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An intersectional study of Swedish Female Expatriates in China

Exploring the dimensions of gender, race and class

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Abstract

The number of Western female expatriates in Asia are increasing as the world is becoming more globalised. The complexity of the increased multicultural identities is becoming a more relevant subject that needs to be understood in order for society, as well as organisations, to enforce equality. Earlier research lacks an intersectional analysis to the issue. By looking at only one aspect of race, ethnicity, gender or class, there is a risk of simplifying complex processes. In order to investigate these complex processes, this study was conducted through a qualitative research method investigating how Western female expatriates were treated by host-country nationals (HCN) when gender, race/ethnicity and class intersects. To answer our research question, four Western female expatriates with experiences in South-East Asia, more specifically in China, were interviewed in-depth.

Consistent with prior research, we found that the Western female expatriates involved in this study were first perceived by the HCNs as foreign and then as female. One of the Western female expatriates who shares the same ethnicity as the HCNs was first-hand treated and respected as a foreigner as well. Western female expatriates in a non-Western context were also found to be treated according to their designation, and secondly as their gender. Another finding when intersecting gender and hierarchy was that the marginalisation of women did not have significant negative impact due to the female expatriates' high hierarchical position. Being both Western and female lead to better treatment by the local female and male employees.

Keywords: Female expatriates, International business, Intersectionality, Gender, Race, Class

Definitions

The following definitions aim to explain how the different terms are used in this thesis, in order to facilitate the reading and understanding of what is written:

Intersectionality: The interplay between gender, race, ethnicity, class and hierarchy applied to a group of individuals.

Race/ethnicity: When the terms race and ethnicity are written together, both of the terms are relevant in a certain context or cannot be exclusively separated from one another.

Class/Hierarchy: When the terms class and hierarchy are written together, both of the terms are relevant in a certain context or cannot be exclusively separated from one another.

Western women: The definition of Western women refers to women who have citizenship or originate from a Western industrialised economy, in particular Sweden, since all respondents were from Sweden regardless of ethnicity.

China: The mainland of China excluding Hong Kong.

Host-country national (HCN): Refers to native Chinese people of Mainland of China.

Ex-host country national (EHCN): Expatriates sharing the same ethnical background as the HCNs.

Swedish-Chinese: Refers to one of the respondents that are ethnically Chinese, but of Swedish nationality.

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1. Introduction

This chapter introduces the background and the problem discussion of this thesis, which leads to the research question it aims to answer. Thereafter, the contribution and purpose of this thesis are presented, as well as the context and its delimitations.

1.1 Background

Expatriates are defined by Berry and Bell (2011) as employees working abroad with all different types of work assignments. The number of female expatriates are increasing in general as more women join the workforce, even though the rates are still much lower than males (Varma & Russel, 2016). Statistics from the report *Global Relocation Trends 2013* show that 23% of the international business expatriates are females. Regarding women being sent abroad for foreign assignments, the trend has pointed towards an increase of female expatriates when comparing to the 3% female expatriates in the world, mentioned by Adler, one of the first scholars addressing this issue in 1984. The lower participation of females when it comes to international assignments suggests that women are not given the same opportunities and treated equally (Varma & Russel, 2016; Berry & Bell, 2011). It is discussed that the reasons behind the lower number of female expatriates are due to the host-country nationals (HCN) gender discrimination or a lack of cultural support (Bhatti, Sundram & Hoe, 2012). Lower participation of women in international assignments is also sometimes in the literature explained by negative perception and prejudice against women (Shortland, 2015). This shows that female expatriates still face many challenges when going abroad.

Inequality in organisations does not only concern gender, but are complicated with race and class, as the work of Acker (2006) states. The negative perceptions about women are often about their availability, suitability and capability. Societal and organisational barriers are also contributing factors to the lower number of expatriate women (Shortland, 2015). More women are taking on international assignments even though it historically has been male-dominated. Therefore, the discussion about obstacles and barriers upheld by society and affecting women are especially important to discuss.

1.2 Problem statement

The inequality between women and men has often been addressed by looking at gendering of organisations and organisational practices. Earlier work that discusses gender discrimination and the patriarchal hierarchy in the workplace finds its explanations regarding gender discrimination in cultural beliefs, institutionalised policies and practices in organisations (Bobbitt-Zeher, 2011). The divergent roles of men and women in organisations might themselves enhanced this inequality between the two genders. The subordinate roles women often take on have metaphorically been referred to as the *glass ceiling*, which can also be understood as barrier that prevents and complicates women's advancements in organisations. The term was coined in 1986 by Hymowitz and Schellhardt to explain the challenges and barriers women face when trying to climb the organisational ladder towards success (Bobbitt-Zeher, 2011). Other forms of discrimination take form even before being at the workplace. The term *glass door* was also coined to illustrate the phenomenon that women are excluded from male-dominated occupations (Zhang, Schmader & Forbes 2008, cited in Caceres-Rodriguez, 2011).

