Drive the world (Girls).

A comparative case study on female leadership identity in the automotive industry.

Author: Angélica Jiménez Méndez

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I would like to thank to all the women who took the time to share their experiences and inspirational journey of leadership. Their contributions to this thesis have not only made an impact in the academic world, but to their company and my own personal development. I hope I have made justice to their inspirational voices and hope to inspire new women to have the courage to join the leadership journey in this industry.

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Abstract

The automotive industry is one of the worst performing in terms of gender equality. Not only are women underrepresented in this industry, but women within the industry have also expressed that they would start their career in another industry if they had the chance. Companies within this industry are attempting to decrease inequalities. This is particularly hard for multinational companies, as they encounter different cultural biases that contribute to inequalities in different ways. Thus, this thesis aims to give a voice to female leaders in the automotive industry within two cultural contexts: Sweden and Brazil. Hence, allowing female leaders to express how their leadership is affected by gender inequalities experienced in their countries, as well as describe how they counter male biases. This thesis utilized Social Identity Theory to understand*: how do women in the automotive industry navigate gender and leadership identities in Sweden and Brazil?* It was concluded that organizational, team, and leader identities are utilized by women when being leaders. The organizational identity helps women understand and prioritize collective success when in conflict with other teams, whereas their team and leader identities help them to improve as a leader. When gender is taken into account, their leadership identities are modified. On one hand, female leaders in Sweden utilize their identity as women to enhance their leadership identities, and their identity as leaders is only changed when noticing inequalities. In this case, they focus on being a role model regarding equality. On the other hand, leadership identities of Brazilian leaders are enhanced or abandoned depending on the presence of allies. When there are allies, their leadership identities are enhanced, allowing them to utilize negative male biases towards women to perform even better than their male counterparts. However, when there are no allies, they abandon their leadership identities, becoming compliant to male leaders in order to gain their acceptance and support as leaders.

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1.0. Introduction

The role of women in the history of humanity has been diverse and full of nuances. Over time, their role has evolved and gained rights and recognition for its own merit. However, despite the progress in the rights and recognition of women, equality has not been achieved. In fact, the current rate of participation of women in the working population of the world is close to 49%, that of men being 75% (International Labour Organization, 2018). When it comes to leadership, only 31% of the worldwide senior management positions were held by women in 2022 (World Economic Forum, 2022). This implies that women's talent is being wasted, missing benefits such as higher return of equity and investment, more creative and innovative outcomes when making decisions, improvement in energy efficiency, and lower company costs (Ernst and Young, 2016).

Although this is true, not all sectors and industries are experiencing inequalities to the same degree. In 2022, the four sectors with the worst levels of equality were Infrastructure, Manufacturing, Energy, and Supply Chain and Transportation (World Economic Forum, 2022). An industry that is present in all of those is the automotive industry. In 2019 in the US, women represented 24% of the motor vehicles and equipment manufacturing workforce, and only 18% of automobile dealers. Moreover, women in this industry consider that they would start their career today in a different industry if they could, citing a lack of work/life balance, lack of promotion opportunities, and lack of diversity and inclusion as the three main causes of this. Women in this industry also believe that a lack of diversity and inclusion is the most important reason why women don't consider a career in the automotive industry (Deloitte, 2020).

Hence, it can be concluded that companies in the automotive industry are at risk of missing or losing the competitive advantage that diversity could bring to their companies. Previous research has shown that this is especially the case for multinational companies, as it is particularly challenging for these companies to implement diversity and inclusion policies. Although there could be multiple explanations as to why this is the case, research shows that the diversity and inclusion approaches of these companies are not adapted to the local cultural contexts of the countries in which they are present (Bader et al., 2022; Hennekam et al., 2017; Sippola and Smale, 2007).

This thesis aims to inspire action in multinational companies by giving a voice to female leaders in the automotive industry within two cultural contexts with different levels of equality Sweden and Brazil, allowing female leaders to express how their leadership is affected by gender inequalities experienced in their countries. In order to illustrate the theoretical relevance of this thesis, current research on leadership, gender, and identity will be first explained, as well as how these concepts have been studied together. Three research gaps will be identified within these areas: lack of research considering cultural contexts and leadership identity formation, lack of comparative studies between women, and lack of research on

conflicting identities. Thus, the research question established will be*: how do women in the automotive industry navigate gender and leadership identities in Sweden and Brazil?* Afterwards, it will be explained that this research question will be answered using Social Identity Theory. Later, the method of the study will be described. Finally, the results and discussions will be presented, concluding with implications and limitations of the study.

2.0. Literature review

2.1. The beginnings of leadership

Effective leadership positively influences a company's productivity and profitability (Fry et al., 2010; Wahid and Mohd Mustamil, 2017). As a crucial resource, it is only natural that the topic of leadership has been incredibly popular both in academia and the practitioner community. However, the study of this topic has been complex, and the definition of leadership has evolved over time. The first attempts to define leadership emerged during the 1900s, focusing on identifying universal traits leaders should have. During the 1930s, the trait approach made an appearance. It assumed that leaders have special innate personality characteristics that enable them to influence other individuals (e.g., Bryman, 1992; Kirkpatrick and Locke, 1991; Lord, DeVader, and Alliger, 1986; Mann, 1959). Five major leadership traits could be identified from this research: intelligence, self-confidence, determination, integrity, and sociability.

Later, the skills approach emerged, which assumed that it is possible to acquire knowledge and abilities over time that will enable individuals to become leaders. In this regard, researchers such as Katz (1955) and Mumford et al. (2000) attempted to propose models that would help managers identify the skills and attributes necessary to be effective leaders. In accordance with Katz (1955), it is necessary that a leader has technical, human, and conceptual capabilities. However, managers need to determine and prioritize which of those are the most important in accordance with their managerial level. They proposed that individuals at the highest level of management require more human and conceptual skills, while individuals at the supervising management level need more technical and human skills.

During the 1950s, contingency models of leadership started to appear. In these models, contextual and situational factors started to acquire high importance, and thus started to be implemented in research. For instance, Fielder's contingency model (Fiedler, 1978; Fiedler and Chemers, 1974) recognized that the quality of the leader-member relationship, the leader's position of power, and the level of task definition are situational factors that influence leader effectiveness. Additionally, House's (1971) path-goal theory stated that the characteristics of followers, task structure, the leader's level of authority, and the group's social norms would predict and influence leadership behaviors. Hence, during this period, it became clear that the effectiveness of leadership style would be highly dependent on situational factors (Kerr and Jermier, 1978).

Two decades later, in the 1970s, the concept of leadership expanded beyond the leader's point of view. At this stage, researchers saw leadership as a dyadic transaction between leaders and followers. For instance, according to leader-member exchange theory, there are in-groups and out-groups in organizations. The in-group is considered closer to the leader, and thus acquires more power over the decision-making process of the leader, whereas the out-group benefits from less privileges, as they have a weaker relationship with the leader (Dansereau, Graen, &and Haga, 1975; Graen &and Uhl-Bien, 1995; Liden, Wayne, &and Stilwell, 1993)

Afterwards, in the 1980s, academic interest in context and leadership dropped dramatically as contingency theories lost interest and new theories started to emerge. One example of emerging research was the transformational leadership approach, which explained that transformational leaders inspire followers to develop personally (their skills and capabilities), as well as empower them by adapting their leadership style to the needs and goals of these followers (e.g. Bass, 1985; Downton, 1973; House, 1976).

Finally, the 21st century saw the emergence of the authentic leadership approach. This approach emerged because of the increasing need for trustworthy individuals leading the public and private sector. This approach describes a leadership style that is "transparent, morally grounded, and responsive to people's needs and values" (Northouse, 2016; Bass, 1990; Bass and Steidlmeier, 1999; Burns, 1978; Howell and Avolio, 1993). According to Avolio, Walumbwa, and Weber (2009), authentic leaders have four main characteristics: self-awareness (process in which individuals understand their strengths and weaknesses), internalized moral perspective (use of internal moral standards and values to guide their behavior), balanced processing (capability to analyze information objectively before making a decision), and relational transparency (be open and honest in presenting one's true self to others).

Additionally, the drop of interest in context as a moderator of leadership effectiveness started to be widely criticized (Antonakis, Avolio, and Sivasubramaniam, 2003; Day and Anotnakis, 2012; Yammarino, 2013). As such, multiple researchers have restarted to include contextual factors in the study of leadership. For instance, it has been shown that national culture moderates the nature of the relationship between leaders and followers (Rockstuhl, Dulebohn, Ang, and Shore, 2012), as well as follower attitudes and expectations on leaders (e.g., Den Hartog et al., 1999; Gerstner and Day, 1994), and leader effectiveness (e.g., Atwater, Wang, Smither, and Fleenor, 2009; Jung and Avolio, 1999; Spreitzer, Perttula, and Xin, 2005).

2.2. Leadership and gender

Leadership research ignored gender problematics until the 1970s (Northouse, 2016). However, the feminist waves together with an increase in number of women in leadership has inspired researchers to contribute to the study of the role of gender in leadership.

Starting with leadership style, differences have been found on how male and female leaders choose to behave. For example, previous research has shown that women tend to engage more in relationship-oriented leadership, while their male counterparts engage more in task-oriented leadership (Book, 2000; Eagly and Johnson, 1990; Helgesen, 1990; Rosener, 1995; van Engen and Willemsen, 2004). However, this is highly dependent on context. On one hand, it has been shown that, in female-dominated industries, women are more likely to adopt relationship-based leadership styles, while men portray task-oriented ones. On the other hand, in male-dominated industries, both women and men portray relationship and task-oriented leadership styles to the same extent (Gardiner and Tiggemann, 1999). Hence, the industry and role elements of the context in which a woman is a leader can influence their leadership style.

Another example is related to transformational leadership, where Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt, and van Engen (2003) found that women portray transformational leadership to a larger extent than men. Once again, context plays an important role in this, as it influences the evaluation of female leaders in relation to male leaders. In fact, it has been found that, although women adopt transformational leadership styles, they are evaluated worse by their followers than their male counterparts if their workforce is male dominated (Cuadrado et al., 2012; Eagly, 2013). Thus, the composition of their team is another element of a woman context that influences their leadership style.

2.3. Leadership and identity

The connection between leadership and identity started in the mid-1990s, with the work of Hogg and colleagues being the precursor of this (Fielding and Hogg, 1997; Hains,Hogg, and Duck, 1997; Hogg, Hains, and Mason, 1998). The main contribution of the authors was using Social Identity Theory to analyze leadership. Social Identity Theory states that individuals have the knowledge of belonging to an already established and specific social group that has specific prototypical characteristics (Hogg and Abrams, 1988). The Social Identity Theory of Leadership proposed by Hogg suggests that the more the members of a group identify with the group's stereotypical characteristics, the more these members will start evaluating their leader in terms of these stereotypical characteristics. Hence, the members that show the most prototypical characteristics will be the most influential in specific groups, becoming leaders (Hogg, van Knippenberg, and Rast, 2012).

After this theory was proposed by Hogg, other empirical articles have appeared to increase the understanding of the social identity process within leadership. For instance, Lord and colleagues identified that, the more salient group membership becomes, the weaker the influence will be of general leader stereotypes on follower's evaluations of their leader's effectiveness (Lord, Foti, and DeVader, 1984; Lord and Hall, 2003). Additionally, Fiske and Dépret (1996) found that members of the group that hold less power tend to pay more attention to those that have more power. As such, this theory suggests that charisma

is constructed by the group, and it is not a static personality attribute (Haslam and Platow, 2001). Furthermore, it has been shown that, as leaders are considered by the group as the representatives of the group's prototype, the leader has the power to define and change the group's identity by communicating new norms for the group ("norm talk"). (Hogg and Reid, 2006; Reicher and Hopkins, 2003; Reicher et al., 2005; Seyranian, 2012; Seyranian and Bligh, 2008). It is important to highlight that, as this is a new look into leadership, it is currently being developed, with new developments looking into uncertainty, fairness, and conflict currently being researched (Hogg, van Knippenberg, and Rast, 2012).

Prominent recent studies of gender and leadership have also taken a social psychology approach, focusing on the self and identity (Eagly and Carli,2007; Eagly and Karau, 2002; Eagly, Karau, and Makhijani, 1995; Wood and Eagly, 2010). A theory to highlight in this matter is the Role Congruity Theory by Eagly and Karau (2002). According to the authors, two kinds of characteristics are relevant when analyzing gender and leadership: agentic and communal attributes. On one hand, agentic attributes include characteristics such as "aggressive, ambitious, dominant, forceful, independent, daring, self-confident, and competitive". On the other hand, communal characteristics are described as "affectionate, helpful, kind, sympathetic, interpersonally sensitive, nurturant, and gentle" (Eagly and Karau, 2002). Agentic attributes are more associated with men, whereas communal characteristics are more associated with women (Eagly and Karau, 2002). However, agentic characteristics are often perceived as leadership traits. As such, individuals create more favorable perceptions of male leaders than female leaders. However, the context in which a woman leads will greatly influence this finding. For example, the role or the group in which the leader performs is a factor that has been found to influence this. In fact, Eagly, Karau, and Makhijani (1995) found that women are more favorably evaluated when engaging in feminine roles, whereas men are more favorably evaluated in masculine roles.

