How to Achieve Gender Diversity in Top Management

- A qualitative study of gender equal companies listed on the Swedish stock exchange

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Abstract
Alarming statistics provides that only 10.2 percentage of companies listed on the Swedish stock exchange has achieved gender equality in their top management. The fact is that women being discriminated, since men dominates these positions of power. The study is of a qualitative nature and aims to achieve a deeper understanding and knowledge contribution of how gender equal companies’ has achieved this gender diversity in their top management. Sweden's highest ranking business leaders has been interviewed in order to obtain their view, and the companies they represent, in order to get an answer to what the most important requirements has been in the achievement.

The study’s main result has shown that strong core values and corporate culture are basic and required condition for a successful gender equality strategy. A deliberate or emergent strategy can then be successfully implemented, and it is mainly the impact of structural barriers that determine which strategy a company uses. At a deliberate strategy, following measures are in additional to core values and corporate cultural crucial; commitment towards gender equality, a specific plan with clear objectives, and a conscious objective recruitment process. The result found about these two factors and three measures also identified a required specific order to follow in order to achieve gender diversity in top management. These findings, which in a near future, aims to contribute to a more gender equal Sweden.

Keywords: Gender equality, gender diversity, top management, Swedish listed companies, strategy, commitment, corporate culture, core values, gender equality plan, recruitment phase, objectives, structural barriers
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The Swedish Central Bureau of Statistics has proven that 95 percent of all Swedish chief executive officers (CEOs) and 96 percent of all chairman of the boards consisted of men in the 2014 gender equality report (Central Bureau of Statistics [SCB] 2014). Furthermore, men represented 74 percent of the total number of board members (SCB 2014), which also indicates an alarming situation, with strong male dominance in the Swedish positions of power.

A company is considered to be gender equal, from a quantitative perspective, when the distribution between men and women is 40/60 percent (SCB 2014). The problem of the underrepresentation of women in top management positions is thus a widespread phenomenon (SOU 2015:50). In April 2015, the European Commission (ECHR) stated that women only represented 21.2 percent of the board members of the largest publicly listed companies registered in the EU countries (ECHR 2015). This indicates that the problem does not only exist within the borders of Sweden. Although, despite this distorted statistics, Sweden has been ranked as the fourth most equal country in The Global Gender Gap Report 2015. This indicates the extent of the problem of gender inequality, since Sweden is far from an egalitarian country despite the appointes fourth place. However, Sweden could nevertheless be seen as a role model since the situation is significantly worse for other countries according gender equality (The Global Gender Gap Report 2015).

This distortion of positions of power is further a hot topic for Swedish politicians and social inhabitants since it highly influences the society and illustrates how the power structure appears (SOU 2005:66). This provides that the Swedish business sector’s top leaders and the power elite is largely male-dominated and must be addressed towards a more equal society (Landsorganisationen 2014).

1.2 Earlier Research

The male-dominance in top management positions is remarkably when existing research provides that women have positive impact on business performance (Sudeck & Latridis 2014, Zenger & Lawrence 1989). Earlier research are mainly based on quantitative methods, which measure significant increases in corporate profit-results after women have been recruited into top management positions (Paulus & Nijstad 2003). Increased shareholder value has also been shown (Sudeck & Latridis 2014), which creates a more efficient long-term liquidity and thus the likelihood of survival in a competitive market. Cook and
Glass (2015) also discuss the importance of having women in positions of influence to increase the proportion of other female CEOs, which would equalize the distribution of power in society. To demonstrate that women can find themselves in senior positions are beneficial and important for a structural change (SOU 2015:50). Although, structural barriers that is a form of an unfair system, or set of attitudes, that prevents women from reach the most powerful positions (Merriam-Webster 2015). Women are also higher educated and graduated in a more advanced level than men (Funkelstein et al 2008), which makes the structural barriers even more visible.

All previously mentioned research provides positive effects of women's impact but still, companies are far from being equal (SCB 2014), mainly by reason of the barrier's existence. One example to this is within the recruitment phase, where men tend to recruit only men (Merriam-Webster 2015). The causes of why women are excluded from positions of power, and thus meaningful decision-making processes are numerous, complex and need a comprehensive strategy for increased equality (ECHR 2015). For a solution, the requirement is that top managers work for gender diversity, or see it as obvious, since they have the major impact in decision structures, goals and not least the human resources base concerning the top management context (Funkelstein et al. 2008).

One of Sweden's measures to address the problem was the introduction of the Discrimination Act. Chapters three, paragraph 13 (SFS 2008:567) states that all companies shall every third year establish a gender equality plan, in order to increase an equal distribution. Obviously, the solution is not efficient when only 27 of 264 Swedish listed companies have achieved a gender equal balance of 40/60 percent in its top management (AllBright 2015). Previous research rather indicates on the need of an explicit strategy in order to make a change. Strategies could be either deliberate, emergent or in between (Mintzberg & Water 1985). Further research also indicates that commitment is of importance to achieve objectives (Swann et. al 2004. Shore et al 2011). Others argues about the importance of holding a strong provided organizational culture and strengths in values, or core values to achieve goals (Rashid, Sambasivan & Johari 2002).

1.3 Problematization & Aim
In Sweden, 89,8 percent of the listed enterprises are not gender equal in their top management, despite the fact that there is a law, which indicates that companies must have a plan towards gender diversity (Allbright 2015). For instance, SAS is writing in their annual report and website that they actively work for gender equality (SAS 2014), but obviously fails since they have been placed on Allbright’s blacklist 2015 of Sweden’s most unequal companies.

However, solely 27 of 243 listed companies in Sweden have managed to become gender equal in their top management (Allbright 2015). There is hence a gap of knowledge about how these companies
actually have managed this. There is a problem that previous research has not examined what the most important is for achieving gender equality in more depth. Since the majority of the earlier research is of quantitative nature, this study will use a qualitative study method in order to create a different and deeper angle to the phenomenon of successful gender equality work. Earlier theories provide how a strategy helps to achieve goals but research is missing in this study context. How a successful gender equality work could take shape by strategy or active measures, needs to be contributed in knowledge and understanding. This paper will therefore dig deeper in women’s minority representation in context, by concerning what the most important requirements is for a achievement of gender equality work.

The study’s chosen context is Swedish company’s highest top level (CEOs, corporate boardrooms and corporate management). The context is justified because the top managers take the most crucial decisions within an organization (Ds 2006:11). For a specific question to be taken into consideration, they need to be convinced it is important to highlight (Paulus & Nijstad 2003). How the top management individuals think and act reflects and influences both the specific organization, but also the society and its various dimensions (Ds 2006:11) as they are the ones in power.

According the problematization and context, the research question is;

What are the most influencing requirements used towards achieving gender equality in top management?

By a qualitative empirical study, using semi-structure interviews of top managers in the current gender equal companies, the research question aims to obtain an answer to provide the current lack of knowledge and understanding. The lack of how these companies’ successful processes of change has taken form including requirements for attainment. According Svenskt Näringsliv (SVD) (2014), this is of importance since greater gender diversity strengthens the competitiveness of the Swedish industry. Organizations in Sweden depends on its ability to attract the most talented individuals in order to be competitive in the global market and has thus a great potential to become a global role model for equality (SVD 2014). A research of how these companies work towards diversity is therefore beneficial conveyed. This in order to encourage other organizations, including international enterprises to adopt and contribute to more equal top managements. To obtain a deeper understanding is important for the social development in a long-term perspective.

The study will designate board members and corporate management overall as top management to avoid repetition. Further, the words equality, equal or diversity, will be referring to gender equality, gender equal or gender diversity to facilitate the reading.
2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Previous Research

This part will cover previous research in relevant areas in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the study’s problematization and the related overall context. The first part will feature a brief description of Sweden's history in the context of equal distribution. Thereafter comes an exposition of measures towards gender equality within organizations and last, the third section will indicate on benefits corporates can gain of achieving diversity.

2.1.1 History Outline

To better understand the situation of why women are a minority in positions of power in today's society, it is suitable to glance back at Sweden's history in context. Positions of power have always been highly dominated by men. Furthermore, if creating a parallel of the overall inequality between men and women, it was not until 1921 that women were legally entitled to vote after much hard work (Riksarkivet 2013)

During the 60th century, the modern gender policy was first introduced and spread across the country (Riksarkivet 2013). Women's working standards on equal payment was started as an internal discussion and the gender role between a typical male and female work where (and is still) very detectable (Jämombud 2015). It was during the 90th century when the issue of power concept was taken up and laid the foundation for questioning the minor representation of women in leadership positions (Jämombud 2015)

Today, 15 years later, women still only represent five percent of the Swedish Chairman positions of the board (SCB 2015). This alarming statistics is both a serious social and political problem. These historical issues can be seen to have influenced and shaped today’s unequal situation in the top management positions, and leads further to the papers next section, which will present reasons why women still are a minority.

