control used to a large extent among the interviewed Swedish leaders.

6. Conclusion

6.1 Conclusion

The purpose of this study is to examine whether gender roles and leadership roles have an influence on leadership style and consequently on the use of management controls. The results presented above highlight that there are different factors that influence and affect the leadership style and characteristics of men and women in Sweden and thereby also the use of management controls in companies. Three factors have been identified in literature that can have an effect, which are illustrated in figure 1. Referring back to this, it can firstly be concluded that there was no significant difference between men and women in leadership positions within the Swedish companies we investigated. The men and women who were interviewed showed similar character traits and leadership styles. Hence, it can be said that leadership style and leadership characteristics are not dependent on gender and gender roles, which in turn has no effect on the use of management controls. Secondly, most of the interviewees were found to be female, meaning that they showed communal characteristics like being sympathetic, concerned with others, relation-oriented, affectionate, and helpful. Only a few of the interviewees displayed agentic/male characteristics like being assertive, result- and outcome-oriented, and distanced. Further, the study showed that the interviewees that revealed communal/feminine characteristics were more likely to use enabling controls, meaning that they enhanced the participation of subordinates in decision making, provided flexibility to their subordinates, and promoted knowledge transfer and transparency within their department and throughout different units. Thus, the conclusion can be drawn that there is a connection between communal/female characteristics and the leadership style and use of enabling controls. Hence, what type of characteristics different leaders possess, which is part of the theory about gender roles, can have an effect on leadership style and the use of management control, though it does not differ between the genders.

The interviewees that showed agentic/male characteristics, however, did not mainly use coercive nor enabling controls. Instead, these interviewees showed a mix between coercive and enabling controls. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is no clear correlation between agentic/male leadership characteristics and the use of coercive or enabling controls. The second factor identified as being a potential influence on leadership characteristics and style (figure 1) is the leadership

role. Since most interviewees have shown to have communal/female characteristics, the fact that male characteristics have been mostly attributed to the leadership role probably does not have a big effect. What has shown to have a possible effect though, is what is perceived as good leadership. This perception has changed to containing more female traits such as being flexible, not being competitive and encouraging subordinates. These types of traits have been shown by most interviewees and hence this aspect of the leadership role could be concluded to have an effect on leadership characteristics and style. Lastly, our study has showed, that the majority of our interviewees displayed communal/female characteristics. Further, the interviewees demonstrated only little differences between genders. Thus, the fact that Sweden is perceived as a country having a feminine culture, which prioritizes equality, could serve as a reason for the results found in this study. Hence it has been shown that culture (see figure 1) is likely to be a factor influencing leadership characteristics and style and consequently the use of management controls.

6.2 Contributions and implications

The findings of the current study make theoretical contributions to the connection between social role theory and management control in leadership. It further contributes to literature on this topic by adding the perspective of cultural influences on leadership style and characteristics. The previous studies found on this topic were on the one hand looking at other types of organizations, like universities, and on the other hand studied other management controls, for example interactive and diagnostic controls (e.g., Bobe & Kober, 2020). This study is thus contributing to theoretical knowledge by studying other types of organizations and also focusing on other types of management controls (enabling and coercive). Moreover, it can not be assumed that the findings of other studies necessarily apply to both the public and private sector and thus our study contributes to this context as well. Additionally, more specific contributions of this study are the implications of communal/female and agentic/male leadership characteristics on the use of enabling and coercive controls. It further shows how culture can affect leadership style by examining the mentioned aspects in Sweden, who is perceived as having a feminine culture. This study has thus contributed to reducing the research gap that was found on this topic by adding these new perspectives.

The study further has practical implications for the selection of individuals into leadership positions. Since some connections have been found between leadership characteristics and style and the use of enabling and coercive controls, specific characteristics could be preferable among potential employees. In this context, assessment centers or tests can be designed in a way that enables recruiters to analyze the characteristics of the applicant and thus can help them make decisions in the hiring process. Furthermore, top managers will be the ones contributing to the adoption of communal/female leadership characteristics as they send the tone from the top. Thereby, they can encourage communal/female behavior also among lower-level managers. In addition, practical contributions are made about the understanding of how management control is used by different leaders according to their leadership style and their leadership characteristics. For example, in order to create a participatory environment within an organization, communal character traits have been shown to be beneficial. This can additionally have practical implications as for example how to design training and education for people in leadership positions to promote the leadership styles and use of management controls that is preferred in the organization.