*FIGURE 1: Illustrative timeline of literature review.*

Figure: Timeline of leadership theories

- **1900** — A leader is someone in a position of power
- **1930** — Traits and skills approach on leadership
- **1950** — Contingency models of leadership
- **1970** — LMX Theory
- **1980** — Transformational leadership
- **1990** — Authentic leadership
- **2000** — Contextual leadership

Leadership
Gender and leadership
Identity and leadership
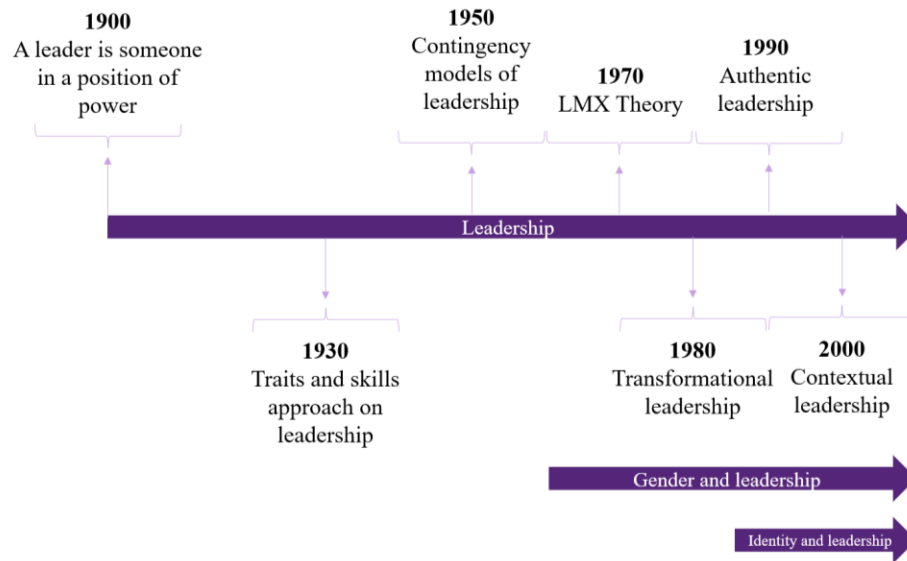
2.4. Research gap, and thesis purpose

Although leadership has been a widely researched topic, multiple criticisms have emerged on the different approaches, methods, and the leadership field itself. A widely recognized criticism is that leadership research has neglected the analysis of contexts (Antonakis, Avolio, and Sivasubramaniam, 2003; Day and Anotnakis, 2012; Yammarino, 2013). As said before, recent research has attempted to close this gap. However, research on how the cultural and industry contexts influence a leader's identity formation processes is still lacking. Hence, there is still opportunity for research within the contextual point of view of leadership identity. In the study of leadership and gender, research is often performed by comparing male against female leaders. However, there is a lack of research comparing women's experiences in different contexts, including comparative studies on different cultures. Finally, when it comes to leadership and identity, it has potential to extend on the concept of "multiple identities", and how individuals deal with dilemmas related to expectations of different identities colliding. As said before, advancement has been done by Eagly amd Karau (2002) (identifying that agentic attributes are associated with leaders, whereas communal attributes are associated with women). However, research to understand how women build a leadership identity utilizing identities with conflicting meanings is still lacking.

As such, this thesis aims to contribute to closing these gaps on the fields of leadership, identity, and gender by answering the research question: *how do women in the automotive industry navigate gender and leadership identities in Sweden and Brazil?* The contribution will be reflected in three ways. First, the identity formation processes of women in a highly male biased industry will be mapped, contributing to studies on contextual leadership and gender. Second, a comparative study will be used to identify contextual differences on leadership identity formation processes of women in countries with high against low levels

of equality. Finally, using inspiration on the research by Hogg, an identity point of view will be utilized to understand and map how women navigate identity dilemmas (leader vs gender).

FIGURE 2: Relationship between literature review and research gap.
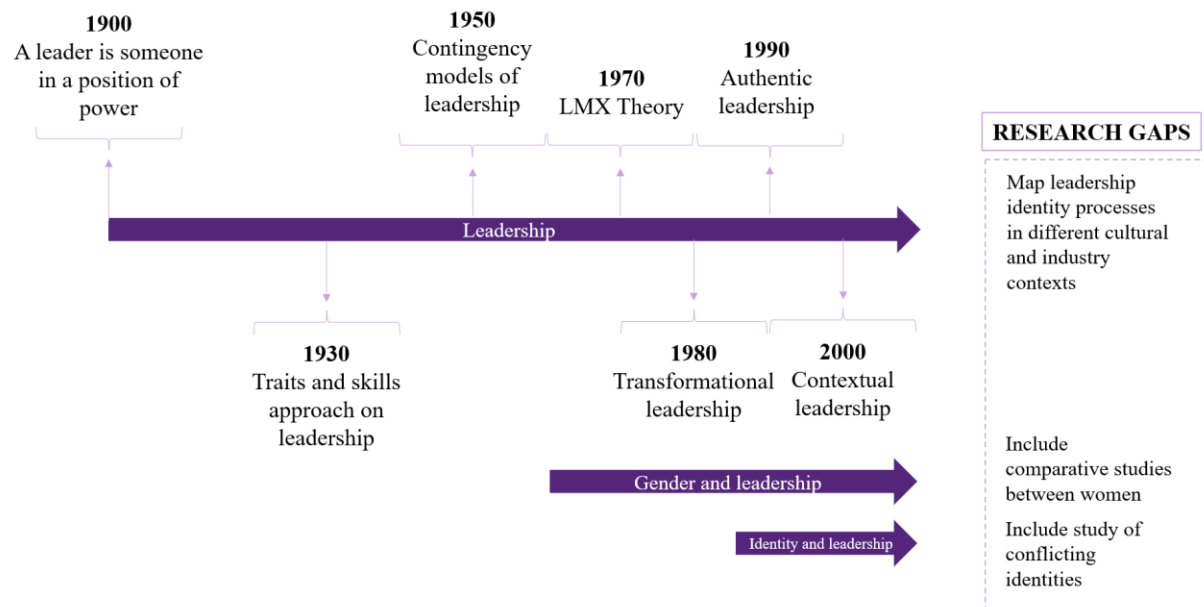
3.0. Theoretical framework

3.1. Theoretical lens used.

Although this thesis uses inspiration from the work of Hogg to study women in leadership, the theory of Social Identity Theory of Leadership was not used. This is because the author of this thesis wanted to explore the possibility of other phenomena rising due to the gender and context explored. Hence, a more general theory was utilized to explore the intersection between leadership, gender, and identity: Social Identity Theory.

As said before, Social Identity Theory assumes that individuals have the knowledge of belonging to an already established and specific social group (Hogg and Abrams 1988). The main claim of Social Identity Theory is that individuals want to reinforce and maintain a positive self-esteem by being associated and included in "in-groups". These in-groups are individuals who perform better than others in relevant variables (Turner et al. 1987). When individuals are not associated and included in these in-groups, their self-esteem is affected negatively, bringing consequences like abandoning or changing an identity, or changing the group itself (Tajfel and Turner, 1979). Additionally, individuals aim to highlight the

characteristics that make them different from out-groups, reinforcing the division between both in-groups and out-groups (Haslam et al., 1996).

The main process related to Social Identity Theory is the process of depersonalization. This means that individuals look at themselves as an embodiment of the meanings and norms pertaining to that specific social identity (Hogg et al. 1995). As such, according to this theory, individuals search for uniformity within the group instead of unique individuality (Turner et al. 1987).

The activation of a social identity is called "salience", and it is the result of two main dimensions: accessibility and fit. Accessibility is the "readiness of a given category to become activated" (Oakes, Turner, and Haslam, 1991). Accessibility can be divided between situational and chronic accessibility. Situational accessibility is the individual's social context, whereas chronic accessibility is "the extent to which an individual tends to make use of a self-categorization across a range of situations" (Reimer, Schmid, and Al Ramiah, 2020). As Reimer, Schmid, and Al Ramiah (2020) explain, "a female student's gender category may become psychologically activated if she finds herself in a room filled with male students (high situational accessibility), but not in a room filled with female students (low situational accessibility)". The same authors give an example for chronic accessibility "An example of chronic accessibility would be if the same student is part of a feminist campaign group which makes her much more aware of, and think more frequently about, her gender" (Reimer, Schmid, and Al Ramiah, 2020).

Fit is the congruence between the characteristics of the in-group and a specific situation. It has two dimensions: comparative and normative. Comparative fit is the extent to which a person perceives greater similarity between themselves and their in-group and greater differences between them and the out-group. Hence, the greater the similarities between their in-group and the greater the differences with the out-group, the more likely it is that an individual's identity will become salient. Normative fit is the extent to which the stereotypical differences between the groups correspond with what the in-group and out-group believe are the differences between each other (Haslam, Oakes, Reynolds and Turner, 1999; Oakes, Turner and Haslam, 1991; Veenstra and Haslam, 2000). Reimer, Schmid, and Al Ramiah (2020) explain fit with an example: "consider a situation in which a group of male and female students are asked to join either the university's rugby team or its dance troupe. Suppose that all men opt for the former, while all women choose the latter. In this situation, the two groups show high intragroup and low intergroup similarity (comparative fit), and conform to the expected norm (normative fit)".

Finally, Social Identity Theory describes that a consequence of the activation of a social identity is "inter-group" bias. This bias is the favoritism of members of the in-group, and discrimination of members of the

out-group. This discrimination can be manifested to various degrees, varying from a linguistic form to violence (Abrams, 1992).

3.2. Frame of the study

The framing of the thesis will be related to the context. Three elements will be equal in both cases: leadership and gender, industry and organization, and area of expertise. When it comes to leadership and gender, female leaders will be the focus. We define "female leaders" in this paper as all managers that identify themselves as "women". This term will be used throughout the thesis. Regarding industry and organization, the organization studied will be named "Company A" throughout the thesis. This is an organization in the automotive industry based in the Nordics. Finally, looking at area of expertise, all female leaders interviewed will pertain to the area of Sales and Marketing. The comparative element of context used in this thesis will be national culture context. In this case, the national culture context of Sweden and Brazil will frame the two cases.

FIGURE 3: Intersection between Leadership, Gender and Identity studied in a specific frame.
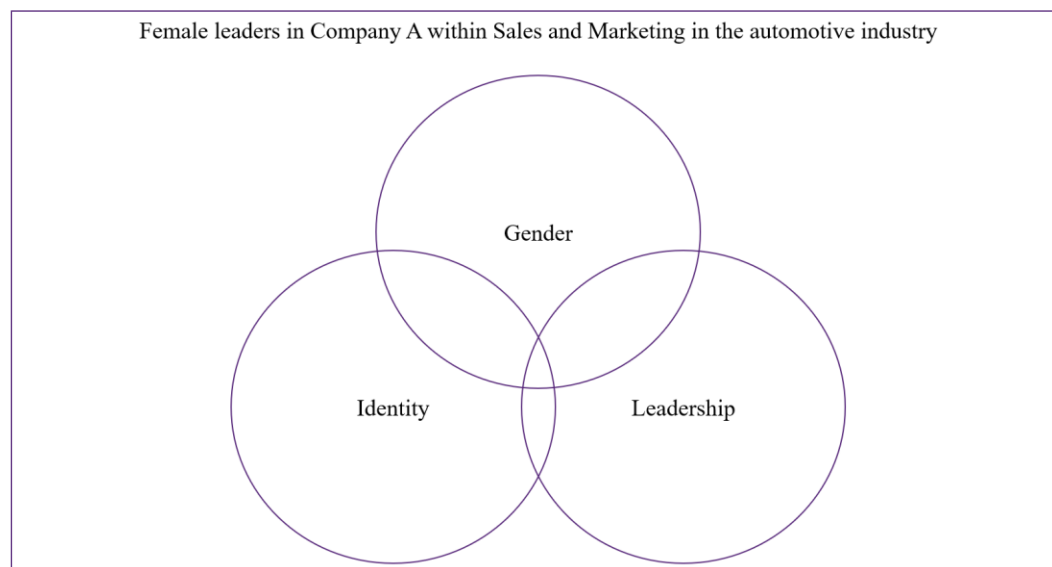
4.0. Method

4.1. Research approach and method

The nature of this thesis is explorative, as it examines an under researched match between leadership, gender, and identity in different cultural contexts. It is expected that the thesis will make preliminary conclusions that will guide further future research regarding these three topics. Due to the exploratory nature of the research, an abductive approach was utilized. This is because this method is ideal to explore

new anomalies and generate plausible conclusions by utilizing current available information (Sætre and Van de Ven, 2021). The method and theories were also developed and refined as data was gathered.

As this thesis approaches leadership and identity, it is reasonable to consider methods within these research areas. Both concepts have been widely researched, and quantitative and qualitative methods have been used in both cases. However, when it comes to identity, a qualitative analysis can be useful when exploring conflicts within the self, as it allows to analyze narratives and relate identity salience with behaviors (Horowitz, 2012). As said before, previous research has shown that there are conflicts when it comes to women and leader identity, as they represent contradicting stereotypes and expectations (Eagly and Karau, 2002). Hence, this method is appropriate when exploring how women navigate the potentially conflicting identities of leadership and gender. Additionally, Alvesson and Sköldberg (2008) agree that qualitative methods can be a good method when linking leadership to socially constructed phenomena. In this thesis, it will be assumed that gender is a socially constructed phenomenon. As such, this method was considered appropriate, and was utilized when conducting this study.

As previously stated, the theoretical contribution of this thesis is closely related to the context and framing of the theories applied. Hence, a case study methodology was considered appropriate, as it allows a deep understanding of phenomena in a specific context (Yin 2009). Although the thesis could have focused on one context, it was decided to study two. This was because a Swedish context would have provided results influenced by high levels of equality in the country, whereas a Brazilian context would have provided results influenced by low levels of equality. Hence, to capture the full spectrum of identity processes, two case studies were compared (Sweden and Brazil). As explained before, the other elements of the context in which female leaders establish their identity were kept as constant as possible (see section 3.3. Frame of the study).