2.1.2 Reasons Why Women Are a Minority

It is important to dig deeper into structural barriers as a reason of why women still are a minority. The structural barriers can stand for many different reasons and phenomenon that women find hard in order to reach top management positions (Merriam-webster 2015). The ‘glass ceiling’ is seen as a well-known structural barrier in context. The definition of the metaphor glass ceiling is; “an unfair system or set of attitudes that prevents women from reach the most powerful positions” (Merriam-webster 2015, 1). Structural barriers are a complex phenomenon and exist in various dimensions and situations. Not least
within the recruitment phase, where women tend to be selected away because of male-dominated stereotypes, since a female behaviour is perceived as not appropriate in positions of power (Andrén 2012).

Another study indicates that several business leaders emphasize the importance of the recruitment process, and believes that the major problem is that men only tend to recruit other men (Statens Offentliga Utredningar 2014). Statistics for Swedish CEOs, who represents a large part of the top management, further provides a significant wage gap between the sexes, both in public and private sectors (SCB 2014). This wage gap is the type of direct sex discrimination, which is easiest to detect within organizations’. Falling wages among women, in the upper part of Swedish wage distribution, provides that the glass ceiling effect is relatively large. (Andrén 2012).

As earlier research indicates, the problem with gender inequality within organizations is a complex phenomenon, which must be addressed. This leads us to the next section, which will present Sweden’s measures towards a more equal distribution of influential positions of power.

2.1.3 Sweden’s Measures Towards Diversity

Sweden’s measure for increased equality within listed companies can be assumed as a so-called ‘soft’ law. The definition of a soft law is a regulation, which not enforce responsibilities (Baxter 1980). In 2008, Sweden introduced the law of Discrimination (SFS 2008:567), which is a soft law. The law states in 13§, chapter three, that all listed companies every third year shall maintain a plan according to increase equality. The plan must include qualitative equality measures, for instance; a workplace where there is no generally uniform distribution of women and men, the employer shall put special effort to attract applicants of the underrepresented sex (SFS 2008:567, see appendix 1). However, the Discrimination law (SFS 2008:567), is not mandatory. Companies are not actually forced to achieve the plan configured since it appear unclear designed and does not indicate what possible penalties could become as a consequence of the failure of achieving an agreed plan.

The Swedish Corporate Governance (The College/Kollegiet för svensk bolagsstyrning) has furthermore developed a corporate governance code as a measure. The code could also be assumed as a soft law because of the no direct consequences if not followed. The code is created in order to strengthen the confidence towards Swedish listed companies by promoting a positive development of corporate governance. The code supplements the Discrimination law (SFS 2008:567) and other rules by specifying a norm for good corporate governance at a higher level of ambition (The College 2012). Although, as this norm is not mandatory, the companies may deviate from individual paragraphs, provided that they report each deviation and explain why. A further aim of the code is to provide an alternative to legal regulation. The College believes that self-regulation is often preferable to legislation and sees its task to enforce self-regulation place within their area of responsibility. The code states that the board shall strive for a gender balance (The College 2012). They utilise peer pressure to influence organisations from within and pressure
from stakeholders and the media from outside, and may thus have an effect despite missing penalty statutory (The College 2012).

The Sweden in order to promote equality is clearly not working to the desired extent. The unequal history of Sweden also demonstrates the need for a change, which further could be linked to the study’s next paragraph, advantages of women in top management.

2.1.4 Advantages of a Gender Equal Distribution
According to Harrison and Klein (2007), equality is a construction of distributed representation of members that differs with respect to a specific area or attribute. These attributes which include differences in gender (Joshi & Roh 2009). Having a gender equal top management is further shown creating benefits in various areas.

According Dwyer, Richard and Chadwick (2003) and Pelled et al (1999) advantages increase in decision-making by superior problem solving in heterogeneous groups. Post and Byron (2015) although suggests that the improvement of decision-making is about the female influence of identifying information of advantage and how decisions are made most efficient to save time and thus money. This supports by Lloyed et al. (2013 that showed how equality in top management also tend to have a deeper understanding and knowledge to make more thoughtful decisions. This could find an explanation in the female’s cognitive frameworks (Paulus & Nijstad 2003). Zenger and Lawrence (1989) and Milliken et al. (1996) also provides the increases and more efficient communication that tend to gain advantages due to enhanced creativity according the cognitive framework.

Furthermore, financial returns increase after women step into top management positions (Paulus and Nijstad 2003). Carter et al (2003) argues for the deeper and broader understanding that comes with a heterogeneous group. This can find an explanation by women in general; exhibit greater level of university degree and in a more advanced level in comparison to men (Funkelstein et al 2002). Women indicate in greater strengths in sales and marketing (Groysberg & Bell 2013) and may relate to the higher level of studies. The strength may explain the increased shareholder value (Sudeck and Latridis 2014). Women and men also seems to differ regarding their cognitive frame, which been shown affect profits in a positive manner when both genders are represented as the decision-making becomes better (Carpenter 2002, Dwyer, Richard & Chadwick 2003).

2.2 Theoretical Framework
The thesis theoretical framework will present the selected theoretical angle and approach. The first section will review different strategies companies can use. The second part will thereafter cover the
relation between organizational culture, values, and commitment and its importance for achieving objectives, as a part of a successful strategy implementation.

2.2.1 Different Strategies

Strategy is defined as “the long-term direction of an organisation” (Johnson et al 2015, 2) and can hence be assumed as a synonym for the word plan since both aim to well conceive actions to achieve goals. Chungyalpa and Bora (2015) supports the comparison between the expressions by defining a plan as future actions and strategies as by nature being future oriented. Furthermore, it contributes competitive advantages in specific areas (Magretta 2002). A perspective from Peck and Jüttner (2000), defines strategy as relationship management, for instance stakeholders and shareholder interests. This also contributes competitive advantages (Magretta 2002) and thus the earlier mentioned monetary profits and other benefits. Diversity, that furthermore rewards since companies need different views and perspectives to find various ways in which strategy, or plan that should be measured e.g. strategies includes possible negative and positive scenarios, in order to make the conditions as well as possible in order to achieve objectives (Mintzberg & Waters 1985). It indicating strongly that a plan or strategy both have clear and leading intention, which is supported by formal controls to ensure the aim or objective in an environment that is manageable. The words plan and strategy will thus imply the same definition in this paper, regardless of whether the word plan or strategy is used hereafter, and can further appear to be deliberate, emergent or in between (Mintzberg & Waters 1985).

2.2.1.1 Deliberate Strategy

Deliberate means ‘thought out’ and a completely pure deliberate strategy is planned and intentional (Mintzberg & Waters 1985). According to Mintzberg and Waters (1985), three conditions must be achieved for a strategy to be pure deliberate. The first condition is that an organization must have clear intentions e.g. what goals they have, so that there is no uncertainty in the intentions of actions. The second must prevent doubts about if intentions are organizational or not, and that the goals are shared of all leaders. The last condition is how the collective intentions must be implemented as intended - as the strategy refers to - which means no interfere from outside force within the implementation. The external forces, such as market, technology or political factors must hence be predictable, in complete control or manageable of the company. In accordance with these three, it is highly unlikely to find companies engaged in completely clean deliberate strategies, it is thus more reasonable that companies only can be very close to such a deliberate plan (Mintzberg & Water 1985).

Mintzberg and Waters (1985) have named the most deliberate strategy as the planned strategy. One interpretation of their description of the planned strategy is how the top management orms the
starting point of the strategy-making. The top management who, with use of precise formulations, then strive to implement these formulations with minimal distortion. The aforementioned is ensured by designing an initial plan of intentions which then require elaboration in every detail (Mintzberg & Water 1985) e.g. who should do what, size of the budget, deadlines or what changes that is required if continued failure to achieve goals are repeated within a given time period. Mintzberg and Water (1985) argues that it also is an important part, to the extent possible, to let the planning process be managed by the top management. The planned strategy must thus continue to appear in an environment that is as predictable as possible as the planned strategy is of no use if the environment can influence the strategy and make it unusable in the way it is composed (Mintzberg and Waters 1985).

We will use this explanation of a deliberate strategy in the further work of this study to try to answer if this type of strategy can be used to achieve gender equality. As Mintzberg and Water (1985) not explored connections to how this strategy type might work in the context achieved equality work, we will therefore try finding the most influencing requirements when using this strategy if it proves to allow for an achieved equal top management. As this strategy type also is thought out, we will search for aware actions taken that are taught out to recognize this strategy type. When we further in this paper will continue to mention the deliberate strategy, we thus aim to our context and thereof the actual deliberate gender equality strategy.

2.2.1.2 Emergent Strategy

Emergent means ‘that something emerges’ or that ‘something happened’ without a definite plan to achieve a specific goal. According Mintzberg and Waters (1985), an emergent strategy lack intentional actions over time and thus can be assumed as no strategy at all, or however an unrealized strategy where objectives not are achieved through a non existed plan. Although, an emerging strategy instead are direct patterns conduct in a business that achieve goals (Mintzberg & Water 1985). Johnson et al. (2015, 14) define the emergent strategy as “tend to emerge in organisations over time as a result of ad hoc, incremental or even accidental actions”. Johnson et al (2015) further argues for that opportunities and good ideas often are captured by lessons and experiences at the bottom of an organization and not only in the top management. Johnson et al (2015) further add that among others, market and competitors can teach companies important advantages of creating successful strategies in which thereby becomes emergent because they being forced to act in a specific direction. For example, if a company have a strategy that clearly not work in the implementation process, the company can thus ‘learn by doing’ in an emergent way (Johnson et al 2015).