Many scholars that have studied the subject have done so by looking at class, gender and race/ethnicity as separate categories. The outcome of focusing on only one of these factors has led to simplified conclusions regarding inequality and oppression (Acker, 2006). Gendering of organisations are further complicated when including factors such as race/ethnicity, class and other differences. These three factors are all influencing one another, reinforcing and reproducing structures in society (ibid.). Intersectional analyses might become increasingly important in a more globalised world as the configuration of gender, class and race reconfigures and changes. By understanding the complexity of the different dimensions and processes, we believe that inequality in organisations may be prevented. Race and gender segregation is very complex as it varies in different organisations depending hierarchal class levels (ibid.). The hierarchical segregation is different across jobs at different class levels, across jobs at the same level and within jobs (ibid.). Acker's (2006) model explaining intersectionality in the workplace has had a big impact in the literature discussing female expatriates [e.g. Benschop & Doorewaard, 2012; Metcalfe & Rees, 2010], as the

challenges female expatriates face are interlinked with the increased globalisation leading to a more diversified workplace where gender, race and class become more prominent.

Earlier work about female expatriation have mainly focused on gender inequality alone, but the female expatriates' race and ethnicity are often not mentioned or discussed in empirical international management literature (Berry & Bell, 2011). In addition, the importance of gender, race and class as intersections are not always acknowledged in the field of organisational studies (Holvino, 2010). Furthermore, even though some earlier work within the field of international business and management researches national cultural differences, they fail to recognise the cultural heterogeneity within a nation (Tung, 2008). Many white feminist scholars have faced criticism regarding the gender inequality issue. Scholars of colour point out that a lot of research has turned a blind eye to topics like class, race/ethnicity and similar factors when discussing gender inequality (Acker, 2006).

1.3 Research question

Based on the background of an increasing number of female expatriates in the global workforce and the complexity of intersectionality, this study was conducted in order to answer the following research question:

- *How does intersectionality complicate Western female expatriates' experience in the workplace while interacting with the host-country nationals in South-East Asia?*

1.4 Purpose and contribution

It is difficult to study complex intersectional processes, but this thesis aims to provide a complementary view on the dimensions of the inequality-producing process of female expatriates in line with theories and concepts concerning intersectionality, *translocational positionality* and earlier research [e.g. Adler 1987; Anthias, 2002, 2008; Acker, 2006]. We believe that Western female expatriates face additional challenges compared to men when performing their international assignments. This research does not plainly explain the

experiences female expatriates face abroad due to their gender, but complicates it by researching inequality where additional factors such as race/ethnicity and class intersects. This thesis will develop the described insight and put focus on an intersectional analysis, by using experiences of female expatriates from Sweden, both ethnically Swedish women and a Swedish-Chinese woman, assigned to China. The focus will be on the interaction between the Western female expatriates and the HCNs in the workplace, since we believe these situations are likely to give a clear perception of challenges and of their treatment. This highlights the heterogeneity of ethnicities within Sweden. Choosing a distinct ethnicity can bring a deeper insight to the complexity of intersectionality.

1.5 Contextual background

1.5.1 China

China's Access to World Trade Organisation (WTO) facilitated the access to foreign markets (BBC, 2016). Foreign companies are planning their extensive expansion into China, opening up for new business opportunities (Owen, Javalgi & Scherer, 2007). This has paved the road for international assignments, attracting workers from all over the world. As the country has become one of the most important players on a global level, it will be important to understand how female expatriates should handle cultural, gender-stereotypical, ethnicity-related and organisationally embedded barriers when working in China. Old values and thoughts are still strongly present in China in contrast to the West (Selmer, 2002). For thousands of years, Confucianism was the dominant ideology in Mainland China whose values still is prevalent in the Chinese society and mentality today, and it can be seen as guidelines when it comes to thoughts and behaviour (Selmer, 2002; Varma et al, 2012). As for this example, stereotypical attitudes towards women in China limits their opportunities to success and to grow as managers (Owen, Javalgi & Scherer, 2007). Results from this study (ibid.) about expatriate women managers in China showed that female and male Chinese managers had negative perception of women as managers.