4.2. Organization and participants' characteristics

As said before, Eagly et al., (1995) found that women are more favorably evaluated by their followers when engaging in feminine roles, whereas men are more favorably evaluated in masculine roles. Hence, a male associated context was necessary to ensure that gender-based problematics will be present in the female leaders' identity, as their environment will encourage this (Eagly et al., 1995).

The case company selected is a Nordic organization in the automotive industry. As said in the introduction, the automotive industry is one of the worst performing in terms of gender equality. Additionally, a study made by Deloitte (2020) discovered that women in this sector would move to another sector today due to an industry bias towards men in leadership positions. Thus, it is considered a male oriented context which

would provide relevant insights in the study of female leaders' identity. As a reminder, this company will be called Company A throughout the thesis.

Within Company A, two markets hold the same relevance, as head quarter offices are in both countries: Sweden and Brazil. Additionally, the area of Sales and Marketing is the area with the most similarities in terms of role and duties in both offices. Because of this, the study was framed within these two countries and this area, as consistency of leadership organization, area of expertise, and industry is enhanced, while cultural context is changed.

In total, 16 random female participants were interviewed in Company A. Randomization was created by using the company software. The area of Sales and Marketing was searched in the internal database, and the first 10 names were selected for Sweden. All the female leaders in Brazil were interviewed. After the 14th interview, no new insights were gained. Therefore, it was concluded that saturation was reached (Graue and Carolin, 2015). They all had the title of "Manager", and the background questions were used to ensure at least two years of experience within the role.

It is important to mention that 10 interviewees were from Sweden, whereas only 6 were from Brazil. This is because the Brazilian office has less equality ratio, and only six members of that office were female managers. As such, although the number of participants was limited, the totality of the female leaders in that office were interviewed. Appendix 1 shows the coding utilized for the participants of this study.

4.3. Data collection

The study was performed using semi-structured interviews, which is appropriate when utilizing qualitative research methods (Saunders et al., 2009; Edmondson, McManus, and Stacy 2007; Miles and Huberman 1994). Additionally, the open questions of semi structured interviews allowed interviewees to highlight aspects that were relevant to them, as well as allowed the interviewer to ask follow-up questions that deepened the understanding of the phenomena studied (Saunders et al., 2009). Due to the exploratory nature of the study, this is highly important, as this allowed the researcher to gather detailed reliable data that supported the research question better than standardized questions (Ahrne and Svensson, 2011; Saunders et al., 2009).

4.4. Pilot study

As highlighted beforehand, identity, leadership and gender are wide topics. As such, a pilot study was utilized to delimit the scope of this thesis. During this pilot study, three Swedish women and three Latin American women were interviewed. In the pilot study, it was made clear that the purpose of the study was to study female leaders in unfavorable environments. The participants were then asked to state challenges they think women face when being a leader. The interviews highlighted three main themes worth exploring:

the stereotype of a leader and role models, adjustments women make to be recognized as leaders, and the importance of a supportive environment. As such, these themes were included in the semi structured interviews.

It was also observed that the women interviewed were biased towards leadership from a woman and struggles point of view. This is in line with Social Identity Theory, as informing the participants of the aim of the thesis made these struggles salient by making the identity accessible. As such, it was decided that the main study would be conducted without informing the participants that the study aimed to explore the conflicting identities of leadership and gender in a male biased industry. This was done to prevent gender identities from being salient from the start of the interview and be able to identify if gender is part of their leadership identity or becomes salient in other circumstances. To remain ethical, participants were informed at the end of the interview of the true nature of the study, allowing them to also highlight other challenges they believed were important to mention due to their gender. This allowed the study to have a first part exploring women's leader identities, to later explore how gender influences the description of these.

4.5. Interview structure

In accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation, the interviewees were informed that the insights gained from the interviews were going to be utilized in a public research study. Furthermore, it was informed that, although the interviewer was going to inform the reader that the people interviewed were female, no other personal data or information was going to be revealed, ensuring the anonymity of the respondents. They were also asked for consent regarding the recording of the session, as the interviewer was working on their own, and this would ensure the capture of all data necessary for later analysis. All interviewees accepted, and the recordings were deleted after the study was finished.

Before the interviews, an interview guide was created, which consisted of five parts. The first part of the interviews focused on acquiring information about the background of the participants. The participants were asked to describe their professional experience, as well as how long they have been working at Company A, and how long they have had a managerial title. This allowed the researcher to initiate an understanding as to how familiar the participants were with the company, the work environment, and the culture, as well as ensuring a sample familiar with managerial roles.

The second part of the interview focused on identifying leadership prototypes, as well as leadership skills present in their organizational context. As previously mentioned, they were not informed that the thesis was focusing on women in leadership to prevent biased answers.

The third part of the interview consisted of putting the participant in the spotlight, asking whether they considered themselves leaders, what kind of leadership style they preferred, and their history as leaders.

This was done to understand whether there were discrepancies between the leader stereotype and the participant's choice of leadership, as well as understand how they learned to acquire a specific leadership style.

The fourth part of the interview consisted of questions asking about expectations posed on the participants by their environment, and how they choose to adapt depending on these. It was also studied feedback, and how feedback systems affected the relationships the participants had between them and their employees, their colleagues, and their managers. This was done to understand the environment in which women lead, and how this affects their choice of leader identity and leadership style.

For the last part of the interview, the participants were informed that the thesis is focused on women, and they were asked whether they considered that being a woman leading brought benefits or challenges. The purpose of this part of the interview was to understand whether highlighting gender resulted in a different description of the leadership role, and how gender affects the experience of women as leaders. Appendix 2 shows the questionnaire template utilized throughout the interviews.

4.6. Performance of the study

The interviews were performed via Teams, as the participants were in different locations as the interviewer. All interviews were performed in English, as the interviewer didn't have fluency in the mother tongues of the participants. However, this ensured that all participants had the same conditions during the interview, meaning none of them spoke their mother language during the interview. The interviews conducted in Sweden lasted 30-45 minutes, while the interviews in Brazil lasted 45 minutes to one hour. This was because the interviewees in Brazil had more time availability than the ones in Sweden. As only one researcher was present, the interviews were recorded to be able to analyze the interviews later.

4.7. Data analysis

A thematic approach was utilized when analyzing the data, as this method is appropriate to identify concepts that describe a specific phenomenon (Daly et al., 1997). As a first step of the analysis, the interviews were transcribed, as this allowed the researcher to be more familiarized with the data.

During the second step, the data was classified into themes without the author researching on theory, allowing an initial interpretation based on the main message the interviewees wanted to give, and avoiding being biased by theory (Braun and Clarke, 2006). In order to increase the accuracy of the study, the researcher performed the coding together with third parties. Discussions were held on the appropriate themes identified, and how these were reflected in the data, reducing the bias that a single researcher may have had.

Finally, during the third step, the researcher compared the themes with current literature, and merged the first order themes that related to the same theoretical theme (second order themes). When the second order themes were only justified with two quotes, they were eliminated, as they weren't considered representative enough of the sample. Finally, these were grouped in third order themes when appropriate, and relationships between them were analyzed. Appendix 3 shows the coding of themes.

4.8. Quality of method

Although this thesis was attempted to be carried out with rigorous and systematic academic methodologies, it can be said that there are improvements to be made. As explained before, this thesis was performed using only qualitative methods (semi structured interviews). Yang et al. (2006) establish that different methods of data collection should be utilized in order to ensure quality of the research paper. Hence, it can be said that the quality of the thesis is limited by the weaknesses and strengths of qualitative research.

Because of the qualitative methods used, it is necessary to evaluate this thesis using the criteria by Lincoln and Guba (1985); namely dependability, credibility, transferability, and authenticity. First, dependability refers to the extent to which the research process is "logical, traceable, and clearly documented" (Tobin and Begley, 2004). The research methods were attempted to be documented with as much detail as possible by the author. This was also ensured by proof reading of external parties, and ensuring they understood the process by which this research was performed. Hence, it is considered to be of high level.

Second, credibility is the extent to which the results reflect the participants' socially constructed realities. Although this thesis was performed by only one researcher, the analysis was performed by including a male third party, reducing bias in interpretation. Additionally, the results of the thesis were presented to employees at Company A. Hence, the results were confirmed in that presentation, making credibility higher. However, it is worth mentioning that the researcher didn't go back to participants for confirmation of the results. Hence, the credibility of this thesis is of medium level.

Third, transferability refers to the extent to which the results can be generalized. This aspect was attempted to be made high by including two cultural contexts instead of one (Brazil and Sweden), encompassing high equality and low equality cultural contexts in this thesis. However, as it has been made clear throughout the thesis, this research focuses on studying a specific context (female leaders in the automotive industry at Company A). Hence, transferability is considered low, as researchers need to be open to the possibility of this phenomena changing depending on the industry, gender, and organization studied.

Finally, when it comes to authenticity, it is a concept that can be divided into fairness, ontology, educative, catalytic, and tactical. Fairness is achieved when "the researcher is able to show several different perspectives and depth of understanding that fairly represent these perspectives" (Shannon and Hembacher,

2014). As said before, multiple confirmation attempts were made. However, the findings were not confirmed by the participants themselves, potentially reducing fairness. Ontological and educative authenticity is achieved when participants become more aware of the viewpoint of others. As said before, this research paper was presented at Company A, and the inequality struggles of female leaders were highlighted. Hence, it is evident that this thesis achieved high ontological and educative authenticity. Catalytic and tactical authenticities are achieved when the research stimulated action or redistribution of power among stakeholders. Although it cannot be said that this thesis solved inequality issues in this context, action was inspired. This is because, by informing people at Company A of the purpose of the thesis, panel discussions for International Women's Day started to be organized, and questions on how to solve inequality arose. Thus, it can be said that this thesis achieved high levels of catalytic and tactical authenticity.

5.0. Results

This section will start by describing and focusing on the female leaders' perceptions on how a leader should be and the expectations posed on them. The Swedish results will be presented first, followed by the Brazilian ones. Later, the female leaders' perceptions on how female leadership is will be described in the same order (Sweden followed by Brazil).

5.1. Leadership in Sweden
5.1.1. How a leader should be

When the Swedish female leaders were asked what characteristics they thought leaders should have, the first characteristic and most important one is that a leader should be able to establish a strategy and guide the team to integrate this in their everyday tasks. This also means taking decisions when they are necessary for the team to advance in the targets defined to reach the strategy.

"For me being a leader means setting the strategic vision and direction. Where we are aiming"

"The leader has to be the one in the front. Showing the direction, showing this is where we need to go. Be the one that starts the dance."

"There are situations where decisions are required, and it is the responsibility of the leader to do that."

Second, Company A has a culture driven by consensus. Hence, a leader should strive to develop a collaborative way of working within their team and the organization. Because of this, they need to have exceptional communication and listening skills, managing to adapt content and format of their communication to their audience, keep the communication transparent within their team and the rest of the organization, as well as listen to what other stakeholders have to say.

"We have an extreme consensus culture. To be a leader you really need to be able to rally the masses and convince others."

"I think collaborative skills are really important. Alone is not strong. Never, but especially in this big organization where you are in an environment where there are different stakeholders."

"A leader needs to be a good communicator, and that is important because you are the one that sort of needs to join the forces on the direction where we are heading. Trying to clarify why we are here, what's the purpose and how should we contribute to, you know, the strategy and the direction. I think that is one sort of basic skill that a good leader needs to have."

Third, a leader should strive to develop their teams' skills, knowledge, and network for them to grow as individuals. They should also strive to let the team lead once they are ready to be independent, and act more as a support. To do this, a leader should be open to listening to their team and understand their needs.

"You have to let them dance. Let them know you are there, you are supporting them, make sure you get the water bottles for them to be the best performing artist in the dance floor. I don't have to dance anymore, cause they got it."

"A leader should not strive to know everything him or herself, but it's really important to listen both to be able to reach the targets, but also to be able to develop different individuals."

Moreover, a leader should be flexible in both their communication and leadership style, as their team will have different needs in different situations.

"You cannot treat everyone the same and we all have our different expectations, personalities, skills, etcetera. So, you have to be flexible in that maybe how you communicate or lead in different situations with different people."

Fourth, a leader should be ambitious, and always willing to challenge and aim for continuous improvement in the organization.

"A leader should be ambitious in actually finding better ways to do things in that sense. So, it's saying that you can't be fat and happy, that is not a leader to me."

Finally, as these leaders are part of Company A, they believe leaders are very proud of the culture within the company, and they implement the values that come with it in their leadership style. This is also reflected in them making sure that, in times of conflict, they seek the well-being of Company A rather than that of their team or themselves.

"Company A is extremely proud and built in our culture. We have values such as respect for the individual, etc. How you treat your coworkers or colleagues and it's extremely important, it's sort of built into the walls. As a general base, the core values and leadership principles define the leadership style here at Company A."

"You need to be less protective of your own area and more open and more, you know, more akin to put on the "Company A hat" to really take the company perspective. Even if we don't have the same target as departments, we have the same target as Company A. I think many people at Company A want Company A to succeed, they are here, and they do things because they care. It's a very big strength."

5.1.2. How Swedish female leaders are

First, the Swedish female leaders interviewed are proud of belonging to Company A. Hence, they value Company A's culture, and consider important that the daily activities are in line with the strategies, processes, and values of the organization. Because of this, they often utilize the tools Company A gives them to develop their team, and help their team prioritize activities supporting the long term competitivity of Company A.