The most emergent strategy according Mintzberg and Waters (1985) is the imposed strategy. The imposed strategy, which forcing companies into patterns that involves actions, independent of the actual control of one company itself because of environmental external forces or forces from within
(Mintzberg & Waters 1985). The Swedish example of an environmental external force is for instance, the Discrimination Law (2008;567), which compels companies to establish a plan for equality. Even if they not achieve the plan in many cases, they are e.g. forced to design one, which can increase the chances of achieving gender equality. Another example is the shareholder's demand for company's actions that can force an emergent strategy used company into a deliberate strategy to comply with the owners' interests in accordance to survive in hard times.

Likewise as the deliberate strategy mentioned, we further aim to examine the similar, if this type of strategy could work in context, and in this case try to identified "things that just happened" or similar. We will thus mention the actual emergent gender equality strategy as merely the emergent strategy further on. To define both these types of strategies in a gender equality context, the next section will reflect on core value, corporate culture and commitment, as found facts out of the theory that could contribute to what type of strategy that appears among companies.

### 2.2.2 The Relationship Between Corporate Value, Culture & Commitment

A summary of various researches defines organisational culture, or corporate culture as values, assumptions and beliefs that show how companies conduct their business (Barney 1986. Jones 1983. Rashid, Sambasivan and Johari 2002). Values, or core values *that will be mentioned as the same in this paper*, which according Rashid, Sambasivan and Johari (2002) are one of the building blocks in the construction of the corporate culture. With absent of strong values may therefore neither a strong corporate culture appear. As top management are the leading drivers of a company and has the main responsibility, *corporate culture, values and commitment* have important implications according to Rashid, Sambasivan and Johari (2002). To avoid repetition in the text, we will further name these concepts as the three phenomena.

Jones (1983) further argues that corporate culture assisting top management as a cognitive map like guidelines through *values*. Scholtz (1987) explains similar through the invisible and informal consciousness within a company that shows employees how to act. Individuals thus act without thinking, what is considered right and wrong lies in the culture, which includes *values* and *beliefs*. As commitment hence defines as willingness to invest time and effort to achieve specific goals, created on *beliefs* (Cambridge Dictionaries Online 2015) The relation from the above mentioned viewpoint thus perceives commitment as a keystone to *corporate culture*, similar as *values*, and therefore makes it difficult to separate the three phenomena.

Although, other studies shows the reverse of the previous mentioned. For instance, those values are a result of outcome from corporate culture (Meglino & Ravlin 1998). Further, organizational commitment also defines as employee's identification with corporate vision of goals and similar (Hendel & Kagan 2014). Other studies argue that commitment connects employees to the company in its entirety
(Allen & Meyer, 1990) and that commitment can guide people to act in specific ways (Meyer & Herscovitch 2001) similar as the corporate culture was previously defined as "show how a company conduct its business" (Barney 1986. Jones 1983. Rashid, Sambasivan & Johari 2002) and as “help guide employees and create itself out of behavior” mentioned in the beginning of this part 2.2.2 (Scholtz 1987). Although, the other way around again show how corporate culture generate social behaviors that increase commitment according to Bates et al. (1995).

A needed level of commitment among individuals within a company is further seen as required at the incorporation of corporate culture to ensure a successful implementation of a specific strategy according Rashid, Sambasivan and Johari (2002). According to both Scholtz (1987) and Schwartz and Davis (1981) all mentioned makes the culture related as an important factor within successful strategies. Strategies in which also guides towards achieving objectives.

According to the theories it is difficult to separate these three phenomena and which of them that gives rise, contribute and influence to the second and the other way around. As a driving force behind all measures from a company (Barney 1986), Rashid, Sambasivan and Johari (2002) explains that organizational culture, values and commitment together can affect companies success of achieving objectives in relation to each other. It is hence unclear whether the relationship with the three phenomena appears in accordance with the research found in this study context. This paper will therefore see the three phenomena as influencing each other alternately, and not affect each other in a specific order or even act together. This will hold until the analysis will forward into a particular order in which they are considered essential and interact, and thus gain understanding of a simplified picture of empirical findings in this paper. We will further build on why these three phenomena are important towards achieving equality.

2.2.2.1 The Three Phenomena’s importance

Commitment has shown to be a likely important element to work out a more diverse company, which increases strength in values and corporate culture to be more equal by nature as they contributing in order to achieve objectives (Post and Byron 2015). Furthermore, Swann et al. (2014) argues for the need of both strong corporate cultures, with containing strong values to achieve equality. Commitment is conscious and seen as contributory, as it helps to implement a deliberate strategy and achieve goals but not are needed when things emerge. Commitment towards increased participation in decision-making is helping as the number of heard voices benefits of being included in actions for everyone to participate in creating function of diversity in distribution (Shore et al 2011). In context is thus equal treatment a prerequisite for that equality should come to stay and can arise only through strong exclusively corporate culture with included strength in values, or even add commitment, if companies measure is deliberate.

To demonstrate more in depth, the importance of the necessary level of the three phenomena to achieve equality in top management, Rönnblom (2011) found that awareness of prevailing lack of
diversity is the only thing that could make a change according diversity, and thus the willingness for a change if non-equality prevails. Individuals need clear perspective of what gender equality is (Rönnblom 2011), in order to create right values, culture and commitment toward equality work. Rönnblom (2011) provides that the ignorance of seeing diversity as a problem also is one major problem to the current situation of women’s minority representation. Rönnblom (2011) thus indicate in the need of these three phenomena to be supportive to gender equality. To compare, Cockburn (1991) discussed how opposition in context consists of people’s aversion of change. Paulus and Nijstad (2003) support the aversion of change but in the way that they think it is all about motivation, which could be seen as a synonym to commitment as it is of a deliberate nature likewise the commitment viewed. Motivation is about making use of the distinct knowledge and values of top management as a whole, which affect the extent to which women could contribute positively to the financial gains (Paulus & Nijstad 2003) and thereof becomes important to achieve in a functional equality strategy.

To conclude previously mentioned, it indicates that there is a connection between a company’s performances, organizational culture, the included values and if the work is deliberate, even commitment is connected. The importance of the three phenomena being supportive to diversity is thus viewed as a requirement in successful strategy implementation according context.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Paradigm
The study’s ontological stances are ideographic, were we as authors’ view the world as socially constructed and can only be understood through the perceptions of our participants (Farquhar 2012). The reality exists in individuals mind and is constantly in a changing process where multiple realities can exist simultaneously (Farquhar 2012). Culture and framework, which individuals uses to understand the world are thus two products of the social interaction in a specific place, at a specific point of time (Bryman 2012). Since the study strives to obtain a deeper knowledge with a specific phenomenon, the epistemology is interpretivist. We therefore highlight the importance of understanding each individual's own perception of reality and unique truth (Farquhar 2012), which we sees crucial in order to understand this complex phenomenon of a gender equal companies accomplished diversity. We as researcher and the participants’ interact and are dependent of each other, and through this we can obtain valuable information to make neutral interpretations from (Farquahr 2012). We are aware that bias might occur due this approach, although we do not reject the subjectiveness. To achieve deeper meaningful knowledge of the
phenomenon, we acknowledge that subjective interpretations are essential and this explains the paper’s axiological assumption (Farquhar 2012).

3.2 Research Design
A qualitative research design falls natural in order to penetrate the study’s problematization and gain new knowledge. The method will be semi-structured interviews of top leaders, who appear in the context, which makes the aim of this paper reachable. To understand this phenomenon more in depth, an inductive approach is chosen (Farquhar 2012). Through this we can obtain valuable information based on participants own experiences through the view of their organization represented (Farquhar 2012). By observing the reality in context based on the participants' own perceptions, we will be able to interpret patterns and generate theory, which we can subsequently make a conclusion from (Maylor & Blackmon 2005). Qualitative research seeks to generalize the theory rather the population itself, and the choice of method is therefore considered most suitable for the purpose (Bryman 2011). Since a qualitative study aims to understand perceptions, experiences and intentions, we have also taken the previous research and essential theories in order to contribute to the understanding as this study aiming at by reason of the choice of a qualitative design (Nyberg & Tidström 2012).

3.3 Selection of Participants & Sample
The chosen selection of participants is companies that have achieved gender equality in their top management. This is justified by the likelihood of more credible answers, as they are successful in context. The narrow focus of only equality companies are further due limitation of time. To find and collect qualifying companies for the study, we used the latest Allbright report from 2015. Allbright that is a politically independent and non-profit foundation that promotes gender equality and diversity in leadership positions in Swedish listed companies (AllBright 2015). Allbright charts business management teams and boards, to highlight the unequal representation (AllBright 2015). We therefore believe that this report is adequate as a basis to select a qualified sample. AllBright (2015) has categorized all the Swedish listed companies on a white, grey and black list. The white list represents companies' top management who has equality in their top management, the grey companies, which is on track to become and the black list includes companies, which is far from equality. AllBright (2015) examines listed companies' top management, e.g. group management and they are ranked according to the following priority: 1: The proportion of women in management group (%), 2: The proportion of women in the line (%), 3: The proportion of women on the board (%).
Based on these three criteria, only 27 of 264 listed Swedish companies are located on AllBrights white list (Albright 2015). We contacted all the 27 company’s via email for a request to participate in the study. Because of our focus on gender equality within top management, the respondents must themselves be a director of the board or working in the top management in the specific company.