1.5.2 Sweden

Equality, efficiency and modesty are three examples of characteristics that Swedes value. Scandinavian cultures are more equality-minded than other cultures (Gesteland, 2012). These societal values are then reflected in each country's business behaviour. Egalitarian cultures usually stand on the opposite side of hierarchical cultures. Sweden would in this context be found at the very end of the egalitarian side. In a working place setting, top executives and junior employees are able to communicate directly with one another (ibid.). According to the *GLOBE Study*, Sweden was found to lean towards an equal and egalitarian society (Chhokar, Brodbeck & House, 2008). The indicators point towards low on Power Distance and high on Gender Egalitarianism. Comparing Sweden to other countries in an international context the gender equality is strongly prevalent in the society (ibid.).

1.6 Delimitations

Approaches like liberal, radical, socialist, together with black, postmodern, postcolonial and psychoanalytic all belong to the research field of feminism. It is the gendered inequality and power distance that unite these different number of approaches (Tong, cited in Edwards & Holland, 2013). The problem is multifaceted and can be discussed through all these different angles. It is important to acknowledge the depth to feminism in order to fully take on the subject. We want to clarify the fact that we know that women are not the only ones facing this discrimination internationally. Heteronormativity and sexuality are other important aspects of this field, even so, management theory is many times failing to acknowledge them (Swan, 2010). We believe people with a different sexuality than the hetero-norm, or transgender people will most likely also face challenges in the workplace, not least in more conservative countries like China. This thesis is limited to the traditional idea of women as a part of two genders; male and female. However, in this thesis gender inequality from the subfields mentioned above will not be discussed. Furthermore, race plays a significant role in feminism, however, the discussion over the years has so far majorly been from white privilege women's point of view. As Hooks (2000) stresses, the questions raised by many feminists are lacking a racial perspective and the experiences told may not be true to all

women. Race will be discussed to the extent it concerns the interview participants, which are ethnically Swedish or Swedish-Chinese. Other races will not be discussed to any extent.

2. Literature review

Following section will explore the main concepts and terms used to conduct this study. Definitions regarding identity such as Western, white, Asian, foreign and female expatriate will firstly be presented. Further on, the literature review moves on to key concepts such as *translocational positionality* by Anthias (2002, 2008) and the intersectionality between race/ethnicity, gender and class, mainly based on the analysis by Acker (2006).

2.1 Female expatriates

Expatriates are defined by Berry and Bell (2011) as executives, managers and professionals being sent abroad to help and provide management development experiences as well as ensure that the foreign operations run smoothly. Further on, female expatriates often have the same socioeconomic status as of their male counterparts, such as being white, highly educated executives who are provided with significant benefits from their respective organisation as well as support (ibid.).

2.1.1 Marginalisation

The term marginalisation is defined as acts of social exclusion of individuals or groups of individuals who are denied economical, political and similar factors of influence due to the reason of being perceived as outsiders (Chandler & Munday, 2011). With other words, marginalised can be explained as not considered equals by the society for not possessing certain qualities and characteristics. It can be generally applied to women in the labour market when not being given equal opportunities compared to men, regardless of skills and education. Often the gender-biased organisation contributes to maintaining women's marginalised work roles (Bobbitt-Zeher, 2011; Cha, 2013, cited in Martin & Barnard, 2013). Minorities such as ethnic groups and women often face hostile receptions in traditional environments or occupations dominated by white males (Berdahl & Moore, 2006). Traditional stereotypes about women can still be seen in organisations both in practice and policy. The gender-biased organisation contributes to maintaining women's marginalised work roles (Bobbitt-Zeher, 2011). Martin and Barnard's (2013) study presents the clear correlation between traditional gender roles in society and how they transfer to the

workplace. Belonging to the minority group as women do, it makes them targets for discrimination, but on the other hand it also makes them stand out (ibid.). Discrimination in the workplace is usually based on identity characteristics such as gender and race (Berhdahl & Moore, 2006). In line with this, Varma, Toh and Budhwar (2006) argues that individuals have a tendency to categorise themselves and others in order to know how to behave in different social contexts. Studies show that individuals assign either in-group or out-group qualities and traits to others to guide their own reaction and behaviour towards them (ibid.).

2.1.2 Whiteness

As whiteness is often brought up in the literature about expatriates, it is important to understand its conceptual meaning when discussing expatriates (Berry & Bell, 2011). Mane (2012) brings up that the term whiteness is associated with oppression and that it has historically been a constructed identity. Lan (2011) states that whiteness is a visible identity marker that is perceived as the superior other in non-Western contexts. Whiteness in those non-Western contexts socially constructs privilege, power and domination (Prividera & Howard, 2006). Earlier work by scholars have suggested that white femininity is superior to others, which is supported by Prividera and Howard's (2006) study. Whiteness also has different dimensions when intersecting with gender, the white femininity is considered by Prividera and Howard (2006) as the superior one when comparing to women of colour or other femininities. Shome (2001) shows in her article about the racialized construction of white femininity that women of colour are subordinate to white women, due to the existent representation of white femininity. The acknowledgement of the many dimensions of feminism lead to two divisions of women when it came to theorising and practice, White and Non-white (Arifeen and Gatrell (2013).