"For me, everything starts with defining the strategic direction. This means where do we want to be as a company in the future, how do we want to contribute as a department, and what do we need to prepare for the future. Establishing the wrong priorities creates panic, stress, and bad results in the organization, and it is my task to explain these."

"I need to explain what do the fluffy words in the strategy mean for us here and now. For that KPIs are important, but also how often to measure."

Second, they are driven by the value of consensus, and this influences their interactions with their manager, their colleagues, and their team. This influence is reflected on female leaders implementing communication systems where they get the opportunity to talk with all the stakeholders involved in decisions, and work with them to arrive to a conclusion that's best for everyone.

"It's a lot about listening and having people on board during the journey. It also makes it easier for people to follow me, not only in my team, but in the whole organization."

"I make sure that communication is transparent, not only on my side, but also management and all the way to the employees."

However, they are aware that consensus may not always be reached, and discussions may become waste. As such, they are brave enough to make a decision without the approval of all stakeholders, always acknowledging the ideas of everyone.

"We have this Swedish culture of consensus. Often, I am in situations when we are in meetings, and we don't share opinions, and we end up in too long discussions, and this becomes a waste. But here I think it's important to take the courage to make a decision and stand behind it. Acknowledge all the points of view and try to make a decision. Then if it doesn't work, you try something else."

Third, the Swedish female leaders also consider themselves a guide whose mission is to develop people and teams. Additionally, they know how to adapt their manager style to the needs of their team depending on how mature their team is. They see success when their team can deliver positive results in the organization independently.

"[...] I discovered my team was not as mature, so I would book meetings with them. Then I would ask: do you want me to tell you what to do, or do you want me to guide you? At first, they wanted me to tell them what to do, because they were super stressed not knowing. I told them, then waited until the task was done, then I had a meeting again to see how they were doing. I did this until they were confident enough to do it by themselves. This was a real success for me."

"When my employees bounce ideas with me, I try to guide them on who to ask, so they build their network and, next time, do these tasks on their own. They also don't need to verify things with me because I believe they have the mandate and competence necessary."

They also care about understanding the motivations of their teammates and utilize these to increase the success of the team. To do this, they establish communication channels where employees can express their needs. Additionally, they utilize the tools the company gives them to better understand what their team needs from them.

"We have one on one meetings with no defined agenda, and they are free to tell me whatever they want, what they need from me, or if they are having any issues."

"We have a work life balance tool. We evaluate the meaningfulness of our job, recovery or how are we feeling, manageability, and understandability. This helps me better understand them and see what they need from me."

Finally. the Swedish female leaders are very ambitious and result driven. Hence, they always try to find areas of opportunity for improvement within the organization.

"I'm a very result driven person, and financial performance is important. I'm clear about that with my team and the managers around me. I will always demand more of you."

An important tool they use to improve is feedback, and they try to encourage this within their team.

"It's important to have a discussion saying everyone needs to improve and feedback is important for that."

5.1.3. Employee's expectations

When it comes to employees, the Swedish female leaders interviewed perceive that their employees have a lot of expectations from them, and these expectations are clearly communicated to them.

First, their employees expect them to be role models that show the strategic direction where the team should be heading, as well as commit to decisions already taken.

"There are expectations on showing the way forward. How do we create value and how do we make sure we are doing what the rest of Company A wants us to do? "

"They expect me to be there and support them, but also represent and strive for reaching what we have agreed together."

Second, they expect their managers to support them when needed, and this is reflected on defending their team's values and on getting the right tools, knowledge, mandate, and skills they need to perform their daily tasks and make decisions on their own, as well as deliver feedback when needed.

"They expect me to have their back and be the one looking out for them."

"They expect getting the coaching and support when they need it. But also, expectations on having a mandate to be able to take decisions and perform their duties without, you know, running to the boss every day to ask for permission."

Third, they expect transparent communication and feedback with their leader with regards to strategies, processes, and targets of the company.

"They expect from me that I'm being honest, that I give them as much information as I can so they understand the setting and the strategies."

5.1.4 Colleagues expectations

First, their colleagues expect the Swedish female leaders to contribute to continuous improvement within the company.

"Expectations are a lot that I drive questions in my area, that I challenge on my responsibilities, etc. Being the expert on certain subjects."

Their colleagues also expect them to strive to achieve the strategies and targets of Company A, as well as act in line with Company A's culture and way of working.

"I bring a view of my section into our management meetings, but I am a representative and responsible for the whole."

"We have the leadership framework, and I think this gives us a baseline that is common, and this is the expectation we have, and this is how we should behave."

5.1.5. Manager expectations
The managers have high expectations on the Swedish female leaders. First, their managers expect them to set targets for their team and achieve these. However, as their managers are leaders as well, they strive for the Swedish female leaders to be autonomous.

"He expected me to deliver what we agreed upon. He was giving me loose frame, but he had the expectation that with this freedom, I also need to focus on what would be best for Company A."

Their managers also expect them to drive continuous improvement and positive change in the whole organization within their area of expertise, and challenge ways of working when necessary.

"My manager has high expectations in terms of driving change, driving improvements, challenging what we do. How can we do it differently? How can we do it more efficiently? Where should we change processes."

5.1.6. Feedback and interactions
As expectations come from three different actors, it is also evident that the interactions described within the interviews were also related to these actors (employees, managers, and colleagues).

First, when it comes to interactions with their team, the Swedish female leader encourages feedback, and establishes feedback systems, sometimes even forcing it. Additionally, they are very open to adapting depending on the feedback they receive from their team.

"We work with weekly alignment meetings, but I also force feedback on a regular basis. We have 30 minutes sessions where we write feedback in a card and hand it over to me and each other. It's not always easy to give feedback, but this is a good reminder."

"If the feedback comes from my team, I always consider it cause they are my tool to drive change, so it's very important that we have that connection and understand each other"

When it comes to their colleagues, as consensus is important, the Swedish female leaders often discuss with their peers, and they challenge each other in their respective areas of expertise. However, communication may not be as open when it comes to individual feedback on performance as a leader. This is also influenced by other teams sometimes being driven by politics and fights for power. Because of this, when it comes to

feedback, they are more careful on which things to consider, as the feedback may come from frustration of certain situations occurring in other teams.

"We are very good at challenging each other regarding the topics we are working with, you know, so the result we need and how to get there, we are quite good at challenging each other. But in terms of how we are acting as leaders, I haven't had a lot of feedback."

"Here I must say I have struggled much more. Here it is more political. It's harder to have this direct dialogue. I feel that people are holding their cards closer to the body, and feedback tends to be more on the surface."

"When the feedback comes from outside my team, I ask myself: Is it relevant for me? Is it something I also feel that I didn't do good? I also value how much the person knows about me and depending on that I see how much I take."

When it comes to their manager, the Swedish female leader considers their relationship with their manager important, as their manager is their main support system. As such, communication is often open when it comes to feedback.

"My relationship with my manager is very close. I was very clear that that's the need I have. I need to be able to be like myself and talk about things in a non-corporate way. I need to be able to say that this is not working because this and this and that, not phrase it in a political way."

"I am very picky when applying for a new job because I think the relationship with my manager is important. If my manager doesn't stand my personality, then he or she won't support me, and I will feel alone."

5.2. Leadership in Brazil
5.2.1. How a leader should be
The Brazilian female leaders expressed that there are two kinds of leaders: leaders that are interested in power, and leaders that are concerned with people.

"I think leadership sometimes enables you to have some kind of special VIP treatment, and some people are looking for this. Some people in the company have the car, they even have a special bench. I do believe we have this kind of people that search for recognition and money. But I believe there is other kind of people who embrace the people and share knowledge. So, one is searching for the opportunity, the target, the sales, and the other is more interested in growing the people and the business, and THEN achieving the objectives."

As a first characteristic, they mentioned that they consider that true leaders are those that inspire and are genuinely concerned for their team's well-being, as well as bringing the best of the people within their team, while keeping their commitment to the success of the organization.

"A leader is inspiring when it comes to how the person behaves. How the person shows that the person is concerned with the well-being of the organization, because the leader is in between. He needs to take care about the group, but also needs to be very attentive and committed with what the organization is expected to reach."

"You need to be tough to the situation but not to people. You need to ensure people are performing and that you are reaching the targets you promised to reach."

Second, in order to bring the best in people, the Brazilian leaders consider that leaders should be flexible, adapting their leadership style to the needs to their employees.

"You need to understand that to do this, you need to take different ways depending on who are you talking with. Some people are driven by challenges, some people need more support than others. Maybe you will have someone that needs to be told what to do. So, I think it's a lot about understanding these kinds of differences and particularities on each person and try to take the best out of them."

Third, they mentioned that a leader should strive to give autonomy to their employees, always making sure employees have the right resources to perform their tasks.

"A leader is a person that gives autonomy, but before giving us the autonomy, they make sure that the other persons are feeling well and that they understood what should be done, and also make sure that this person is not needing any type of support. It is a must also of course that the leader makes sure that the persons have the right tools and the right skills and capabilities to perform the job."

Forth, interviewees suggested that a leader should be a good listener, as well as have excellent communication and social skills, as this would allow them to understand how they can support the team and ensure the success of the organization, as well as have good relationships with others in the organization.

"I think you need to be a good listener, so you can listen and understand how should I help out? I see my role as making the way forward for the people that have a special competence to deliver things. It's a lot about asking a lot of questions like: How can I help you? What do you need? How are you? How could you succeed."

"Leaders expose themselves; they speak very well. It like magic you know, they are very easy to talk to, and they are also very talkative."

"It's a lot about alignment. Aligning expectations with different stakeholders. You need to make sure that their expectations are aligned and that their needs are heard and that they feel they are heard. You need to say ok, I heard all of you, but I suggest we go into that direction, as this is the best for Company A."

Finally, as these leaders are part of Company A, they believe leaders are very proud of the culture within the company, and they implement the values that come with it in their leadership style.

"I think what's characteristics is that leaders, are really committed to the Company A core values, and they take it really really seriously. This is what I see, which is good"

"The culture has had focus on leadership for a long time. We have values such as respect for the individual. Company A makes sure that we know how to act in accordance with the culture."

"It's important to follow the rules and be very in contact with the principles. We have a very established way of working within Company A."

5.2.2. How Brazilian female leaders are

First, the Brazilian female leaders are highly ambitious and have high expectations on themselves, sometimes even being their own critic. However, they identify success when they have become recognized by their skills, expertise, and experience in their area of work.

"In one sense, I don't consider myself a leader yet. I have a lot of soft skills to develop. Like communication skills. Sometimes I struggle to go to the point, and this is an important skill to be a leader. However, in other ways I am a leader. There is this colleague I have that has the same title as me, and has a lot more experience, but he comes to me sometimes for advice, and I feel good about it. I think it's because I have the biggest market, so I have contact with the processes more often, and I am more knowledgeable in this than him."

"I consider myself a leader because of the skills I bring, which are recognized by my managers."

Second, the Brazilian female leaders also consider that they prefer to be leaders that are concerned for their team's well-being and performance and provide autonomy instead of micromanaging. They provide the resources needed for their employees to achieve their targets independently. They also have the end goal of developing their team as individuals. Hence, they provide an environment where their employees can ask for guidance and support whenever it's needed.

"I used to be a leader that was focused on what needs to be done. Then I started to make tests. Not only in the company, but also with the person in charge of my apartment complex. I realized that if you acknowledge people, and they ask them how they are, they feel happier and more motivated."

"It's important to understand the differences of each person in your team and try to take the best out of them."

"I'm very happy when my team asks me for opinions and information just when they need it. For me that's success. They are working, they are well, they have the trainings they need to do a good job, they work in an environment where they can speak. It's free for them to be who they are, it's free for them to work and say what they feel like saying, you know?"

Third, the Brazilian female leaders have good communication and listening skills and try to take into account different points of view when making decisions. They also consider politics and conflicts to be part of the role of a leader. Hence, they consider it important to build a network of allies and acquire negotiation skills, as this allows them to navigate conflicts and ensure what's best for the organization.

"As part of the organization, we need to do what's best for Company A, and that's a cause of a lot of conflicts, because a lot of people can't see it that way, so it takes time and effort. I try not to say no the first time. I tell them I'll go back, analyze, come back to them. Because I feel in this case the person will have more time to think and can have time to see the whole picture"

"When conflicts arise, I like to take the time to reflect about it. I try to be patient with myself, and not take any decisions at the same moment something comes to me. I also discuss this with people I trust, as they can have a different view about that and more knowledge, so we can discuss this and arrive to a better conclusion."

"Based on experience, if I need to take something approved in a bigger group, I would rather take short individual meetings with each one, make sure I am aligned. So, by the time this gets into a bigger meeting with a lot of people, I'm already pre aligned and use this as leverage for the people that agree to support me."

The Brazilian female leaders are also proud of belonging to Company A. Hence, they value Company A's culture, and consider important that their daily activities are in line with the strategy, processes, and values of the organization. They also consider that Company A's culture allows them to make decisions that ensure that targets are met, and the organization becomes successful. Because of this, they often utilize the tools Company A provides in their daily work.

"We have methods, we have principles, and processes. If processes don't go well, you go back to the methods, if that doesn't work, you go back to the principles, but the principles never change. I take this very seriously."

"I think this is important. I can also explain why it's important for Company A that we deliver what we promised that we follow the budget, all of that, because I believe in it myself."