6.3 Limitations

This study has several limitations. One limitation that needs to be mentioned is that only the influence of some factors on the leadership style and the use of management controls are investigated here. Other factors or contingencies that could affect the results, like the type of work tasks, the organizational culture or hierarchy, the set procedures in the organization by higher leaders than the ones interviewed, were omitted. Furthermore, some leaders responded in a more collegiate manner, using words such as "we", which could imply that they are referring to an organizational level, rather than from their individual perspective as a leader. Thus, some conclusions should be made with precaution for these as other factors might have an effect on the results.

Another limitation with this study is that only one data collection method has been used, which was interviews. The interviews were only conducted with leaders and thus only the leaders' own perception of their leadership style has been collected and reflected. Therefore, their own perception of themselves as leaders could be biased, as the perception about your own behavior can differ in the eyes of another. Furthermore, describing and explaining their own leadership style

and characteristics can be difficult, as other factors, like the organizational structure, can have an influence on them, which oneself is not aware of. People tend to put themselves in a good light and paint a nice picture of themselves towards others. Accordingly, it is not certain that the correct image of their leadership has been mirrored and received, which further limits the quality of the study. To avoid this, more data collection methods could be used such as observations of the leaders in their work or surveys among their subordinates to also integrate their perceptions in the study, which can provide clarification about the leaders' characteristics and their leadership style.

Moreover, only a small number of people have been interviewed due to the tight time schedule. Results could change, if a bigger sample of interviewees was selected and more information would be collected. The possibility to make more general conclusions would be bigger if a larger number of leaders would be interviewed. Consequently, the quality of this study has been limited by several factors and therefore needs to be viewed with circumspection.

6.4 Future research

Possible future research could be to include data collection methods that were not included in this study. In this way a study with better validation possibility than was the case for this thesis, would be created. For example, researchers could interview leaders about their perception of their leadership but also do observations to see how they actually act as a leader in their everyday work. Further a survey among the leaders' subordinates could be done to see if their perceptions of their leaders are in line with the leaders' own perceptions of their leadership styles and characteristics. In this way the results from the interviews could be confirmed, or contradicted, with the additional information collected.

Furthermore, it would be interesting to go deeper into the influence of the culture in different countries on the leadership style and gender roles. It was found in this study that Swedish culture being feminine could be a possible explanation for there not being significant differences between the genders and leadership styles and for leaders being more communal/female. Though this was not studied much further and deeper and thus a study with this as the main focus would be interesting. For example, studies could be made in different countries, with some having a masculine culture and some having a feminine culture, to see if there are any differences in the

connection between gender roles and leadership styles. With a study like this, the possible explanation that Sweden having a feminine culture is having an effect on the leadership style, could be validated if similar results were found in other countries as well.

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Appendix 1 - Interview guide

Background questions

1. How long have you been working in the company?
2. What is your role as a manager?
   a. What are your work tasks?
   b. What is your responsibility?
3. How long have you been working in a management position?

Question related to the topic

Indirect questions:

1. Can you describe your leadership style with three words and explain what you mean?
   a. Why is this (the three words) important?
2. Do you have set procedures for subordinates on how they should perform their work?
3. To what extent do your subordinates have the possibility to make changes in their work processes?
4. From a managerial perspective, what behaviors and responses have you observed regarding the presence or absence of rules and routines, and how does this affect your subordinates?
5. What does the discussion look like before, during and after a work-related task, when you have meetings (formal or informal) with subordinates about that?
   a. How does the discussion go when there are problems with completing the task?
6. How do you promote knowledge transfer within your department?
7. How do you measure the performance of your subordinates?
   a. How are these measures used and discussed?
   b. How do the subordinates take part in the outcomes of the measures?
   c. Are the different measures compared to each other?
8. What does the feedback process with subordinates look like? What is included in the feedback?
   a. Are there things that you feel are missing/not being paid attention to?
      i. If so, do you have your own way to handle these?
9. How does the communication within your department look like regarding different updates?
10. What do you as a manager think are the three most important things subordinates need from you to conduct their work? How can you as a manager facilitate for your subordinates?

Direct questions:

11. Do you consider yourself more task oriented or relation oriented?
12. Do you consider yourself more outcome/result oriented or learning oriented?
13. Do you consider yourself more compassionate or distanced?
14. Do you consider yourself more sympathetic or indifferent?
15. Do you consider yourself more willing to compromise/flexible or predefined/decisive?
16. Do you consider yourself more Collaborative or independent?
17. Do you consider yourself more demanding or tolerant?
18. Do you consider yourself more assertive or modest?