2.1.3 "The third gender"

Adler's (1987) paper discusses Western female expatriates assigned to Asia, her study shows that the foreign gendered subjectivity held by Western female expatriates could be used to their advantage. Being female was considered an advantage rather than a disadvantage according to 42% of the women in the study. Adler (1987) concludes that a Western female

expatriate was seen by Asians as first of all being foreign, then as a woman. Czarniawska and Sevon (2008) makes a similar statement claiming that when a stranger is a woman, her femininity is overlooked and is not judged by local standards. When a woman was seen as a foreigner, there was no expectations for her to act like a local. Behaviour that would not be acceptable by the local women, would be more accepted and condoned in another way if it was a foreign female. Tung (2004) also comments on expatriate women being perceived as professionals first and then as their gender. Adler (1987) uses the expression *gaijin*, which means foreigner in Japanese to describe this phenomenon, whilst Tung (2004) states that some Japanese would refer to this as the *third gender*. Adler's early research (1987) resulted in highlighting the noteworthy treatment of Western female expatriates, and she concluded that the foreign females were treated better compared to their foreign male colleagues. This special treatment was connected to their gender, but mostly to their foreignness. This phenomenon titled the *third gender*, refers to the Western female being treated as neither females, nor males, but foreign females. An historical analysis by Czarniawska and Sevon (2008) arrived to the conclusion that foreign women in male dominated professions actually allowed them to succeed even more, as opposed to the assumption that being both female and a foreigner would have been to their disadvantage. The advantage these foreign women had, permitted them to be even more successful than other native female workers within the same profession (ibid.).

The advantages that were reported by the female expatriates participating in the study by Adler (1987), were that they were more distinct. Clients showed curiosity and remembered them easier compared to their male counterparts. Consequently, the female expatriates had higher accessibility to the client's time and attention, along with higher visibility (ibid.). Tung (2004) also highlights that it was easier for a female expatriate to be even more visible in a male-dominant community. Female managers also thought to have better interpersonal skills than men. Many experienced that they were treated better than their male colleagues due to their hierarchical position and gender combined (Adler, 1987). However, Tzeng (2006) states that ethnicity plays a significant role when it comes to how the female expatriates are received in the host-country. Tzeng's (2006) study show that the Caucasian females in Taiwan were treated and accepted better than non-Caucasian females. The Caucasian females

had their foreigner status to their advantage, whilst other female expatriates of Chinese origin faced other challenges, as the ethnic Chinese expatriates were judged according to local norms and behaviour for females.

Since not as many females are assigned abroad as males, Adler (1987, p.183) claimed that "the Asians tended to assume that the women would not have been sent unless they were 'the best,' and therefore expected them to be 'very, very good.'". It seemed to have strengthened the female expatriates advantage, as host country nationals assume that only the female expatriates that are being sent are well-qualified employees, referred to as *the halo effect* (Adler, 1987; Tung 2004).

2.2 Intersectionality

Gender, race and class inequalities have many times been brought up in the literature as separate categories, which has created need for intersectional approaches. Intersectionality means that these three given groups or categories can be seen as simultaneous experiences or factors, inevitably affecting one another (Anthias, 2008). Anthias (2002) argue that we cannot build a gender equal society without also involving other oppressions for e.g. race and class. Other struggles as such must also be addressed in a multicultural democracy. This is in line with Acker's (2006) work which also states that gender, race and class processes are usually present and are foundations for inequality in organisations. By looking at only one of the categories gender, race and class easily leads to simplifying the complicated relation they have with each other, as well as risking to look at it from a biased view (ibid.). Acker also claims that all organisations have inequality regimes, and those are described as "systematic disparities between participants in power and control over goals, resources, and outcomes" (Acker, 2006, p.443). These regimes within organisations reflect society.

Acker (2006, p.444) refers to race as "socially defined differences based on physical characteristics, culture, and historical domination and oppression" and also points out that race can be separate from ethnicity. Race and gender segregation is very complex as it varies in different organisations depending hierarchal class levels. The hierarchical segregation is

different across jobs at different class levels, across jobs at the same level and within jobs (Acker, 2006). Acker (2006) also uses and defines the term class as systematic differences. Differences could be the access and control over resources in organisations. According to Acker (2006) it is the processes and practices that sustain and create differences when it comes to employment, power relations and monetary rewards. Gender identities, beliefs and differences can be viewed as something constructed by society. Gender is highly integrated with class in many organisations and class-relations in the workplace takes its form in different practices. The support for this type of class-relations has its roots in gendered assumptions and attitudes. Progress has been made regarding this. A higher number of women are entering man-dominated occupations which leads to women being more distributed in the organisational class structure. As a consequence, the traditionally integrated gender and class are less integrated. Although, the gendered and sexualised assumptions still continue to support and shape class-relations in the workplace. Gender stereotypes that are reflected in institutional features also affects male and female workers (Ridgeway and England, 2007, cited in Bobbitt-Zeher, 2011).