"Everything starts with our values. If we have good leaders, then you have good results because then the people working are enjoying themselves, having fun at work and delivering what they have been asked."

5.2.3. Employee's expectations

When it comes to employee's expectations, the Brazilian leaders perceive that they are expected to adapt their leadership style to the needs of their team.

"Different people have different levels of maturity, and they expect different levels of support. So, you need to understand what kind of needs they have and how you should be as a leader to help them."

Additionally, they are expected to grant support whenever it is needed and be a problem solver for them.

"They trust that all the demands they are collecting from customers, that I will find the best way to bring it internally to the factory. That I will really structure the business case in order to argue internally."

"They of course expect you to grant them a lot of things, and here when you need to say no, it's a lot about negotiating."

"I believe they want from me support to develop their activities. For example, I have a problem with X partner as they don't have the training necessary to perform their tasks. Can we do something to provide training? Then I go back to academy and arrange this training. So, to summarize, they expect me to be a problem solver and someone to teach them how to work with the Company A services and tools."

Finally, they are expected to be experts within their areas, and be teachers of Company A's tools and processes when necessary.

"I believe they expect me to be the person that knows the details behind the thing, to know the procedures, you know. For instance, they need to do X, can you teach me? And then they assume I am working with the system and then I will know every single detail about that."

5.2.4. Colleagues' expectations

Regarding their colleagues, the Brazilian female leaders perceive that they are expected to contribute with their expertise to the tasks in which they collaborate.

"We have different experiences, we come from different roles, so generally speaking we expect each other to contribute with our own view based on our previous experience to come up with the best possible proposal to our products."

Additionally, they are expected to have a good collaboration with their colleagues and have a good level of communication.

"I think most of the expectations would be related to having good relationships and being a good interface to these areas, rather than caring about how I manage my team. It's important we maintain a good level of discussion, that we have a good level of transparency, governance and so on. In this sense I feel they expect me to offer these things to me."

Finally, they are expected to follow Company A's strategy, and always strive to reach the targets the company has established by utilizing the skills and knowledge of their department.

"I think we have common activities, and in this case, it makes sense that they expect me to be in contact with my employees, and push them towards our strategy and activities, because it is a common target for everyone. I think they also want me to complete the activities related to my area of expertise, to follow up in these activities, and to also support them when they are performing activities related to my area of expertise."

5.2.5. Manager expectations

The manager's expectations are often related to performing activities, achieving targets, and supporting other teams within the area of expertise of the leader.

"Their expectations are according to what my role description requires and the targets we have established for the year."

"Their expectations are more towards deliveries than leadership. They expect me to deliver X when I promised it. Mostly the things I need to do to succeed in my job. I expect you to deliver X on time with the resources you have."

"There are practical expectations, like getting something implemented in certain markets, getting certain products developed. But it can also be expectations regarding supporting teams and bringing up knowledge, and really contributing in a more general way to group discussions."

The Brazilian female leaders also perceive that their manager expects them to have transparent communication as to what are their needs when facing challenges.

"I think they want to trust me. For this I try to be transparent and let them know if something needs their attention."

Finally, they perceive that their manager expects them to strive for the well-being of their team.

"We use the barometer. We are measured when it comes to behavior and happiness in the department. So, I think my manager wants to have good mood based on this tool, so I think this is part of their expectations."

5.2.6. Feedback and interactions

As expectations come from three different actors, it is also evident that the interactions described within the interviews were also related to these actors (employees, manager, and colleagues).

First, when it comes to their employees, they don't often receive feedback from them. This is because their interactions are often influenced by hierarchies. Hence, respect for positions of power and a lack of feedback systems hinder the possibilities for employees to deliver feedback. However, the manager senses when their employees are satisfied or need support by using their knowledge and experience, identifying sources of support in a more implicit way.

"I think it's a cultural thing. We are in a very hierarchical country, so employees may be afraid of giving managers feedback. For me it's totally okay, but I don't receive it often. And I am the same as my manager. Of course, if I see that something is going to affect my work, then I speak. But otherwise, I don't."

"They don't speak about their demands loudly, but we also have regular meetings for me to follow up how they are doing. And there are things that I identify that I can help them with to be better based on my knowledge and experience. They shouldn't be spending much time thinking about process improvement and so on, I am the one to take that responsibility to make their life easier."

"Some of the expectations are in our job description. So, the cases they bring to me are related to some kind of support, which is in my job description."

Second, regarding their colleagues, feedback is also rare due to a lack of peer-to-peer feedback systems. Positive feedback is delivered only after big achievements. If the Brazilian female leaders need feedback from their colleagues, they ask their colleagues for support.

"They don't tell me their expectations openly, but you feel that once you do something that was going in the right direction, you receive a lot of positive comments. So, you really realize that this is the way you should go. Sometimes I ask for feedback, mostly to get collaboration going within these areas."

"You get feedback after meetings or when we do things well, but that is very rare."

"We have meetings, where we discuss what is happening, but I don't think this is enough. So, when I have something specific, I book a meeting or grab a coffee together if it's something simple and so on. But not any specific tool that we are using for aligning expectations or give feedback."

Finally, their manager is more open to deliver feedback, and they have formal communication systems for Brazilian female leaders to request guidance and support (usually one on one meetings), and for their manager to deliver feedback. However, although their manager is more open to delivering feedback, they only do so when revising whether targets of the year have been achieved, or when certain milestones must be completed. The interviewees also only request feedback when help is needed for a task.

"I think they should tell me their expectations more openly. The problems change every time, and I think the expectations should change as well. They shouldn't be only one forever. This is something that sometimes I miss, the alignment of expectations. I can feel that everything is going well because quite frequently I receive positive feedback. So, I can conclude by myself that it is positive because it is aligned with their expectations, but sometimes I miss this open and transparent conversation about what they really expect. However, I feel expectations are matching with my role description and my skills."

"We have a process in which we set targets for the year, and when we do this, we do somehow expectations alignment. So, when I establish a target, they expect me to perform all these tasks in the best way. But we don't have any system where we do this calibration often. We do have regular meetings, but in these meetings, it is mostly about regular issues and follow up tasks and so on."

"If necessary, he will give me the tip to explain. We have regular one on one meetings, and when I ask my manager for feedback on something that I'm doing, or if they believe it should be done in another way, they always say no, don't worry, it's okay the way you are doing. If I see something, I will tell you. So, then I think I'm doing okay. But I ask for this feedback."

FIGURE 4: Summary of findings first part of the interview.

Sweden					
Elements	**How leaders should be**	**How Swedish female leaders are**	**Employee expectations**	**Colleagues expectations**	**Manager expectations**
Be able to establish a strategy and be a decision maker	*x*	*x*	*x*	*x*	*x*
Seek consensus and a collaborative way of	*x*	*x*	*x*		

Elements	How leaders should be	How Swedish female leaders are	Employee expectations	Colleagues expectations	Manager expectations
working (communication and listening skills)					
Developer of teams and individuals (support and guidance)	x	x	x		
Flexible in communication and leadership style	x	x			
Ambitious and seeker for continuous improvement	x	x			x
Proud of the Company A culture	x	x		x	x
Brazil					
Elements	**How leaders should be**	**How Swedish female leaders are**	**Employee expectations**	**Colleagues expectations**	**Manager expectations**
Interested in their team's well-being and development	x	x			
Flexible in their leadership style	x	x	x		
Give autonomy and support to employees and colleagues	x	x	x		x
Good listener and excellent communication skills	x	x		x	x
Conflict solver, negotiator, and networker		x	x		
Ambitious (expert and highly skilled)		x	x	x	x
Proud of the Company A culture	x	x			
Focus on reaching targets and strategies		x		x	x

5.3. Female leadership through the Swedish lens

Firstly, when asked about their experience as female leaders, the Swedish participants expressed both an advantage and a disadvantage, as they are in the spotlight more often.

"Being a woman in leadership comes with a lot of challenges. I didn't think so originally, but it does. But it also comes with perks I would say. One of the perks is that people remember you. Like when I step into a room everyone knows because I am the only woman. But your space to move is even smaller. Both because people would look at me and say, "can she manage it?", but also because I stand out, so everyone remembers it."

"I will mention the benefit, I think when you are in a company like Company A and in the automotive industry where I've always been operating, it is an advantage just because you're visible, and people remember you. So that's the clear advantage. I think that's the main differentiating factor."

Second, regarding their identity, they mentioned that they receive negative feedback when acting tough, as the expectation is that they should be gentle leaders.

"The one thing that I struggle with personally, is that I am not a very soft leader. I love people, and I love developing people, but I am not cuddling, and there is this expectation that I should be cuddly. And I don't know if it is because I am a woman, or because I am a happy person. But therefore, when I am tough or direct, or say things for what they are, there is quite frequently backlash. Some people love it, and they get used to it after a while, but there is definitely an expectation of me being someone else than who I am. But in this case communication is important. You can expect me to act so and so, but if you come to me and you don't prepare and don't reach the results, you will see another person. That's because results for me are very important. So, talking talking talking. Sometimes people still get shocked, even if I prepared them. They get surprised that I get harsh on them."

"I think my personality may be a challenge because I am constantly driven for improving things. When I asked things, I could ask it in the same way as a male leader, but people were offended by my way, and not by my male colleague's way. Because having those direct discussions, it is not easy to have as a woman. I have not been ruder than anyone else, but due to my gender people interpret me as much harsher. So that has been a challenge for my whole career. I'm expected to be sweet all the time."

They have also experienced being told that they only got their jobs because of their tough personality, and not because of competence.

"I've had a lot of comments of being very tough for a woman, and that I have had the possibilities of being a leader only because of this. And that is of course also not something that I like in this whole discussion. That you have to be very male to make it. I think we are missing out on a lot of talent if we only promote females that behave like the male. I try to take the discussion. Especially with people who have an old view on how a leader should be. I think it's important to discuss how it is possible to be male or female and be a leader, have different cultural backgrounds, different ages, it doesn't matter. Take the discussion because it is limiting us."

"When we act the same way as men, it is not as appreciated. The men are assertive, the woman is a bitch."

However, when being gentle, they experience that women are not as respected as leaders.

"What I have experienced, is that I have a lot of employees that are women who talk with a very light voice, and they are very skilled. And then I have seen that they are not seen as competent, and this has made me mad, because they are very competent and very capable. They are not interpreted as strong and driven. The feedback always came from male that are 50+. "

Hence, they experience opposing views when getting feedback on being a leader and being a woman. However, they believe that these shouldn't matter, and a female leader should continue to be authentic to her personality and not care about gender stereotypes.

"I just hope we get to a point in society where you don't see gender in leaders and just see them as individuals."

"I just try to not think what female leadership is, but rather what leadership for me is."

Regarding aspects that have been detrimental for their leader identity, they mentioned an industry bias towards men.

"I can feel that there is this attitude that when you're worked here for a long time that you know the best and I don't think that's the case. When you've worked here for a long time, you've been out at markets, retail network and somebody new may not have this. However, new people have other competencies and experiences, and we need to merge these together. I can feel that young men have an easier path than young women in this sense. I think it's because of industry bias. I feel it's something that we have to be conscious about and we need to work with it in a regular basis."

This male bias has negative effects on company efforts towards equality.

"We have skills capture, and we also have equality in our targets. However, we have received feedback that not everyone experiences being treated equally, and we have also seen that people that leave us are to a larger extent women, and we are now looking into that and doing exit interviews with everyone. So, I think you need to work with these things because I think in our industry there is still a lot of bias. So, it's not always that I have experienced this when I am in the room, but I need to be open to taking in the feedback."

"I don't like these discussions on quotations on females, because I feel this puts us in the spot, and tends to drive the discussion that she is only here because she is a woman. "

When it comes to aspects in their context that has helped them build a leadership identity, they mentioned managers that don't coach them based on their gender, and other female leaders (role models).

"To me it's super important the manager I have. I need a manager with which I can have this authenticity. I've had a few managers that cannot stand my personality, and it has been a catastrophe. The problem is when I feel that I'm alone. The most important is to have someone that believes in you and that allows you to make mistakes and picks you up."

"We don't have enough role models in the company, and it was hard to see yourself in the role. I think it took until I had a female manager until I was able to see how this changes things, and how it is easier to fit in. I don't think being a woman is a challenge in the role, but in the long run in your career development, I think it helps to have others that are like you."

"I think you need to find other women. There are a lot of other great female leaders at Company A, and you can learn from each other's experiences and build each other up."

Hence, they try to promote these when leading as well.

"As a female leader, I have a much greater responsibility for all those females that want to be females as well. So, I joined mentorship programs, and I mentor four women. We share our experiences, what I would have done in the situation and so on. I think this is very important to give to those others who see you as a role model and seek important advice."

"I get to hear that the atmosphere in the meeting is much better, there is room for equality, and everyone is heard when there are women in the room. I think this is wrong because we shouldn't need women for women to feel safe."

Finally, they mentioned that experience and communication can be two powerful elements that allow them to defend their identity and not implement other's expectations regarding their gender and leadership style.

"I think when I was younger, I was more conscious about how people would perceive me. But I've learned from experience that you can't pretend to be someone you are not. So, if I'm a rather quiet and more modest person, then that's who I need to be in my leadership. Pretending to be someone else won't help in my leadership. Not everyone is gonna love you, not everyone is gonna like you, but that's okay. Receive feedback and learn from it but decide which one is true to your personality."

"I think it's important to be clear with what we want. From that perspective, I have had courage. I have been clear of what motivates me and what I strive for. For my perspective is development, so not being stuck in one position. And then I have gotten that back. Sometimes I don't get a position, and in this case, I ask for feedback, and we set up development plans. So, I think I have contributed to my development in that sense."