The respondents, and thus the study’s sample appeared to be seven, one representative top manager determined for each company. The companies represented by the sample was; Investor, Ratos, Hemfosa Fastigheter, East Capital Explorer, Wihlborgs Fastigheter, Platzer Fastigheter and one more company who demanded anonymity into context. The selection was hence a so-called targeted selection, when top management is viewed as a specified group of people (Bryman 2011). The respondents contributed to comprehensive answers and were thus contributing to theoretical saturation (Bryman 2011). This means that most of the interview responses can be covered up by previous theories found (Bryman 2011). However, as this qualitative study either aim at statistical generalizability and interviewees is profound and comprehensive, we determine seven respondents as sufficient to answer the study’s research question and obtain deeper understanding (Hedin 1996). The sample remained further divided among four women and three men, with a ranged in age between 35-65 years. All respondents’ appeared to act according their respective companies represented, even if there was from their own point of view. This we considered to be positive when we wanted to know how the company's work in its entirety speaking out for equality, and not what each interviewed individual accomplished according context.

3.4 Data Collection Method

The data collection was done by semi-structured interviews were the questions was designed for a profound dialogue that encouraged the participants’ to speak openly (Farquhar 2012). The structure was based on five key questions that could be extended with other divergent questions if needed to increase understanding and a more nuanced answer (Farquhar 2012). Therefore, the interviews also were designed as a so-called non-structured interview to ensure that enough were added in the answers (Bryman 2011). To ensure that the questions contributed to the study’s aim, they were designed based on previous theories from the reading that considered important and thus also was required to create the theoretical framework (Bryman 2011). Through this the ability of reaching transferability was accomplished (the equivalent of external validity in quantitative research) (Farquhar 2012). The transferability describes the extent to which the questions and respondents' answers respond to what the study refers to answer (Bryman 2011).

The interviews began with a description of the overall arrangement. For example, a clarification of the number of questions, the approximate extent of time and what ethical aspect is followed. To build a strong transferability furthermore, the questions were formulated as similar as possible to all interviewees
to enable a comparison of the answers between all respondents (Bryman 2011). The interviews were booked for 45 minutes but varied in length. The majority of the interviews took about 35 minutes while two of the interviews took 48 and 28 minutes.

All interviews were recorded to allow transcription of the collected data in a subsequent process and allow for a better analysis of the material. The interviews were primarily face to face to better interpret body language, tone of voice, facial expressions, gestures, doubt, pauses and laughs (even though personality was hard to determine as the was perceived act professionally). There were two telephone interviews since the respondents were located elsewhere than in Stockholm. We do not see that as something negative as telephone interviews may be better suited for sensitive issues such as this study, for some companies or individuals, may involve and thus can have bring more reliable answer (Bryman 2011). All respondents also agree that, if needed, had to contact them for later processing of data if some ambiguities arise. This qualitative report thus meets the reliability requirement, which also is necessary for the credibility and transferability (Bryman 2011).

3.5 Data Analysis Method
When conducted interviews, we processed all collected material. The first step in our processing started by written notes immediately made for all individual interviews of the answers that emerged directly from the memory from each of us as interviewers. By making notes immediately after the conversation, we obtained the main summed responses from all the interviews in text. As we did not discussed the interviews before we performed the quotations we hence reduced the risk of creating distortions from our perhaps different perceptions of the answers.

The collected empirical from the recordings were then processed by transcriptions. That the interview was recorded also allows the interviewees' responses can be caught in their own terms, and facilitates a more detailed analysis (Bryman, 2011). All interviews in spoken form, where thereof retrospectively translated literally into written text. The transcription entailed a broader and deeper overview of all captured data. Following transcription made it possible to use colour coding on the transcribed text, which was done in the three following presented steps;

1. **Search for keywords** - We marked and selected out specific words, which we believed important and relevant regarding the research question and stained them into different colors to clarify the differences and similarities between the companies.
2. **Finding themes and categories them** - Different themes were identified by finding statements that related to the found keywords. The themes and the keywords that relate to each was thus coloured into the same colour and together made rise to a categorized theme.
3. **Search patterns and relationships in more detail** - We analyzed patterns in the categorized theme by comparisons and support by the theoretical framework.

The different colors were considered to give a good overview of what was listed as different keywords, themes and areas (Bryman 2011). This coding process laid further the foundation for coding scheme, which later will illustrate the thesis empirical findings.

### 3.6 Limitations of the Method

The main limitation of the selected qualitative method is that the results cannot be generalized (Hedin 1996). The sample, based on the Allbright report 2015, can be considered as an inadequate source as it might occur large fluctuations among the companies' rankings from year to year. Especially among smaller companies that one year can be at the top of the white list, and next year lie at the bottom of the black list e.g. by simply appoint a man instead of a woman. However, most of the companies on the white list are relatively large.

What conceivable, however, may have also reduced the transferability was the choice of “face to face” interviews since telephone interviews are better suited for sensitive issues (Bryman 2011). This may have created a certain loss of entirely truthful answers on the questions perceived as sensitive. Our two telephone interviews are, however, considered instead lost information where body language could not be taken into consideration.

Another limitation could be that respondents might not be willing to completely share their chosen strategy, or actions toward equality because of competition purposes. Furthermore, processing errors may also occur, which can be miscalculations of what sort of information really is important in order to get an answer to the research question.

### 3.7 Research Ethical Considerations

The study has been conscious of its responsibility and moral ethics towards the participants in the study. The purpose of the study was clearly formulated to the participants, that there was no hidden agendas. During the interviews, we followed the Codex research ethical principles in the humanities and social sciences research, which also was assured before the interviews started (Vetenskapsrådet 2002). The Codex include following four key requirements: 1: The information requirement; *the researcher must inform the research concerned about the current research task order.* 2: Consent requirement; *Participants in the study have the right to determine their involvement.* 3: Confidentiality requirement; *Details of all of the examination conclusion people should be given the utmost confidentiality and personal data must be stored in such a way that unauthorized persons can not access them.* 4: The utilization requirement; *Data collected about individuals may only be used for research purposes.* (Vetenskapsrådet 2002)
For further ethical reasons, the companies and the interviewed individuals has only been given fictitious names. They all been named as the Organization, or the abbreviated Org, followed by a letter to separate them e.g. Org A or Organisation A, which also minimized the risk of answers not being truthful and transparent as respondents did not need to feel exposed (Bryman 2011).

4.0 EMPIRICAL FINDINGS & ANALYSIS

The outline is divided in three parts. The first part, 4.1 present the processing of the collected empirical data and by coding schemes present the empirical findings with an objective account as possible. Part 4.2, will more in depth be a theoretically grounded analysis by view quotations from respondents linked to the theoretical framework. The last part 4.3, will then present the study’s results as an outcome from the two previous parts.

4.1 Empirical Findings

The first step in the processing of the transcripted data was, search for keywords, to detect patterns. We wanted to explore differences and similarities between the companies surveyed. It thus seemed natural to determine if an emergent or deliberate strategy could operate and exist in a successful achievement of equality in top management, which also supported from the theoretical framework. If both strategies could reach gender diversity, the most important requirements for each of the two, also falls natural to find out. To further identify what type of strategy each company used successfully, the encoding was used in order to allocate organizations between keywords that indicated on requirements and was given different colors. We maintained to separate differences in active measures taken and emerging factors as requirements. Active measures was a sign for a deliberate strategy as a deliberate strategy are defined as ‘thought out’ and aware according the theoretical framework. Emerging factors was thus a sign for an emergent strategy used, since this type of approach is executed subconsciously according the theoretical tool in comparison.

To consider what actually was an important keyword, we searched for clear statements from the respondents that highlighted companies actively use of some factors or measures that had been required to achieve diversity. The reverse statement highlighted was also seen as important, in comparison if no active measures had been taken. The common for keywords considered as important, was clear expressions of measures or factors contributed to current equality situation. The chosen keywords was Core Values, Corporate culture, Commitment, Objectives/Plan and Recruitment. We entered a total of five keywords that we coloured into different colors. We placed the keywords under each company.
Core values and corporate culture was intermittent during the interviews from all of the seven surveyed. These two keywords were interpreted as important critical factors based on respondents' body language and emphasis on the two specific factors. We could early in this stage distinguish a difference between the companies who used a deliberate strategy and an emergent strategy. The difference was that the companies with a deliberate strategy had additional three keywords.