The class processes in society are very similar to the hierarchy that can be seen in larger organisations. Earlier research has shown that when organising class hierarchies, the gender, race and class inequalities are often reproduced. Top positions within hierarchies are often gendered and racialized. In Europe and in the US for example, the top hierarchical class positions are to majority white men (Acker, 2006). Power differences across different classes play a significant role and are associated with hierarchy (ibid.). Berry and Bell (2011) refers to two different perspectives behind the meaning class. The first perspective presented is that class can be viewed as a hierarchy within a social ranking where income, job, wealth and status are influential factors, and secondly it can be understood as "economic relation of exploitation between surplus producers and non-producers…" (Berry & Bell, 2011, p. 18). Berry and Bell's (2011) explanation behind class is also similar to Acker's (2006) class analysis.

2.3 Transnationalism

Transnationalism is a complementary aspect to intersectionality as it acknowledges complex relations such as diversity and gender across state borders (Metcalfe & Woodhams, 2012). Metcalfe and Woodhams (2012) argue that it is important to understand the *geographies of power* as they represent complex dynamics of globalisation and shape identities. One aspect of the geographies of power is that they build intersections and hierarchies on not only a national level but also on a transnational level. According to this aspect, this type of power hierarchy is created by historical, political, economical and other similar factors. An individual's gender, race, ethnicity and the intersections have different positions across countries and time (ibid.). In line with this argument about people constructing contemporary forms of identity depending on location (Anthias, 2008; Metcalfe & Woodhams, 2012), Fechter and Walsh (2010) arrive to the same conclusion that social construction subjectivities such as gender, race and ethnicity are constantly reconfigured on a transnational level.

2.3.1 Conceptualisation of translocational positionality

Culture and ethnicity are increasingly becoming a question on a transnational level rather than on a national level (Beck, 2002; Wimmer & Schiller, 2002, cited in Anthias, 2008). When the increasing flow of people, cultures, economic and political interests come together they can, according to Anthias (2008), be identified as social processes which are called translocational. Tung (2008) describes culture as a multi-layered construct and emphasises that cross-national management is as important as intra-national diversity. Tung's (2008) study have revolved around patterns of interactions between expatriates and HCNs, but even so, she acknowledges that it exists differences between people who share the same ethnic background. Anthias (2008) discusses in her paper that the increasing movement of people construct contemporary forms of identity. *Translocational positionality* is explained by Anthias (2008, p.15) as "... one structured by the interplay of different locations relating to gender, ethnicity, race and class (amongst others), and their at times contradictory effects". Sometimes, the imaginary of a traditional Western nationality is disrupted for e.g. a Western national that is non-white or of mixed heritage (Anthias, 2008). The term *translocational positionality* is used to discuss intersectionality and individuals' given category between

gender, ethnicity and class when identity, in terms of location, is a context when the location is not fixed.

Basic identity markers such as culture, origin, language and colour are according to Anthias (2002) attributes by one selves and others. Other boundaries put people in the *translocational sphere* which recognises the context, the complexity when shifting locales, and are sometimes contradictory. *Translocational positionality* recognises the complexity between these factors, which can at times construct contradictory positionalities. An example of a contradictory positionality is white women who are subordinate when discussing the gender category whilst being dominant when discussing race (ibid.). This means that an individual with one status or that have been placed in a certain category might be perceived as having a different position in other categories. Arifeen and Gatrell (2013) supports this argument, and claims that ethnicity and nationality often are contradictory concepts.

According to the *translocational positionality process* the focus and emphasis is put on social locations and processes, when discussing identity and belonging (Anthias, 2008; Anthias 2002). The *translocational positionality* explains the complexity of power-relations when race and other similar factors are involved (Anthias, 2008). Moving across nation borders does not automatically mean constructing a new identity. Gender and social class that one defines himself or herself with is likely to remain intact regardless of location. The term translocation refers to the intersection between gender, ethnicity, class and other similar social boundaries (ibid.).

Globalisation and the increased mobility of people has given sub-cultural groups more attention as the cross-cultural boundary lines become blurrier (Tung, 2008). Tung (2008) coined the term ex-host country nationals (EHCNs) to describe people that share the same ethnic background as the country he or she operates in. Even though these expatriates share the same background as the host national, values will likely differ from host nationals who have not lived or worked abroad for a longer time period (ibid.)