5.4. Female leadership through the Brazilian lens

First, when asked about their experience as female leaders, some Brazilian participants expressed that being a woman is a benefit, as they are committed to excel at their work.

"We have benefits, because we know that we are committed and dedicated to do things perfectly well."

However, the majority stated that being a woman in leadership represented a very big challenge, as men assume they are not knowledgeable and are unimportant.

"In my organization, I haven't experienced anything. But in other departments, especially in the business units, it happens sometimes. There was once this meeting, where the business units were discussing with guys from engineering. I was actually not invited to this meeting. But someone in the meeting said "actually, the person to talk about this is Participant X, so let me get her to the meeting". And then I arrived to the meeting, and they were spreading misinformation about the products, because they were not the people to talk about this. So, then I shared my screen to show the right information. Then the guy from engineering said to forget what he said, and instead trust my information. So, this happened in this meeting to which I was not invited to. So, then I had another meeting, with the same people of the business unit. One of them said something like "oh no, it's not right, don't you know that? This guy from engineering said other information is right". So, in their minds, all the wrong information should have come from me, because I am a woman. They were even saying "he shared his screen, didn't you have the time to take a screenshot?" and then I said "take a screenshot? Why would I take a screenshot of my own content? I was the one sharing. Then they tried to pretend like nothing happened. But this is the kind of situation in which they expect all the wrong information should come from a woman that wasn't even invited because she is not important at all."

Second, they expressed that, as most leaders are men, it is harder for a woman to enter this social circle, so it is harder for them to be heard and advance in their careers.

"It's more difficult to be honest. I think it's not because anything against women. Everyone here I see is very open. But I think we as human beings, and we live in a society where we have friendships and so on, and it's tougher for a woman to enter these societies, and to be really connected to these. So, it's harder for a woman to advance in the organization, because of these human relations, biased and so on. They don't plan not to have women, but we like to promote who we are friends with. It's easier to promote people I like, people I have the same opinion with, people who I studied with. It's very easy, very convenient. To promote someone who is totally different and has different opinions and arguments, that's tough, but it's better."

Additionally, they explained that they must pass multiple tests to demonstrate they have knowledge and capabilities, only gaining respect when they pass these tests.

"One time a man asked me to show them how to use the parts catalog. I know how to use this tool, because I have been working with this for a very long time. So, I showed them. But then I thought to myself, this person has worked with the distributors for many many years, it is impossible that he didn't know the parts catalog. So, I realized it was a test to see if I knew about the parts. I truly believe that, because he didn't need anyone to show him the parts catalog."

Fourth, they mentioned that their age and looks are more noticeable than their capabilities as a leader.

"Being a leader and a young one, it's a horror show. "You are the Company A specialist, but you are too young or too pretty."

Finally, they expressed frustration, as the lack of female coworkers has as a consequence that inequality situations are left unnoticed, and they feel alone when experiencing them.

"Being a woman only brings challenges. Most of the times, you are the only woman in the room, so situations of inequality are not seen by anyone in the room, so you feel more lonely about the situation."

"There was this situation where I was with my boss, and we were talking with dealers. And the dealers have a different culture because they are not even Company A. They carry the name of Company A, but they are not. We were joining a meeting with them, and we had our cameras open, because part of the assignment was to get them to open the cameras. So, when I opened my camera, they were like "woooww, not the screen looks beautiful" stuff like that. And I couldn't say anything, and at this time I was with my boss in the meeting, and he didn't say anything. And at this time, I didn't have the open communication with him to talk about that, so I was just like "that's sucks but let's move on".

When it comes to elements in their context that have helped them to overcome these inequalities, they mentioned that having allies is important. These allies can represent other women, organizational actions towards equality, and men they trust. These allies also help them to position themselves as leaders and not give up their identity due to inequality.

"It's not enough for women to be in management positions, it's also important that they are in the right quantity. Because in the long run they will start having the same opinion as the men around them. They won't say anything different because they will be alone. It's tougher to say something when you are alone. First you say, second time you think twice, third time you say I will agree, because nothing will change with my opinion, because I am alone here. So besides being in management positions, we have to be in quantity, because you and me we can do something, because we will have our back."

"But it's good that there are many incentives in the organization encouraging all women to don't be shamed, or to don't give up on their ideas only because others won't give you the proper attention. You should raise your voice and say your opinion. There are also a lot of awareness programs dedicated to men that they need to take care the way they are behaving. So, the same way they encourage women to be mor confident about themselves, they are asking the help of the men and ask them to open a little the space to get in the stage. I can already feel that it is generating a positive change in the organization. Now we have the KPIs where we are measuring the level of women being in leadership positions, which is very good."

"Now I am close to my manager, and I share with him things that happen, because I feel he needs to know the things that happen. But still, at the moment I feel I can't just do anything and just have to move on. I believe that for equality, the majority needs to stand for the minority."

Regarding elements in their context that have hindered them from overcoming inequalities, they mentioned hierarchies, as there is fear of getting into trouble for speaking up.

"Being a woman is a challenge in itself. This can also vary depending on where you are I can tell by experience that Latin countries are more sexist than Sweden. So, you as a female when you are taking tough discussions with male colleagues, especially when they are in a higher hierarchical position than you, they say I am the manager here, and you will do what I tell you to do."

"My reaction depends on who I am with. Because some people are too high in the department, and you feel that you may get a big problem if you say anything."

Regardless, women feel that it's important to always try to not give up, attempt to express their opinions, correct inequalities when they see them, always try to increase their allies, and show good quality in their job.

"I've never given up, and I decided I would never let that affect me. This was because of my first manager, because he encouraged me to go out, make mistakes, and improve. He always said that he always had my back. He even told me "I will always hire women, because they always deliver better". So that helped me a lot, and I have always believed that I deserve the same opportunities. I never give up, I keep showing that I am skilled, and that I deserve the positions I want."

"I think that once we deliver a good job with quality, once we can take the discussion with the right arguments and facts, then we get strength. And also, it's important to try to give an opinion. Even when you are alone, try to give an opinion. Knowing that not all the time this will be followed, most probably this won't be followed most of the time, but it's important that people know what your opinion is, because in the future they will have you as reference."

"Now I am close to my manager, and I share with him things that happen, because I feel he needs to know the things that happen. I believe that for equality, the majority needs to stand for the minority."

"It's a lot about teaching and say "no it's not okay to interrupt me, I'm not finished. Or not, it's not okay for you to disregard my opinion, or whatever you think it's okay to do because I am a woman. Really make sure that you are making your point very clear for them."

6.0. Discussion

6.1. Forming a leader identity...

6.1.1. In Sweden

As explained by Social Identity Theory, individuals categorize themselves into groups that perform better in relevant variables (in-groups) than others (out-groups; Turner et al. 1987:20). Additionally, as they want to be accepted in this group, they search uniformity with the in-group and become role models of the meanings and norms that the individual perceives pertain to that social identity (Hogg et al. 1995). Based on the results above, it can be concluded that Swedish female leaders belong to three social categories: "Company A employees", "their team", and "leaders". When it comes to "Company A employees", this social category exists as the Swedish female leaders aim to be role models when it comes to the values, behaviors, principles, culture, strategy, and processes that the company culture represents. This is also reflected in a culture inspired by consensus, as Company A employees enjoy listening to all points of view before making decisions. In accordance with Social Identity Theory, Swedish female leaders prioritize the point of view of members of Company A over other organizations (Tajfel and Turner, 1971).

Regarding "their team", they are characterized by having knowledge and opinions based in their own area, having specific needs and culture depending on the individuals in it, and having a specific structure and processes established. As such, they perceive other teams as "out-group". In accordance with Social Identity Theory, this would mean that the point of view of their team would be prioritized over that of other teams (Tajfel and Turner, 1971).

When these identities work in harmony, their team identity is salient, as they aim to contribute with their team's skills and knowledge to the rest of the organization. However, these identities sometimes conflict with each other. In this case, there are conflicts between the beliefs of two or more teams about what is best for the organization. Nevertheless, there seems to be a hierarchy to these identities, as they don't prioritize the success of their team over the others if this is detrimental for the whole organization. In fact, there is an assumption that other teams and leaders within Company A also want to belong to the in-group of "Company A employees". As such, a uniformity aspect allows them to prioritize the success of Company

A, as this means the success of the collective in-group. Hence, it can be concluded that a strong organizational culture can overcome the formation of internal smaller in-groups for female leaders in Company A, preventing "discrimination" of out-groups (other teams in this case).

When it comes to "leaders", it is evident that individuals identify characteristics that all leaders should have to gain respect (leadership prototype). These skills include a strategic mindset, decision making skills, communication and listening skills, being highly ambitious, and a developer of individuals and teams. It is important to mention that, although these individuals don't discriminate against the "out-group" (followers), belonging to this in-group implies higher levels of responsibility and respect from the followers to the leaders. Hence, enjoying more benefits than the out-group.

In general, the three social identities complement each other, allowing the leader to implement the unique needs and culture of their team, as well as Company A's values into their leadership style. However, when it comes to feedback, it can be seen that the feedback of their team and their manager is prioritized (although feedback from their colleagues is not completely discarded) This may be because success as a leader is reflected in the acceptance, admiration and respect of their team, and the membership to the social category of leaders is reflected in other leaders accepting them as well. Hence, it can be concluded that, although the social category of "Company A employees" is utilized to ensure the collective success of different teams, the identities of "their team" and "leaders" become more salient when wanting to improve as a leader.

This is a complementary finding to the Social Identity of Leadership proposed by Hogg and colleagues. They state that members of a social category will regard with more respect and admiration individuals that have the most prototypical characteristics of their specific social category. However, in the context of this thesis, it is also evident that leaders will continuously seek evaluation of members of the social categories they are leading to guarantee they are compliant with the expected prototypes of the group. Additionally, although the Social Identity Theory of Leadership states that general leader prototypes will have less effect on followers with intense group membership, it is also evident that these are not completely disregarded from the leader point of view. This may be because members of the social category of leaders are "role models" for them as well. Hence, leaders balance being a role model (prototype) of their team, while being followers of leader prototypes, as these represent their "role models".

FIGURE 5: Interactions of different identities hold by Swedish female leaders in Company A.
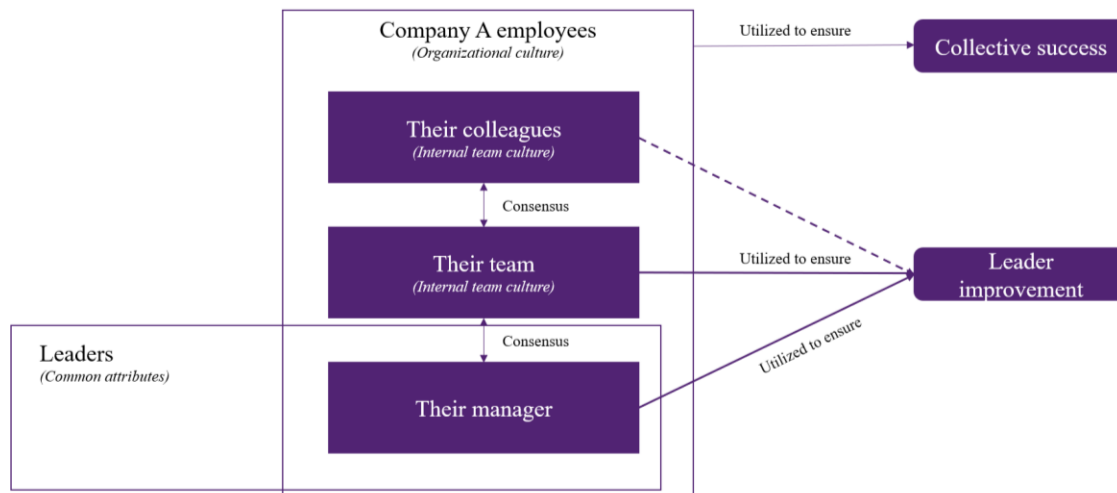
6.1.2. In Brazil

Regarding the Brazilian leaders, they categorized themselves in the same three social groups as Swedish leaders: "Company A employees", "their team", and "leaders". When it comes to the group of "Company A employees", the main characteristics are their shared values, behaviors, principles, culture, strategies, and processes. Because of their social categorization with this group, they strive to maintain uniformity among people within this group, educating even followers on how to behave according to the Company A way (Hogg et al. 1995). As a consequence, in accordance with Social Identity Theory, they prioritize the point of view of members of Company A over other organizations (Tajfel and Turner, 1971).

Regarding "their team", they are characterized by having knowledge in their own area, having specific needs and culture depending on the individuals in it, and having a specific structure and processes established. As such, they perceive other teams as "out-group". In accordance with Social Identity Theory, this would mean that the point of view of their team would be prioritized over that of other teams (Tajfel and Turner, 1971).

As in the Swedish case, the hierarchy of their identities makes them choose the best for Company A over the individual interests of their team. Hence, reinforcing the conclusion that a strong organizational culture can overcome the formation of internal smaller in-groups for female leaders in Company A, preventing "discrimination" of out-groups (other teams in this case). Nevertheless, it is worth noticing that interactions between teams are highly influenced by the cultural context of individuals. In the case of Swedish leaders, the interactions with other teams were driven by "consensus", highlighting communication, and listening as skills that facilitate this. However, Brazilian leaders described these interactions as "conflicts" that require "negotiation skills". Hence, although their social identities hold similarities, their cultural background influences the skills needed when utilizing these identities when disagreeing with other groups within their organization.