In the second encoding step, finding themes and categories them, we search for relationships between similar statements from respondents according to the keywords. We found clear statements related to these, which was similar statements among all companies more or less. These statements was thereafter shared into categories and afforded various colors for the different categories, which we in this study decided to call the categorized themes. This categorized themes was thereby created out from similar statements where we could see a clear link and relationship to one key word. The categorized themes turned out to be five after the work of colour coding, e.g. one statement "the spirit of gender equality within the company" (see coding scheme 4.1.2 and 4.1.3). It must be made clear that these categorized themes are not literally taken from one respondent's statement. They are designed after conducting a comprehensive assessment of all the respondents' similar statements in the same field, with relation to the same keywords.

These relationships between the keywords and statements, made into categorized themes, distinguished that keywords concerned required factors and active measures taken by companies in order to achieve equality. When we further link them together, colour-by-colour, it became possible to differentiate companies' different use of active and definite actions and whether it "has only become" equal according themselves. By starting with what was found for all companies could important factors, consciously and unconsciously, be discerned since all respondents has achieved a gender equal distribution in their top management. However, to know what was the important shown in this step was to identify differences. By the categorized themes out of the keyword it showed that two companies only was in need of two keywords, which in this study is named factors as they are current and not measures. The required two factors thus seem to be enough with use of an emergent strategy. Those with a deliberate strategy stated three measures in their gender equality work in addition to the two factors.

Through these two stages of the encoding, we have created three coding schemes. Coding scheme 4.1.1 clarify empirical findings of what type of strategy used in each surveyed company. Coding scheme 4.1.2. Present empirical findings of found keywords, which in this case proved factors, which is further, linked together with found categorized themes involving the factors used by a successful emergent strategy. Coding scheme 4.1.3 will hence overview the successful use of a deliberate strategy in a similar way, but the keywords are instead active and aware measures taken in comparison to the factors.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy used</th>
<th>Org A</th>
<th>Org B</th>
<th>Org C</th>
<th>Org D</th>
<th>Org E</th>
<th>Org F</th>
<th>Org G</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emergent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deliberate</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Coding scheme 4.1.1 (An overall view of the type of strategy used for achieving gender equality within top management for each surveyed organization named by letters)*

For the two additional coding schemes, the overview of the emergent strategy we named the categorized themes as companies overall “view” (see figure 4.1.2) and the deliberate strategy to companies overall angle (see figure 4.1.3). These categorized themes concern the important majority collective views and angles found according keywords of factors and measures found in the empiristics. We also want to highlight that it is important that the two main factors found will only be presented in the coding scheme for an emergent strategy in 4.1.2 to avoid repetition, but applies to as an empirical finding for all companies. Step three in the process towards the study’s result, which is *search patterns and relationships in more detail*, will be done in the following analysis section were a more in depth analysis of the overall empirical findings also will be done. *(Coding scheme 4.1.2 and 4.1.3 is shown on page 19-20)*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors Required/ The view</th>
<th>Values/Core Values</th>
<th>Corporate Culture</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The spirit of gender equality</td>
<td>Very strong values, both individually and organizationally for gender diversity are given</td>
<td>Very strong culture for women's and men's equal dignity are given</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A description from respondents (not directly quoted)</td>
<td>&quot;Obvious to work and live by and comes from within&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;Sitting in the walls, you just act and know what is right&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What gives raise to what towards gender equality work</td>
<td>The fundamental prerequisite to operate and is a building block in order to create a strong corporate culture in the same spirit</td>
<td>Constructed and contains gender equality values and are thus in need of strong values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exists and is essential in following parts in an organization</td>
<td>Important to be strong in the whole organization and seems required in top management and genuinely exist within its individuals from their upbringing and thereby become obvious</td>
<td>Important to appear strong in the whole organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contributing impact towards gender equality</td>
<td>Work as guidelines and guiding principles to top management further the whole organization</td>
<td>Work as guidelines and guiding principles to top management further the whole organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Companies view of gaining from occupancy strong factors</td>
<td>Gains in a strong Corporate culture, Monetary gains and Social gains</td>
<td>Monetary gains and Social gains</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 4.1.2 (Coding Scheme of Empirical Findings - Emergent Strategy)*
### Empirical Findings of a Deliberate Strategy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measures Required/Angel of measure</th>
<th>Commitment</th>
<th>Plan/Objectives</th>
<th>Recruitment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The spirit of gender equality</strong></td>
<td>Strong commitment to the issue and willingness to actively enforce measures if needed</td>
<td>Pressed importance of ongoing work in progress that do not operate in a vacuum</td>
<td>Clear measures to avoid structures against women in recruitment work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A description from respondents (not directly quoted)</strong></td>
<td>&quot;It is a self-awareness that leads to rational basis that leads to action&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;We have constructed a gender equality plan with specific guidelines that we always strive to follow. We have also different explicit codes that we follow in the same spirit&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;Important step to achieve gender equality in top management. We always have a man and a woman who interviews the applicants to avoid personal bias and achieve a more objective view&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Exists and is essential in following parts in an organization</strong></td>
<td>Important to be strong through the entire organization but seems required in top management and genuinely exist within (similar as the core values)</td>
<td>Important to strong involved and understood through the entire organization</td>
<td>Concerns only top management and especially the human resource section, as they are in charge of the recruitment processes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Contributing impact towards gender equality</strong></td>
<td>Breaking male-dominant structures through active measures taken</td>
<td>Creates easier work towards gender equality and allows to find defects/deficiencies as plans create what to comply. It thus allows use of penalties/measures if plans being violate</td>
<td>Creates diversification in recruitment and thus greater likelihood to a uniform distribution as possible structures disappear as a result of a clear competence view</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Companies view of gaining from measures taken</strong></td>
<td>The entire resource base being used and thus monetary and social gains</td>
<td>Creates clear boundaries on what should be done and what violates rules and thereby avoid imperfections and increase profits</td>
<td>Generates a more open view on communication and decision making and thus monetary and social gains</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 4.1.3 (Coding Scheme of Empirical Findings - Deliberate Strategy)*
4.2 Analysis
We base the analysis on a subjective view as researchers. In accordance with the study’s axiological assumption, the subjectivness is necessary to obtain a deeper level of understanding. Through our analytical observation, we will generate theory and finally, draw conclusions and come up with a result (Farquhar 2012). This part will be closely linked to the study’s theoretical framework, and together with quotations from respondents, together create a theoretically based analysis of the empirical findings.

By a deeper observation, we found that the identified factors in the coding schemes are based on a specific order to follow in order to achieve equality. This will be illustrated and presented in a pyramid figure that gradually will be built up of components consisting of the factors and measures from empirical findings. The bottom is based on the absolute necessary component in order to build further on the remaining parts to finally reach the peak. The building blocks are in need of the lower sections, build one by one, and the peak of the pyramid illustrates equality in top management achieved.

4.2.1 Strength in Core Values and Corporate Culture
According respondent’s’, strength in core values and corporate culture exists and is important by all. Companies using an emergent strategy have merely strong core values and corporate culture in the spirit of equality, which demonstrates the importance in holding these two factors as even companies using a deliberate strategy shown the importance of these two factors as a requirement to achieve their equality. As further indicated in the theoretical framework, it is supported that values are one of the essential components in corporate culture from researcher as Barney (1986), Jones (1983) and Rashid, Sambasivan and Johari (2002) even if the reverse is shown from Meglino & Ravlin (1998). As we found that respondents despite repeated that core values, towards equality, are a very important factor to operate against a change, and thus achieve diversity, values seem to be more important than corporate culture. Strong core values for men's and women's equality was somehow always understood from the interviews as fundamental for their successful work without exceptions e.g. Organization A expressed;

“We believe the organization's core values are very important for the basis of our business. It is important to respect each person for what he or she brings to the organization, and not what type of sex they have. Through the corporate culture, we have used our core value so all employees know and share our position on the question of gender”

The importance of having strong values to achieve equality is also consistent with found research showing that strong values should be the first building block in order to create a strong corporate culture in the same spiritual context. Interviews further indicating that without strong values for gender equality, companies can not create a corporate culture in the same spirit which indicates on the same as the
previous theory. This in which can draw parallels, once again to the definition of corporate culture composed of such things as values (Barney 1986. Jones 1983. Rashid, Sambasivan and Johari 2002). Nothing from the respondents indicating on the other way around as Meglino and Ravlin (1998) argues, that culture is fundamental in order to create strength in values e.g. Organization C respond as follow;

"Without our strong values for gender diversity, both individually and corporately, I find it hard to believe that our corporate culture had been the same and imbued the company with the same mindset and actions towards gender equality work"

The theoretical framework also adds value to the importance of these values within the top management since they are the ones who make the decisions in firms. Jones (1983) stated that these values works as a cognitive map that leads top management. This is supported by the respondents’. These values work as guidelines for the top management to permeate the entire company. This could in future effect new recruited top managers to follow the same values and thereby create a more long-term sustainability supporting equality work. Previous is support by Johnson et al. (2015), which indicates on this being a achieved strategy as it is defined as "the long-term direction of an organisation". Organisation B supports this by their quotation;

"It is important that the core values are strong within the top management so the right message is permeated to the entire company, in order for others to consequently not perceive a wrong picture of how to act"