3. Methodology

In the following section, the methods used for this study will be presented. Firstly, the method and procedure are described. Secondly, it be followed by a discussion of issues concerning ethics and qualitative research methods.

3.1 Scientific approach

The research in this thesis is conducted from an interpretative approach. This is in line with hermeneutic approach. The interpretative approach states that the social science is different from the natural science, hence it should be researched differently (Bryman & Bell, 2013). It focuses on the understanding of social behaviour, instead of explaining them, and has insight to the subjective interpretation of the study (ibid.). The design behind the qualitative research approach can also be said to be phenomenological when conducting interviews. The phenomenological research originates from philosophy and psychology where the researcher's aim is to describe some lived experiences of individuals who can relate and have experienced this phenomenon (Creswell, 2014).

3.2 Qualitative research method

The qualitative research method approach has been chosen for this thesis in order to be able to interpret the complexity of different situations relating to our research questions. The qualitative research method is an approach which emphasises words and explores the deeper meaning behind individuals and groups' statements when being ascribed to a social problem (Creswell, 2014). The qualitative research method takes on the approach on generating theories, compared to the quantitative method which aim is to test a hypothesis or theory (Bryman & Bell, 2013). However, the qualitative method does not always generate new theories, but uses existing ones to support the findings. The main orientation is the inductive approach, which usually is paired with the qualitative method, and the deductive approach with the quantitative method. The inductive approach focuses on the deeper analysis of the empirical data in order to create generalised answers and create theories. The deductive approach has its base in the theory, and uses this to create hypotheses to investigate through

observations (ibid.). It should be noted that a qualitative research method is not strictly inductive, but usually has tendencies towards a deductive approach as well, and vice versa. Hence, this thesis also has features of the deductive approach. Bryman & Bell (2013) argues that these approaches can be seen as guidelines and tendencies, rather than strict fixed to the research method. Since this thesis will deal with a subject that requires a deeper understanding of the participants' perception of their social surroundings and its processes, we find the inductive approach suitable. The qualitative method is not flawless, part of the criticism pointed towards it includes the subjectivity and influence on the outcome by the authors, as well as the subjectivity of the interpretation (ibid.).

The qualitative method is also suitable for this thesis since it allows to give information from different perspectives. All respondents have different perspectives as they are "ethnic, gendered, aged, classed, and identified with one or another sexual community." (Warren, 2001, p.3).

In addition to the interviews, a literature based researched method has also been used when writing this report, also following a qualitative research method. A data analysis of journals, articles and other literature have been done within the research field of intersectionality and women in international management with emphasis on female expatriates.

3.3 Qualitative interviews

To investigate the research question further, in-depth interviews with four female expatriates were conducted as some of them might have experienced different treatments due to the intersection of gender, race and class. In order to conduct an intersectional analysis, Swedish female expatriates with different ethnicities were suitable. Warren (2001) describes the qualitative interview technique to be interactionally, and the purpose is to get a deeper understanding of the interviewees' experiences. In-depth interviews are appropriate when the information that needs to be gathered concerns complicated and sensitive emotions, as well as when the participants may have different levels of understanding or views on the studied subject (Johnson, 2001). Women interviewing women is also classified as the best way of

finding out about people due to a non-gender hierarchical relationship (Ann Oakley, cited in Edwards & Hollands, 2013). The qualitative interview technique is the most common one when treating a feministic topic. The trust between the interviewer and the interviewee is of most importance (Bryman & Bell, 2013).

The interviews were semi-constructed, as it allows for the interview to take different turns depending on what the interviewee considers important. A semi-constructed interview usually follows the interview guide or the questions in the order they were meant to. If the interviewee touches upon an interesting subject, the interview allows to change direction and the interviewer can add supplementary questions in order to fully comprehend the participant's experiences and thoughts. The order of the questions can also be changed during the interview to be more dynamic (Bryman & Bell, 2013).

3.3.1 Interpreting the data

By using the qualitative research method, one difficulty is analysing the huge amount of generated empirical data (Bryman & Bell, 2013). In order to analyse it, many aspects of the concept of *grounded theory* has been used. This analytic strategy is the most cited one in qualitative research (ibid.). It has many complex aspects to it, and is hard to fully describe. The method in this thesis was to have a close relationship between the collection of the data and the interpretation of it. Bryman and Bell (2013) describe how the results are broken down to its constituents, and later systematically analysed as theories and codes are developed from the outcome.