Regarding their social identity of "leaders", the Brazilian female leaders are in a context where hierarchies and power are important. Hence, contrary to Swedish leaders, members of this in-group of leaders not only acquire more respect, but also more prestige than followers (out group). When it comes to the characteristics of this social group, leaders are individuals that are interested in the well-bring of their team, are flexible in their leadership style, give autonomy and support to their employees, have excellent communication and social skills, and focus on reaching the targets and strategies of Company A.

Similar to the Swedish leaders, when the three social categories to which the Brazilian female leaders belong complement each other, they allow the leader to implement the unique needs and culture of their team and Company A's values into their leadership style. However, feedback from their team and their manager is prioritized once again, as success as a leader is more reflected in the acceptance, admiration and respect of their team, and the membership to the social category of "leaders" is reflected in other leaders accepting them. However, as leaders hold a higher hierarchy than followers, their employees are often reluctant to deliver this feedback. This is because the higher hierarchy of leaders intimidate followers, as they fear receiving backlash or discrimination from leaders when delivering feedback. Hence, feedback is only delivered when conflicts arise. However, as the female leaders' manager is within the in-group of "leaders", they often receive feedback and guidance from them, as both members of the in-group don't risk bad consequences for this (Tajfel and Turner, 1971).

Thus, it can be concluded that there is confirmation of the previously identified contribution to Hogg's and colleagues' research. Namely, that leaders will continue to seek evaluation of the members of the social categories they are leading to ensure that they comply with group prototypes. Additionally, the leader will continue to search for role models within the "leaders" social category to imitate role models, despite followers prioritizing their team's prototypes. However, the meanings of social categories will be modified depending on the cultural context. On one hand, leaders in the case of Brazil are individuals with higher hierarchical power. One the other hand, in Sweden, a leader's power is reflected only by higher respect from the followers. Hence, their interactions with the members of their social categories will be influenced by this as well, reducing feedback in highly hierarchical cultures. As such, company tools are highly relevant in the Brazilian context, as they are the support leaders need to understand their team, their expectations, and how to become a better leader and role model for them.

FIGURE 6: Interactions of different identities hold by Brazilian female leaders in Company A.
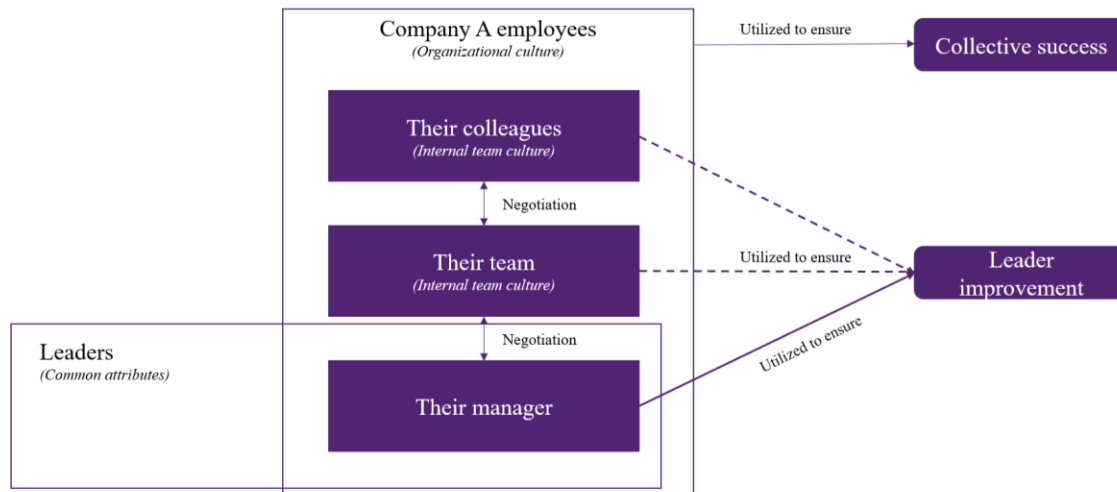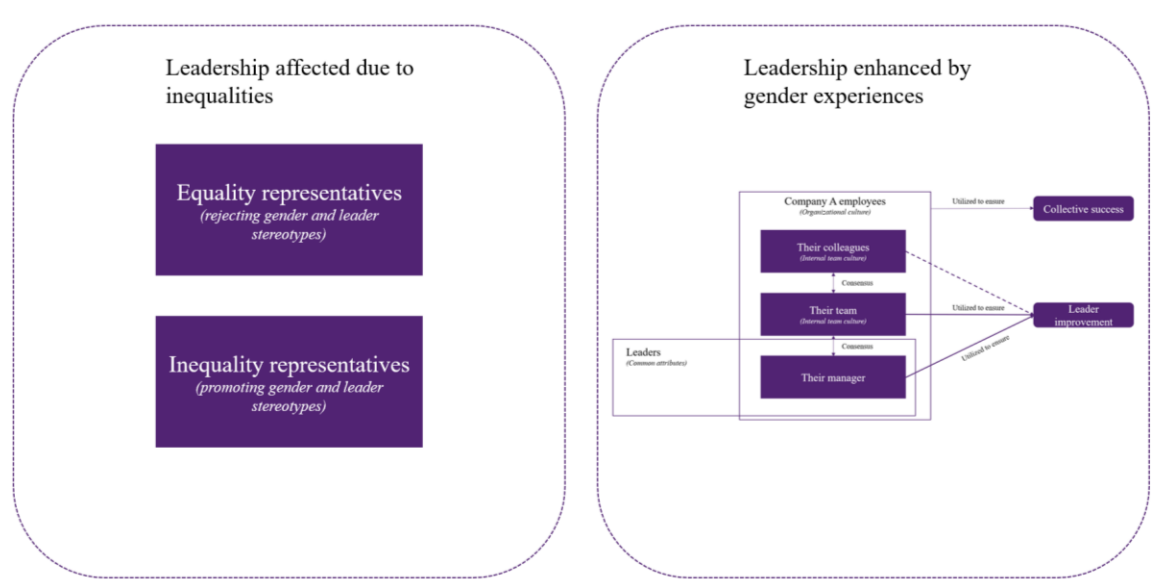
6.2. Being a woman...

6.2.1. In Sweden

When informed that part of the frame of the thesis was regarding gender, the Swedish female leaders identified two more social categories to which they belong: equality representatives and women. According to Social Identity Theory, this may have been because of changes in accessibility and fit. Regarding accessibility, the categories of "Company A employees" and "their team" are more often used when being a leader. However, if the situation changes and highlights their gender, then the identities of "equality representative" and "women" are activated. Additionally, it may be the case that they don't utilize these identities often when leading, utilizing it only when encountering inequality. When it comes to fit, an explanation for the salience of these identities could be that the situation gave them the opportunity to highlight the differences between equality representatives and the "others". Hence, if the situation reminds them about their gender, they identify in-groups and out-groups based on equality and gender.

As members of the social category of "equality representative", they share experiences of inequality of different levels. For instance, they experience constant reminder as to how stereotypes of male leadership and female leadership is. They consider gender stereotypes in leadership as beliefs of the "out-group". As such, every time they are confronted in a situation where they are told to behave in a certain way for being a woman (or they see someone else is experiencing this), they communicate this is not correct, and explain that being a leader should imply the same expectations, regardless of whether the individual is a man or a woman. Moreover, they experience questioning of their capabilities, as the out-group is highly male biased and believes men have more capabilities than women. Because of these experiences, their behaviors focus on countering inequality. This is reflected in actions that aim to empower the in-group, such as joining training programs for younger female coworkers, or making sure everyone is heard and included during meetings.

Regarding their identity as women, the Swedish female leaders expressed that, although they don't let this category influence how they act as a leader, this category brings them unique experiences that allow them to succeed as a leader. They stated that this category represents being a minority. Hence, they receive more attention, allowing them to highlight their accomplishments, and increasing their chances of being recognized and respected as leaders. Moreover, they are able to utilize their unique experiences as women in their leadership. Hence, they can utilize this identity to become better leaders.

Overall, it looks like these social categories influence their previous identities. Being a woman brings unique experiences that allow them to enhance their development as leaders, complementing (but not defining) the previous categories. However, the social category of equality representatives changes their view on leadership. According to Social Identity Theory, this is because their focus changes, and they aim to become as close to the prototype of "equality representative" as possible to be considered a leader. Hence, the leaders will attempt to become a role model in terms of "equality representative" rather than a role model for "Company A employees", "their team", or "leaders".

FIGURE 7: Influence of gender and inequality on the interactions of the different identities of Swedish female leaders at Company A.

6.2.2. In Brazil

When informed that part of the frame of the thesis was regarding gender, the Brazilian leaders identified a third social category to which they belong: women. Similar to the Swedish case, this may have been due to this identity becoming more accessible and fitting as the situation highlighted their gender.

In the case of these interviewees, a vast majority of leaders are male, and they see themselves as an "in-group". Hence, it is harder for female leaders to enter this circle and acquire the benefits that being in the "in-group" brings. They see that there is a group of male leaders that believes that women are not knowledgeable and unimportant, and they experience discrimination because of this. In this case, the discrimination goes from not being listened to, to not being invited to meetings even if they hold the knowledge necessary for the meeting to be successful. These male leaders also start seeing physical attributes as important for a woman, reflecting on behaviors such as giving comments about their appearance or commenting on their young age.

An important aspect to highlight is that allies were mentioned as important in this case. Allies are persons or systems that allow the woman to have support if a situation of inequality arises. It can be other women, men, or organizational efforts for equality. The implications of the social category of "women" change depending on whether the Brazilian female leaders have allies or not. If the female leaders have allies, the implication of this category is that they strive to prove these stereotypes wrong. They acquire more knowledge than their male counterparts and show exceptional skills in their job, even passing "tests" performed by male leaders. Additionally, when they receive comments regarding their gender or appearance, they feel confident enough to say something and clarify that, regardless of their gender, they are a leader, and they should be treated as such.

However, when there are no allies, the category of being a woman implies being compliant and copying behaviors of their male counterparts. In this case, as men are the group that receives the most benefits, women remain silent when seeing inequality behaviors, as having problems with the male group may result in negative consequences for them. Additionally, as they want to pertain to the "in-group" of male colleagues in order to be recognized as a leader, they agree with the ideals men have. They don't challenge them, as they believe they are alone fighting for their ideas.

Overall, it looks like the social category of "women" has an effect on the previous categories. In this case, it highly defines whether the woman perceives herself as part of the in-group of leaders or not. As the in-group is dominated by men, these two identities merge and become a prerequisite to be in the in-group, making it harder to female leaders to have the benefits of this in-group. Allies represent a defining factor of the extent to which this category will overpower the others. The presence of allies enhances their identity as leaders, allowing them to develop their skills to a larger extent to counter the negative expectations biased men have on them. On the other hand, the absence of allies results in a complete withdrawal of a leader identity, focusing on complying with the male biased in-group.

FIGURE 8: Influence of gender on the interactions of the different identities of Brazilian female leaders at Company A.
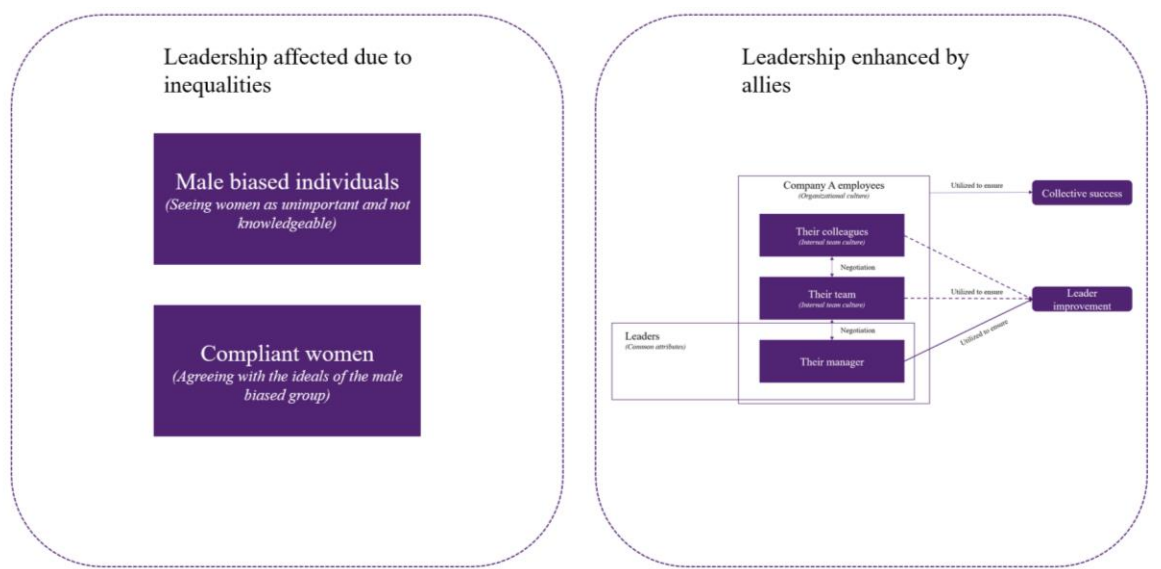
6.3. Findings and previous research

Although all female leaders interviewed were part of the same company, same industry, and same organizational area (sales and marketing), similarities and differences could be found regarding their identities due to their cultural context.