The considered slightly more important of having strong values found among individuals’ in the top management, that genuinely exist within individuals from their upbringing and thereof become obvious facts for them was also found and could be linked to the theoretical framework. According some of the respondents, it was obvious to treat everyone equally and ensure equal rights. We also found support in the theoretical framework on which, values imply as guiding principles that dictate behavior and action in the top management as well as throughout the entire company (Scholtz 1987, Jones 1983). Organization D indicates on the same approach and indicates on all the above analysed by this;

“Values for gender equality must first of all exist in order to create a gender equal top management”

We have therefore placed core values at the bottom of the pyramid model. Even though some theory indicate on the reverse possible, the companies’ surveyed has shown clearly that values are the most important and fundamental. From the interviews it is clear that without these core values supporting equality, neither a deliberate nor an emergent strategy could be accomplished. This analysis part has
further identified that these values seems to appear most essential in top management, as they are the ones who lead the company's development in all areas which also is shown in theory. The analysis indicates that actions taken towards equality probably will fail, as well as the corporate culture, without these core values. The theoretical framework supports as Scholts (1987) and Jones (1983) argues about the values as necessary for the strong cultures existence in the same context. We have therefore placed corporate culture as the second building block. This thus speaks against Meglino and Ravlin (1998) who argues that corporate culture would be fundamental in order to create values in the same equality spirit. Organization D supports this;

"We have core values that we as leaders follows. These are important to us, since we are focusing on the respect for each individual, and to share the same values. That is an asset for the company and a belief all of us have with us from our parenting and upbringing. We have brought together our personal values for gender equality in the top management and formed corporate core values. Corporate values which then has designed a strong organizational culture that guides and helps us through decisions and measures which thereby becomes obvious for us"

As shown below, the first building blocks towards equality in top management are primarily core values, which then forms the basis for corporate culture into the same spirit. All the companies that participated in the study share this.

![Diagram](image)

*Figure 4.2.1 (Core values as fundamental factors in order to build on a corporate culture of the same spirit for achieving gender equality)*

The next section of the pyramid will at this point be divided into two separate main parts. In following paragraph, we will begin to go deeper into how an emergent strategy being successfully achieved according the two factors mentioned above, by indicating more clearly linked analysis to the respondent's quotations.
4.2.2 Emergent Gender Equality Strategy

Two of the respondents have achieved equality within their top management through an emergent strategy. On our question regarding how they become gender equal, Organization D answered;

“It just happened to be so, we have actually not done anything in order to achieve the equality. Again, we always look at each individual’s specific competence. That is our main focus. It should not matter if you are a man or a woman, without the person best suited for the job should be employed. We have simply succeeded with that I suppose then”

This is in clear line with the theory of an emergent strategy according Mintzberg & Waters (1985). The companies had no specific objectives for achieving equality. It is rather a result of seeing each individual's specific competence and what he or she can bring to the company. In order to be successful with this type of strategy, it is highly required that the steps, core values and corporate culture, clearly signaling that the company view every individual regardless of gender. This was clear from our respondents. They described it as the sex is simply “invisible” and insignificant, and the main focus is instead individuals’ skills. One of the respondents highlighted that if you want to create the most efficient organization as possible, is it necessary with a resource base comprised of both women and men where they most qualified individuals are hired. This means that if you have a company with strong core values that focus on the individuals’ as a whole, and not divide women and men in separate homogeneous groups, it automatically creates equality in top management. Then it is not necessary with awareness of actions and goals to push through a change towards equality. Organization E;

“We do not sit and count how many women and men we should employ. We believe that, if companies are objective in their recruitment process, it should automatically become a gender equal top management. There are many competent women to hire, you only need to look beyond your own social network”

According Mintzberg and Water (1985), a pure emergent strategy can exist but not likely be found in reality. As the imposed strategy forcing companies into patterns that involve actions, independent of the actual control of one company itself because of environmental or within forces, the imposed strategy, however, is difficult to determine in the two companies found used an emergent strategy. The empirical findings can be seen related to this imposed strategy as a strong force is found according values and culture, achieve equality without any other actions taken. As these two factors has been shown from the empirical findings and the theoretical framework, build on each other, they also works in the same direction in order to achieve equality. Nothing speak against that the successful emergent strategy shown
in this study would not be pure emergent. Simultaneously, nothing speak for it to be a imposed strategy then the explanation based on the theory for the general emergent strategy range also is consistent according Mintzberg and Water (1985). Then it means that we are unable to comment with certainty whether it is an imposed strategy or just fall within the scope to be emergent. As this is hard to identify in this study, we find support in the theoretical framework in Mintzberg and Waters (1985), which tells that strategies either are more deliberate or emergent by their nature, even if they has described and set out pattern for a pure deliberate and pure emergent strategy. These two strategies cover up for the entire range of endless numbers of strategy types. The strategy range in this paper will thus be split into two parts with deliberate on the one hand and the emergent on the second. We have therefore after this unclear imposed strategy found, from these two emergent companies, decided to left the study’s strategy approaches to merely referred to only the emergent or deliberate strategy as shown in coding scheme 4.1.1.

Another interpretation of the successful emergent strategy found is the no shown indications of being colored by structural barriers. Structural attitudes or barriers against women does not seem to exist within these top managements’ which also finds support in the theoretical framework as the emergent strategy involves independent actions affected by the environmental nor from within. We interpret this further that neither the Swedish governance code (College 2012) or the Discrimination Law (2008;567) have had any impact on the company’s equal situation according the respondents. This analysis also speaks against the theory about values, culture and commitment all contribute to a successful implemented strategy. The commitment clearly not exist as aware supportiveness within these two companies. As they neither could answer on how they had manage the current outcome, or that they supposed the equal view on gender would be the reason point out clearly the non deliberate strategy used and further how commitment not being supportive in the extent the theory refers to. This makes also the two previous pyramid blocks, core values and corporate culture crucial in order to create such an environment in a company where an emergent strategy can work, without influence of negative barriers from the environment as everything becomes obvious according equality.
4.2.3 Deliberate Gender Equality Strategy

The majority of our respondents achieved equality through a deliberate strategy. From empirical findings, the impact or awareness of the structural barriers has been shown lie behind the need for use of active measures, to overcome these barriers or prevent them. Even if these companies have the first building blocks in the pyramid by core values and culture, companies still be affected unconscious by structural barriers in some extent as they are in need of active measure taken to achieve the peak. Organization G makes this clear;

“We know that structures affect us daily, even if we try to see past it. We must therefore actively work towards preventing these”

The statement view that they are aware of these barriers. As no common statement was found from the two emergent companies, this could be identified being what separates these deliberate companies them from the emergent. As these deliberate companies also make use of ‘thought out’ measures, which supports by the theoretical framework mean deliberate according Mintzberg and Water (1985). The three analyzed, which from the empirical findings are commitment towards gender equality, specific plan/objectives and the recruitment phase will now be go through more in depth to gain understanding and knowledge of their importance as influencing requirements for achievement.
4.2.3.1 Commitment Towards Gender Equality

Respondents’ state that if a company actively want to push through a change towards equality, it requires that the management team share a genuine commitment towards it. This creates a determination to achieve equality and leads to the ‘thought out’ measures identified from the empirical findings. Commitment has been shown be a requirement for a deliberate strategy to be established and implemented successful. This is also in line with the theory according Rashid, Sambasivan and Johari (2002), that a needed level of commitment among individuals within a company, is a requirement to ensure a successful implementation of a strategy. All the respondents, who used a deliberate strategy expressed strong commitment to the issue and wanted to actively enforce a change within the company as a whole and also in their top management. Organization B said;

“I feel that we have a genuine commitment towards gender equality. We have come very far and it would be irrational not to use the entire resource base. It is a self-awareness that leads to rational basis that leads to action. Breaking the male-dominated structures is frankly a challenge. It must be a shared commitment among all the management team members otherwise a strategy will never be developed and implemented.”

The respondents emphasized that it is not without challenges to push through a change within the organization, considering structural barriers and therefore, the commitment towards success is of importance. It is thus not merely enough to have an organizational culture and core values that promote men and women’s equal rights. If the management team is not committed, a change towards gender equality will not happen according companies too. Further, they steated that social structures are a complex challenge to break and therefore requires a strong commitment among all managers. Organization C said e.g. that many companies start with equality measures in the bottom of the organization and then work up to those in higher positions. However, he emphasized that it is in the top of the company you need start, because it clearly signals to the rest of the organization that equality is an important issue that the top management focuses on. Then it spreads out to managers at lower positions managers throughout the organization. Organization B;

“It is within the top management team you have to start to become gender equal. Otherwise it is easy that the equality work is stagnating at lower levels and never reaches the management positions. The problem of the boards where one gender is underrepresented, they have not worked actively with the issue in their the top management”
Although, this is contradictory to Johnson et al (2015) who states that ideas often are captured by lessons and experiences at the bottom of an organization. Commitment supports on the other hand from the theory, to be a part of successful strategy implementation by exists within the top management, and also seems to be of similar importance in order to maintain equality in context (Post and Byron 2015).