3.3.2 Selection of context

The choice of Sweden and China as our context, was due to their increased relation in line with increased female expatriates. These two countries are interesting to examine since Sweden is the fourth most gender equal country in the world, in contrast to China that falls on place 99 in the *Global gender gap index* of 2016 (World Economic Forum, 2016). Due to the increased globalisation, the interaction between the two countries increases, thus the gender issue becomes clearer. The Asian market is upcoming which naturally leads to increased

Western foreign direct investment and Western corporations expanding in the area (Suder, 2008). This calls for knowledge about cultural differences as well as race- and gender norms.

3.4 Selection and limitations

The interviewees were not chosen from a certain selection group, but were selected on the basis of their specific qualities suitable for our study. The four conditions we looked for in our candidates were;

1. Female
2. Ethnic Swedish
3. Ethnic Chinese (Swedish nationality)
4. Experience of working in China

This resulted in four women giving us their time for interviews. Three of those women are native Swedish. The fourth woman is ethnic Chinese with Western background. Analysing experiences of these female expatriates with different backgrounds, different attributes and different positions, contributes to the understanding of the complicated intersectional dimensions of gender, race and class.

3.5 Preparations

3.5.1 Preparational studies

The research began with thorough literature studies within the field and important second data collection. All literature research prior to formulating our problem statement and research question also gave a clear view of what could not be answered through the earlier work. This lead to the interview questions in hope that the answers will complement what we already know.

3.5.2 Preparing the Interviews

First, several in-depth interview questions were made, approximating to take half an hour to go through. A lot of effort was put into making them open-ended and inviting elaboration of the answers. Interviewing open-endedly is important since it invites the interview to changes depending on the outcome of the respondents' answers (Warren, 2001). The interviewer must be flexible and open to change the questions during the course of the interview as the answers may deepen if they are allowed to (ibid.). Moreover, the questions were tested on friends and family members in order to secure that they were understandable and perceived as wished. Furthermore, to let the interviewees be prepared, and in hope to get as accurate answers as possible, the questions were emailed beforehand to the candidates.

3.6 Procedure

Three interviews were conducted face-to-face and one was held over Skype. All three face-to-face interviews were held at a location chosen by the woman being interviewed to make her feel as comfortable and open as possible. At the beginning of each interview, the participants were informed of the purpose and length of the interview, as well as the possibility to be anonymous. The permission to record was also asked. Before the interview started, the candidate had the opportunity to ask questions. The Skype-interview was held through telephone only, but through the same procedure as described above. The questions were divided between the two of us, and the one asking questions played the role of the active listener, while the other one took notes.

3.6.1 Transcription

All four interviews were recorded, hence easy to transcribe afterwards. The recordings were transcribed word by word, including pauses, laughs and sighs. This is important for the later interpretation of the interviews. The recordings were listened to several times to make sure we did not leave out any relevant information as Gibson and Brown (2009) stresses is important. The transcriptions were made separately between the two authors at first, and later compared in order to reach most possible accuracy.

3.7 Method discussion

3.7.1 Qualitative method limitations

Validity, reliability and generalisability account for traditional approaches to quality of research. Approaches like this derive from the quantitative research context (Gibbs, 2007). Validity refers to the accuracy of the findings, and reliability means that the results repetitively should be consistent. The last term generalisability applies when findings are true for a wider range of situations (ibid.). Regarding limitation of the qualitative research method used for this study, only one of the four participants was able to provide us answers which would give us a more multi-cultural perspective as this respondent identified as Swedish-Chinese. Due to this reason, the study is not fully generalisable as the population have not been big enough and therefore the findings may not be true for a wider range of contexts. However, three of the four interviewees had similar backgrounds. Advantages with having people sharing cultural background, gender and other identity markers makes it possible to see a pattern of consistency, which was helpful when drawing conclusions, but on the other hand a homogenous group of people also have a tendency to give biased answers. However, the analysis limits itself with only one participant partly sharing the same background as the HCNs.

When conducting research, it is also important for the researcher to check for validity and reliability, which differs depending on whether it is quantitative or qualitative research (Creswell, 2014). Gibbs (2007) mentions that there is a difficulty proving reliability as lone researchers through different projects and other researchers. To ensure that our study was as reliable as possible for analysis, the transcriptions were checked many times, as recommended by Gibbs (2007) in order to avoid obvious mistakes that would make the study less self-consistent. Qualitative research projects involving more than one researcher may be a problem because of the differing ideas each has about the data (ibid.). In order to avoid confusion when collecting the data, we divided the work when interviewing, as mentioned in another section above. After conducting all of the interviews, we went through them one by one and discussed their similarities and differences together in order to ensure that we had similar interpretations of the data. Dividing work and collaborating will according to Gibbs (2007) also minimise one researcher's bias and strengthen the reliability of the study.