Starting with the similarities, when being a leader, participants of both nations mentioned that they are proud to belong to the social categories of "Company A employees", and "their team". Additionally, as a consequence of their strong organizational culture, they prioritize organizational success over their individual team's success when being confronted with conflicts with other teams. Thus, it can be concluded that a strong organizational culture could overcome the formation of internal smaller in-groups regardless of the national culture context. This finding can be complementary to the studies on leadership identity, highlighting organizational culture as a powerful moderator of identity choice in conflict situations.

Additionally, a complementary conclusion was made to the research of Hogg and colleagues. These researchers concluded that members of a social category will regard with more respect and admiration individuals that have the most prototypical characteristics of the specific social category (Hogg, van Knippenberg, and Rast, 2012). However, from the point of view of leaders, they will not only seek approval of their followers by becoming a role model (prototype) of their social category, but they will also try to complement these identities with role models of other social categories (leaders in this case).

Finally, it can be concluded that gender inequalities have negative consequences for female leaders' identities. However, these are reflected in different ways depending on women's cultural context. When it comes to Sweden, their focus shift to the social category of "equality representatives", losing focus on factors expressed at the beginning of the interview (like establishing a strategic direction). Regarding Brazil, gender inequalities can result in a complete abandonment of leadership identity, modifying it to get the approval of the male in-group of leaders. Eagly and Karau (2002) have already mapped how there are conflicting expectations on leadership roles and the female gender. However, these findings support their research by identifying how these different identities are utilized by women in different contexts, also mapping the negative consequences of inequalities in female leader's identities.

When it comes to differences, they were found on the meanings related to being a leader. In Brazil, being a leader comes with additional social benefits, status, and recognition, which is not as present in the Swedish interviews. This brings additional differences in their interactions with other members of the organization. Swedish leaders have more open interactions based on communication and consensus, whereas the Brazilian leaders have interactions highly influenced by the hierarchies of the individuals. Furthermore, although both Swedish and Brazilian leaders are more open for feedback of individuals that are closer to them (their team and their manager), they don't receive it to the same extent. This is also due to the hierarchies in Brazil, which often hinder the followers' willingness to deliver feedback. Although previous research has already stated that national cultures influence the relationship between leaders and followers (Rockstuhl, Dulebohn, Ang, and Shore, 2012), follower attitudes and expectations on leaders (e.g., Den Hartog et al., 1999; Gerstner and Day, 1994), and leader effectiveness (e.g., Atwater, Wang, Smither, and Fleenor, 2009; Jung and Avolio, 1999; Spreitzer, Perttula, and Xin, 2005); this finding highlights that these findings are not changed when leaders studied are only women, contributing to the generalization of these findings.

In Brazil, gender has a great impact on the social category of leaders, as the majority of the population in that group is formed by men. As such, although women in Brazil are leaders, they don't enjoy the benefits of this despite the highly hierarchical structure of the organization. Hence, it could be concluded that hierarchies can be overwritten if the gender population is disproportional, creating in-groups based on gender instead of leadership. This is a complementary finding to the research by Eagly and Karau (2002), mapping an identity process consequence of agentic and communal attributes assigned to specific genders, and how increased population of these genders changes perceptions of roles. However, more quantitative research is needed to understand if a decreased male population in the social category of leadership influences the perceived correlation of agentic behaviors with this role.

Finally, Brazilian leaders highlight the importance of allies when building their leadership identity. If they perceive they have allies, they challenge assumptions of them being an "out-group" and reinforce their leadership identity by proving wrong the expectations posed on them because of their gender. However, when they don't have allies, they become compliant and utilize the expectations towards women as a tool to guide their behavior in favor of male leaders. Thus, it can be concluded that allies are important when there is high inequality in the leader social category. These findings complement research on gender and leadership by highlighting the importance of allies in low equality contexts for women to build their identity as a leader. This wasn't identified in other gender and leadership research, and it is thus required that future research further investigates this.

7.0. Conclusion

7.1. The study

The automotive industry continues to be ranked as one of the industries with the worst levels of equality. Hence, these companies lose or miss the opportunity to benefit from the competitive advantage diversity brings. As multinational companies are present in different parts of the world, it is expected that their levels of equality will be influenced by different cultures. As such, it is necessary to explore how women are affected by different cultural contexts and adapt the company's efforts for diversity depending on the local needs of female leaders. Thus, this thesis aimed to give a voice to female leaders in different contexts for them to express how their leadership identity is affected by gender inequalities experienced in the automotive industry in their own countries. The research question utilized in this thesis was: *how do women in the automotive industry navigate gender and leadership identities in Sweden and Brazil?*

This research question was answered by performing a comparative study between two case studies with differing levels of equality (Brazil with low levels of equality, and Sweden with high levels of equality). Similarities between these two countries allowed the researcher to draw three main conclusions. First, the female leaders interviewed utilize three main social identities when leading: their company identity, their team identity, and their identity as leaders. In both contexts, they utilize their company identity to recognize and prioritize collective success when facing conflicts with other teams. Hence, strong organizational cultures allow female leaders to prioritize collective success over that of individual teams regardless of their cultural context. Second, although the organizational identity is utilized to seek collective success, individual success as a leader is ensured by utilizing their team and leader identities. Hence, it was concluded that female leaders build and improve their leadership identity by considering prototypes of the social categories they are leading, and considering prototypes of other social categories where they identify role models. Finally, it is evident that gender inequalities bring negative consequences for female leaders' identities regardless of cultural context. In the case of Sweden, although leaders utilize their unique

experience to enhance their leadership when faced with inequalities, they abandon their leadership skills focused on individual and collective development and start focusing on correcting inequalities. When it comes to Brazil, depending on whether the leaders have allies or not, gender inequalities may result in the female leader focusing on constantly challenging negative expectations of her (hence enhancing her leadership skills), or completely abandoning her leadership identity, focusing on getting the approval of the male in-group.

The differences between these two case studies allowed the researcher to draw three main conclusions. First, although the social categories are named the same in different cultural contexts, they have different meanings, influencing not only the prototypes in the social category but also the interactions between members of the social category. As such, the cultural context will influence the skills necessary for women to build a leader identity. Second, when most of the population of a social category is one gender (male in the case of leaders), the prototypes of this gender merge with the prototypes of that specific social category. Thus, it is harder for other genders to access this in-group, resulting in the leader modifying their leadership identity to counter inequality. Finally, the importance of allies in low equality contexts was highlighted, as these may influence the abandonment or enhancement of leadership identities in women.

7.2. Theoretical contribution

This paper contributes to previous research in three ways. First, it studies and compares how women build their leadership identities in two different cultural contexts (Sweden and Brazil). Hence, two identified gaps in research were addressed: lack of research on leadership identities in different cultural contexts, and lack of comparative studies between women. Second, this study allowed for a better understanding on conflicting identities and how women navigate these in different levels of inequality. Finally, a male biased industry was studied, contributing to an understanding of how an unfavorable industry context can influence women's leadership identities.

7.3. Managerial implications

Following the findings of this thesis, three concrete managerial implications can be drawn. First, a strong organizational culture that encourages diversity is important. As it was shown in the thesis, the organizational culture of Company A was so strong, that it passed frontiers. Hence, a culture encouraging diversity would give female leaders the tools to counter male biases in their industry regardless of their cultural context. Second, it is important to understand the cultural context of the individuals in order to understand how to counter inequalities in a more efficient way. For instance, encouraging women to speak up may work in Sweden, but not in Brazil (due to the already seen hierarchical and male-dominant context). Finally, it is evident that there are Swedish leaders that are willing to mentor other female leaders, whereas

there is a need for allies in Brazil. As such, this understanding of differences in cultural context can allow international programs of mentorship, allowing Swedish leaders to continue developing as leaders, while giving the tools for Brazilian leaders to be empowered as leaders.

7.4. Limitations and future research

Future researchers are encouraged to perform future studies in the previously identified research gaps. First, this thesis was limited by the context studied. Hence, future researchers are encouraged to explore other countries, industries, organizations, and minorities. Second, this study focused on women. However, the study on gender also lacks comparative studies highlighting other gender spectrums. Thus, this is an opportunity for researchers to investigate the interrelation between the gender spectrum identity and leadership. Finally, related to the previous point, researchers are encouraged to investigate how a person that highly values their gender identity (trans women or trans men for instance) balances their identity as a leader and try to understand how these identities interplay in their decision-making process.

8.0. Appendix

8.1. Appendix 1: Participant coding

Sweden

Interviewee	Date of interview	Length of the Interview	Interview type
Manager 1	6th March 2022	45 minutes	Teams
Manager 2	6th March 2022	45 minutes	Teams
Manager 3	6th March 2022	30 minutes	Teams
Manager 4	6th March 2022	30 minutes	Teams
Manager 5	13th March 2022	30 minutes	Teams
Manager 6	13th March 2022	45 minutes	Teams
Manager 7	13th March 2022	45 minutes	Teams
Manager 8	15th March 2022	30 minutes	Teams
Manager 9	15th March 2022	30 minutes	Teams
Manager 10	17th March 2022	30 minutes	Teams

Brazil

Interviewee	Date of interview	Length of the Interview	Interview type
Manager 11	25th March 2022	45 minutes	Teams
Manager 12	25th March 2022	45 minutes	Teams
Manager 13	7th April 2022	45 minutes	Teams
Manager 14	7th April 2022	1 hour	Teams
Manager 15	14th April 2022	1 hour	Teams
Manager 16	14th March 2022	45 minutes	Teams

8.1. Appendix 2: Questionnaire template

Background

1.0.   Can you introduce yourself? (Years being in management, years of working at Company A)

Leader stereotypes (Definition of leadership)

2.0.   How do you think leaders are?

3.0.   How is a leader at Company A?

Leader identity

4.0.   Do you consider yourself a leader?

5.0.   How would you describe yourself as a leader?

6.0.   Do you think you were a leader before being a manager? Ask for examples.

7.0.   What were your expectations of being a manager? Were they met? What kind of adjustments have you had to make to improve as a leader? Why?

Adjustments based on interactions.

8.0.   Do you think your employees have expectations as to how you should behave as a leader for them? Which ones? Give examples, how can you tell?

9.0.   Do you have a system to identify these? How does this work?

10.0.   How is this reflected in the everyday relationships and interactions you have with you and your employees? (Advantages and disadvantages)

11.0.   Do you think other leaders have expectations as to how you should behave as a leader? Which ones?

12.0.   Do you have a system to identify these? How does this work?

13.0.   How is this reflected in the everyday relationships and interactions you have with you and other leaders? (Advantages and disadvantages)

14.0.   Do you think your manager has expectations as to how you should behave as a leader? Which ones? (Company culture influences)

15.0.   Do you have a system to identify these? How does this work?

16.0.   How is this reflected in the everyday relationships and interactions you have with you and your manager? (Advantages and disadvantages)

Gender and leadership

17.0.   How is it to be a woman and a leader?

18.0.   What advantages and disadvantages do you identify?

19.0.   How does this affect your leadership?

20.0.   Do you have any other comments you would like to highlight?

8.3. Appendix 3: Thematic coding

Swedish leadership		
Leaders establish and develop a strategy	How leaders are and how I am	Leaders' social category
Leaders take decisions when necessary		
Leaders like consensus		
Leaders want transparent communication		
Leaders need to listen		
Leaders like to develop independent teams		
Leaders adapt their communication and leadership to their team		
Result driven		
Proud to belong in Company A		
Manager expectations to set targets for their team	Manager interactions and expectations	
Manager expectations to drive continuous improvement		
Feedback and relationship with manager		
Team expectation of role model	Team interactions and expectations	Leader for the team
Team expectation of showing the strategic direction		
Team expectation of support		
Team expectation of transparent communication		
Feedback encouragement and systems in the team		
Colleagues' expectations to drive continuous improvement	Colleagues' interactions and expectations	The others
Colleagues' expectations to strive to achieve strategies and targets		
Feedback and relationships with colleagues		
Brazilian leadership		
Leaders can be interested in power or on people	How leaders are	Leaders' social category
Leaders want to develop their team		
Leaders adapt to their team's needs		
Leaders give autonomy to their teams		
Leaders are good listeners		
Leaders need to have good communication skills		
Leaders are proud of belonging to Company A		
I am ambitious	How I am	
I want to be a leader that is concerned for their team		
I want to develop my team		
I need to manage conflict through negotiation and communication		
I am proud of belonging to Company A		
Manager expectations on performance	Manager interactions	
Manager expectations on communication		
Manager expectations on leadership		

Feedback and interactions with manager		
Team expectations of flexibility	Team interactions	Leader for the team
Team expectations of support		
Team expectations on expertise		
Feedback and interactions with employees		
Colleagues' expectations on collaboration	Colleagues' interactions	The others
Colleagues' expectations on communication		
Colleagues' expectations on following the strategy		
Feedback and interactions with colleagues		
Women in Sweden		
The advantage of being a woman	Advantages	Enhanced leadership identity
Negative feedback due to personality	Disadvantages	Conflict with leadership identity
Negative feedback because of leadership style		
Industry biased towards men	Negative contexts	
Being authentic	Actions against inequalities	Actions against gender stereotypes
Role models		
The importance of a good manager		
Communication key to counter inequalities		
Women in Brazil		
Women excel at their work	Advantages	Women against the others
Women are assumed to be not knowledgeable	Disadvantages	
Hard for women to enter male social circle		
Have to pass tests		
Receive comments on age and gender		
Men don't notice inequalities	Negative contexts	
Afraid of getting in trouble with someone higher up		
Allies are important	Actions against inequalities	Defending leadership identity
Don't give up, express opinions and correct inequalities!		
Show good quality of my job		

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