4.2.3.2 Equality Plan & Objectives

All the five companies with a deliberate strategy had some form of an explicit equality plan shown in the empirical findings, which they actively worked to follow. They showed up being well aware of their actions and their responsibility to promote equal terms within the organization. It is conceivable that equality plans can be designed in various ways depending on companies’ specific needs. In accordance with this study-surveyed companies’, the equality plan for them was, or is formulated, by the leaders within the top management. Their plans include specific measures, for instance Organization G stated;

"We have constructed a gender equality plan with specific guidelines that we always strives to follow. One of our goals was that before 2014, our board of directors should consist of at least 40 percent women, and by that we consciously working towards this, we have succeeded"

This indicates that the companies have a clear and well thought out plan with specific objectives related to gender equality as the other companies has similar statements supporting the same. This is further consistent with the theory of a deliberate strategy, that an organization must have clear intentions e.g what goals they have, so that there is no uncertainty in the intentions of actions (Mintzberg & Waters 1985). Measures and intentions are well formulated and clearly described from the respondents. This is also in great contrast to companies with an emergent strategy. Furthermore, the formulation of objectives is an important part of maintaining long-term gender equality work, which supports by the theory from Post and Byron (2015). The respondents also highlighted the importance of work, as an ongoing progress, which do not operate in a vacuum. Just because they achieved equality in top management, their equality work does not end. There is no exit strategy. The theory supports that commitment is of importance for achieving these objectives (Post & Byron 2015) and hence shown that commitment also is an important element to work out higher diversity which furthermore supports the need of commitment towards women and men’s equal right in the designing of a plan towards gender equality work (Miller & Lee 1999). It is thus theoretically grounded supported that existence of commitment within a company is required in order to create plans and achieve objectives. Example of plans to get women into the top management from the surveyed companies is their focus on broadening its resource base by attracting women to apply for positions. Another is being out in high schools to increase interest to educate students within the
company’s branch. This in order in a long-term perspective, to broaden the resource base of potential future talents to employ.

Two of the five companies also viewed the fact of how a specific plan to follow enables the use of consequences if a plan not being followed. The plan thereby creates clear directives within companies to act on. Organization F;

"Once we involved in a man sexually harassed a woman through anonymous messages. We hired a detective and sought out the one who have not followed our plan of equal treatment and he was dismissed"

From this analysis we has thus identified that commitment must be achieved before a plan can be formulated and implemented in the same spirit. We has thus at this point set out the order of core values, corporate culture, commitment and then the plan/objectives. Commitment has been shown be needed to create a plan in the context's spirit.

4.2.3.3 The Recruitment Phase
The recruitment phase is clear from respondents be a key measure within their deliberate strategy. Competence is the factor to be assessed for a specific service and not what type of sex you have, which also was highlighted from companies surveyed. They expressed the importance of not separating men and women in different groups, but rather look at a holistic approach and assess each individual based on what he or she can contribute in the company. According to the respondents, this is how you create an efficient and gender equal top management, where you can clearly see the benefits of having both women and men in corporate governance. Organization C;

"The recruitment process has been an important tool for us to achieve our objectives to create a gender equal top management. For instance, we always have one man and one woman who interview the applicants to avoid personal bias and through this achieve a more objective view. We have only experienced positive effects and advantages by having both women and men within our top management, so one can say it is also a strategic conscious choice to create competitive advantages."

Several of the respondents mentioned the problem of structural barriers that prevent women from reaching top management positions. We interpret this action as part of the top managers commitment and objectives. It is an important measure because they illustrate that it is not quite simple to always push through a change, particularly affected by the structures. This suggests again their awareness of the issue. Organization F;
“I'm not saying it's an easy challenge to overcome, but by consciously and actively work with the recruitment phase, we manage to see each individual's skills instead of sex and that's an important part of why we succeeded with a gender equal top management”

It is clearly viewed that they actively works to prevent structural miscalculations of the applicants. It was important to not only look for new candidates in their own network, without actually looking in wide dimensions and beneficial takes the help of an external recruitment firm. This is in line with the study, which indicated the central role of recruitment process where *men only tend to recruit other men* (Statens Offentliga Utredningar 2014). This strengthens the firm's choice to take active measures in the recruitment phase.

All the enterprises' settled using a deliberate strategy, argued for that the recruitment phase is a crucial measure towards equality. This also makes it natural that the recruitment phase is the last pyramid block before a company achieves a gender equal top management, as a plan is required to ensure an objective view of applicants. The deliberate gender equality strategy therefore takes the following shape and order of influencing requirements.

![Diagram](image-url)

*Figure 4.2.3.3 (Active measures taken at a deliberate strategy used in a gender equality strategy)*
4.2.3.4 Conclusion Of the Three Measures Required

Even if a deliberate strategies use these active measure in this specific order to achieve equality, it could be identified that they did not use a pure deliberate strategy even if the strategy seems very planned for all the surveyed companies. Two of the three conditions is found, which all of them must be achieved to be classified as a planned strategy that according Mintzberg and Waters (1985) is the pure deliberate strategy. We found the clear set out goals with no uncertainty in the intentions of action, and the shared goals from of all managers committed. The third factor, external factors can affect that companies under no circumstances, from within or the environment can despite be determined as non-achieved.

With keywords found of their active measures taken toward objective achievement, and statements about e.g. the existence of structural barriers that needs to be aware and prevented, these deliberate companies being shown influenced by external forces. With support from Mintzberg and Water (1985), it is even more reasonable that companies only can be very close to such a pure deliberate strategy and we keep to only ensuring the difference between deliberate and emergent.

4.3 Results

After empirical findings and a grounded theory analysis of collected data we have identified the most influencing requirements of factors and measures. The final result is illustrated by the pyramid figure below.

![Figure 4.3](Factors and measures taken in the order they are required, depending on type of strategy used to achieve gender equality in top management)
We consider that the study’s research question has been answered.

*What are the most influencing requirements used towards achieving gender equality in top management?*

The results has shown that companies with an achieved equality among their top management shares two basic conditions. The first is strengths in core values, that clearly signals the individuals equal rights regardless of gender and makes it obvious for servants to act on. The core values are more important than the second condition that is about holding a strong corporate culture. This study’s result has identified a determined order for these two factors, the core values and the culture, in the order they given birth to the other as a requirement for achieve equality. The required order in which they must be implemented and function, regardless of type strategy, are thus first strong values, as it has been found as the most fundamental. The second and the following is hence strength in corporate culture, as culture is shown being constructed out of core values. With support from the respondents and theory, it is allowing the determined order to feel justified. Empirical findings and theory correspond in many cases, and one requirement is further that values need to support equality to shape the corporate culture to act in the same direction. By equal rights regardless of gender because of strong values, and guidelines towards gender equality from corporate culture, the two factors has shown together create a strong force in order to equality without any further action taken as everything works along the obvious. As an emergent strategy act ‘emergent’, gender equality has further been shown be achieved and ‘just happen’ if an organization has the force supporting diversity.

The difference between the two types of strategies is that the emergent strategy not being colored or affected by structural barriers that prevent women to reach positions of power. However, the results remain that majority of companies seems to be affected by structural barriers, or at least being aware, when five out of the seven uses active measures than merely holding strong values and culture supportive of equality.

The most common strategy is thus a deliberate strategy with the results indicating on three measures in addition. Active measures indicate on the companies’ awareness of the barriers and the willingness to avoid them. The first and most important measure in order to achieve equality by a deliberate strategy is *commitment* among the top management towards equality. Commitment forms the basis for the second stage, which give rise to a intended equality plan with more specific objectives and measures included. A specific plan helps to achieve goals and enables use of consequences if a plan not being followed, and thereby creates clear directives within companies to act on. The third measure is the central role of the recruitment process, where the organization uses a plan of efforts to achieve equality.
This step falls naturally when a gender equality plan must be issued and thought out to prevent the structural barriers in the recruitment phase in order to achieve an even distribution between sexes.

5.0 DISCUSSION & LIMITATIONS

We will reflect upon our purpose in understanding, of how gender equality work succeeds. The main part will discuss this study result and the study’s limitations. As the result not can be generalized into other context we will just make reflections of how the results can function and appear for unequal companies. By reflect of how results found in this study could work in their context, we will touch a reflection outside the disciplinary boundaries.

We claim that the study result is theoretically well established in the study’s theory, which we have provided in the analysis process. By the two required factors to achieve gender equality by an emergent strategy, and the further three additional measures for a deliberate strategy viewed, we also claim that we has answered the research question. The result has shown that both types of strategies can be used in order to achieve gender equality in top management, with the requirement that the right factors and measures further are implemented and appear in the stated order the result has identified. By this answer presented, we also view a more in depth understanding and knowledge contribution.

An empirical finding that lack from the analysis, in according to a respondent; “just happened to be so”, is despite the understanding about how the emergent strategy companies more clear not being affected by the structural barriers. However, the results only highlight their achievement by strong support in values and culture. We thus discussed possible other underlying factors of reasons that could not be distinguished from the respondents’ answers. We gained the fact that these companies operate in relatively young companies’ in comparison with the other companies. The age which we have chosen to not present earlier in any of the study sections as we did not think it would need to be reviewed as any important or influencing. From the results discussed, we thus see the age as an explanation. One can assume that the old attitudes and structures not had time to shape the core values and corporate culture into something that speaks against women. Another explanation that could be discussed is the significant lower number of employees. It can be assumed much easier to control and influence values and corporate culture towards gender equality in a small group of people. However, we believe it is then easier to create a modern enterprise combined with core values and culture that not are characterized by old traditions and attitudes towards women, and especially around few servants.

As empirical findings indicates an awareness of barriers within companies using a deliberate strategy, and view the fact of them being affected of barriers, we reflect the fact that it will not work for
unequal companies to just sit and wait for gender diversity to be achieved. It would thus be inappropriate to use an emergent strategy. If we further reflect of the study’s results outside context, we think that it is even more important for unequal companies to start within their top management core, as the respondents pointed out. According previous theory, and respondents’ the top managers need to express to the rest of the organization that gender equality is an important issue that must take focus. Both in order to increased corporate earnings, the society and for each individual’s rights. We thereof reflect that commitment is important for these companies. As theory view the fact that the three phenomena all could affect each other alternately, we may believe that commitment could be the fundamental for core values outside the study context, as likely as this study result could function for unequal companies. For the companies that in the current situation not are gender equal, we think that a deliberate strategy thus is necessary, otherwise the companies would already have been assimilated by now as the gender equality plan is required by law.

As we in this study further has distinguished two different strategies ranges, we can reflect that strategies may take shape in almost limitless combinations, even if they either fall within the range of an emergent strategy or a deliberate. It can therefore be questioned whether other sets of strategies, within the respective ranges, than the investigated companies holds, must possess the same two factors, the same three measures and used in the respective order to achieve gender equality as this study results states. We thus understand that there may be a risk in that this can only be true for the companies surveyed gender equality work. We thus want to highlight that despite the fact of limitless of strategies, which in this study has been divided into two, we have raised a thought within unequal companies to work towards a change into gender diversity in top management's when the results of the study show two, from reality, different possible ways to succeed.

Another critical reflection is that the result according to type of strategies, indicates in a more superficially level about how these companies have done. Although, the study is limited as nothing tells about how to actually establish the requirements found and make them work in indicated order for a achievement. For example, nothing indicates on how core values and corporate culture has turned into the spirit of gender equality in a more specific matter. Moreover, it says nothing of how to create these conditions within a deliberate or emergent strategy. The study's results have merely created understanding and knowledge of what conditions is needed in order to implement and ultimately achieved gender equality.

We also want to highlight that just because a company attained a quantitative gender equal distribution by the results finding requirements, this study’s result says nothing about gender equality from a qualitative perspective. By this we mean that even if a top management consists of equal numbers of men and women it may still be the men (or women) who essentially makes the important decisions. Thereof, we see it as of highest importance to actively work from the core of the organization's values and
corporate culture to create a consistent attitude in which women's and men's opinions and expertise are treated equally. We think that an important part of achieving general equality, (just as our respondents pointed out), is to start in the core of the company with the values and the corporate culture. This to obtain a climate that signals competence and not gender, which is important for each individual and in order to destroy the existence of structural barriers. We dare to say that the study's result provides valuable knowledge contribution about how companies can be assimilated to influential positions.

We think that earlier theory has been a great support to obtain the study results. The theory has been a cornerstone to examine for theoretical grounded answers that has been of great importance. This would perhaps otherwise go missing if these guidelines of theory had not been taken into consideration. There is thus a further possible risk that earlier theory in reverse could have influenced our findings in a negative manner. By this we mean that the processed data could possibly have been too colored by the theory's influence, and therefore valuable information has been missed. Although, this study’s result has created new theory were earlier research was missing. Even if we are aware of that this new theory only can be secured to the study examined company's results, however, it demonstrates at least one part of the reality we exist in. Given that multiple realities can exist in parallel.

To conclude, we despite this consider that our study has added valuable knowledge contribution within the area, as there is a lack in existent research. This is important from a societal perspective, to create a more gender equal distribution in positions of power that have great influence on other parts within organizations and the society as a whole.

6.0 CONCLUSION

This is a qualitative study with a problematization based on women's underrepresentation in Swedish listed company's top management (SCB 2014). These positions are highly influential in the Swedish society and women are excluded from this context is hence a serious social problem (SOU 2015:50). Historically, women have always been a minority and this is largely due structural barriers that prevent them from reaching top management (Merriam-Webster 2015). In the current situation, research indicates that women have both higher education and create positive gains after taking place in positions of power (Funkelstein et al 2008, Sudeck & Latridis 2014, Zenger & Lawrence 1989). Furthermore, merely a few companies have achieved gender equality despite these positive research areas about women (AllBright 2015). This laid the foundation and created this study's aim. The purpose is to gain deeper understanding and knowledge contribution of how organizations have achieved gender equality. The research question is;
What are the most influencing requirements used towards achieving gender equality in top management?

By the use of semi-structured interviews from Sweden’s highest ranked business leaders the result indicates the need of specific factors and measures in order to implement a successful strategy. Furthermore, these elements are indicated required according the result to act in a specific order. The two factors, which is core values and corporate culture exists for any business whether it is a deliberate or emergent strategy. A majority of the companies’ has a deliberate strategy. Organizations has shown achieved equality with an emergent gender equality strategy, although it at first requires strong core values and second, strength in the corporate culture, both factors clearly signaling that competence is the property that is the focus and not the sex of individuals. This two factors, values and culture, has thus being found as obvious facts within gender equal companies, it ‘emerges’ and thus supports gender equality and form companies into equality without further conscious measures taken (Mintzberg & Water 1985). For an emergent strategy to be successful in this way, however, from this study result shown, requires that companies not being colored by structural barriers towards women. Two out of the seven surveyed companies showed results in order to succeed by an emergent strategy. These two companies, which also was proven established much later than the other companies surveyed, could be an explanation why these ‘emergent companies’ not being affected by the old traditions of barriers.

In comparison, the result for companies affected or aware of the barriers, use a deliberate strategy in order to achieve gender equality. If an organization should be gender equal by use of a deliberate strategy, results found three required measures in addition to the two factors, which in accordance to the study findings is regardless dependent of strategy type for achievement. Five requirements are needed to achieve the gender equality by a deliberate strategy. The first measure that has to take in consideration and work, as a third step after core values and cultural restrictions are reached, is shared and genuine commitment that enforce a change among companies top leaders supporting gender equality. Companies use their commitment to make the second measure work, create a plan, or plans, to overcome, or prevent the structural barriers. The last measures are thus an active recruitment phase to ensure that top management become equal distributed in the end. By having strong core values and culture, commitment, plans and actively reviewed recruitment processes to ensure individuals being seen for their competence, the likelihood that more women will be phased in to positions of power will increase with support from previous positive research on women. A deliberate strategy, with this five required steps, has been shown successfully used in majority of gender equal companies on the current Swedish stock exchange in this study. This indicates that the problem about strong impact from structural barriers can be overcome and thus creating hope for a future gender equal Sweden.
The study has provided additional valuable knowledge within the study context. The contribution knowledge is important for the future development of Swedish organizations gender distribution among their top management as a role model of power. This study can lay basis for future research and we encourage primarily to three specific areas. The first area is how the successful gender equality work operates in more detail. This can be done by explore how the two factors, and the additional three measures work in a more complex way, and how they are achieved one by one. As this study has solely analyzed companies with a gender equal top management, further research of non equal companies are also an interesting area to investigate in order to create an understanding of the possible problems, or if there are other causes to the current majority situation of men representing the highest positions. A third area of further research could also examine how the current Swedish law, about a required gender equality plan for all companies listed on the Swedish stock exchange, can be reformulated. This in orders to assist the result from this study gained, in order to contribute to a increased diversity in the Swedish top management and further on a more equal Sweden and beyond.
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Appendix

The Swedish law of Discrimination SFS 2008:567

This Appendix overview § 4-9 in their entirety, which in accordance to § 13 must be followed.

Work conditions

4 § The employer shall implement the actions with respect to the employer's resources and other circumstances may required to work conditions are suitable for all workers regardless of gender, ethnicity, religion or other beliefs.

5 § The employer should facilitate both female and male employees to combine work and parenthood.

6 § The employer shall take actions to prevent any employee from being subjected to harassment or reprisals associated with sex, ethnicity, religion or other belief or sexual harassment.

Recruitment

7 § The employer shall work for people regardless of gender, ethnicity, religion or other belief the opportunity to apply for vacant positions.

8 § The employer shall, through education, training and other appropriate actions to promote a balance between women and men in different types of work and within different categories of employees.

9 § When at a workplace there is not a generally uniform distribution of women and men of a certain type of work or within a particular category of workers, the employer at hiring special effort to attract applicants of the underrepresented sex. The employer should try to see the proportion of employees of the underrepresented sex gradually increases.

   The first subparagraph shall not apply if special reasons take such measures or actions cannot reasonably be required with respect to the employer's resources and circumstances otherwise.