Validity is usually addressed in qualitative literature by trustworthiness, authenticity & credibility (Creswell & Miller, 2000). It also discusses whether the methods and strategies to conduct the study are the most relevant in order to present the result of the study as accurate as possible (Given, 2008). The information that is provided by the participants is filtered through their own perspectives, which is inevitably subjective. It is therefore important to understand the different situational and cultural factors in order to increase the validity and understand the perspective of the interviewee (Kuzmanic, 2009). Comments, statements and experiences described by the respondents may have been biased as all of them held a high hierarchical position within their occupation and shared the same cultural background. The subjectivity and the participants own personal views were however important in our study as their individual experiences were of interest. When analysing the data, biased opinions were taken into account and commented on in the analysis. Besides the interviewees biased opinions or tendencies to narrate from their own perspectives, our own opinions and expectations about the topic of our study may also have a negative impact. To address this possible issue, we were a bit more careful and conscious about our way of interpreting the data as their answers was re-constructed by us.

The researcher's reactions and way of handling him or herself might affect the responses according to Creswell (2014). To minimise the risks of affecting the interviewees way of responding, we refrained from putting any personal opinion when interviewing, or reacting in a way that would affect their responses. Out of the four qualitative interviews, one of them was conducted through a voice-call using Skype. Qualitative audio was collected through recordings. The difference between a telephone-interview and the face-to-face interview was the inability to interpret and visually see the interviewee's facial expression which could be a disadvantage. Shuy (2001) states that telephone-interviews as compared to face-to-face interviews have reduced interview effects. Interviews conducted through telephone might also contribute to respondents giving less thoughtful answers (ibid.).

Another issue with qualitative interviews, as mentioned by Creswell (2014) as well, is that the interviewees may also not all be equally articulate (ibid.). Follow-up questions were

sometimes asked when the participant was not as articulate. Although, some respondents expressed themselves well, a study mentioned by Shuy (2001) showed that social desirability bias might be present. This means that respondents might have provided us with answers due to the pressure of what they believe is acceptable according to societal norms and values. Some might even refrain from telling the "truth" due to other personal reasons.

A difficulty that might occur when conducting qualitative interviews is that the researchers do not know which data that will be collected and whether it has potential to be used or not in their continuing work (Pope & Mays, 2006). The original aim of the report was explained to the participants, but during some interviews unexpected themes that were of interest to our research would come up which lead to potential use of data that the participant was not informed by beforehand. Even though we had structured the interviews using different themes of topic to create a logical flow when interviewing, other relevant topics would be brought up at times which pushed the interview a bit towards other directions.

Collecting, transcribing the verbal data and analysing it have all been important parts of our study. The transcribing part of our collected data is critical to ensure validity. According to Walliman (2006) there is a risk of simplifying transcripts when transcribing recorded data. Data might also be misinterpreted when the vocal inflections are ignored in written form. As mentioned above the interviews were all transcribed in order to be analysed. The transcribed version always risk being viewed as our interpretations of what was said. There is an increased risk of misinterpreting due to the reason that we translated the interviews from Swedish to English. However, we found it more important that the interviewees could express themselves freely in their native language in order to receive detailed answers.

3.7.2 Secondary data

The interviews were a significant part of this study in order for us to finalise our research, but besides primary data, which is defined by Pierce (2008) as unedited first-hand data (interviews, e-mails, diaries, observations, records), secondary sources were also used. Pierce (2008) classifies secondary data as edited and interpreted material. This includes our use of scholarly articles and transcriptions of the interviews. Regarding secondary data, Johnston

(2014) mentions six criteria to be asked when evaluating secondary data: purpose of study, credibility of person collecting information, collected information's relevance, date of collected data, methodology obtaining data and consistency of data. For our study, mainly journal articles were used which majority have the purpose to research and extend the knowledge within a field, or find new findings. We consider the journal articles and peer-reviewed articles that we have used very credible as the have been reviewed by experts within a certain field before being accepted for publishing. The journal articles used both primary and secondary data, as they included interviews and observations as well as including other influential work in their articles. Concerning the time of the information, most of the articles used are published 2000s onwards, it was important to make sure that the date and information is current and include new findings. However, it is to be mentioned that works by authors within the field, such as Adler's path breaking literature about female expatriates is used as well. Adler's work and findings about female expatriates are still relevant today and adds understanding to our research. The information used in our study from independent sources is very consistent with earlier work and findings, which increases the credibility of our own conclusions as we used the multiple articles as foundation.

3.7.3 Ethics

Ethical behaviour should be considered when conducting social research involving people. Harm caused by publishing findings and results can be avoided by setting ethical standards (Walliman, 2006). Ethical issues in qualitative research often discusses anonymity, confidentiality and informed consent (Pope & Mays, 2006). In accordance with this, Vetenskapsrådet (2002) presents four main research-ethical criteria regarding humanistic and social science research: information, consent, confidentiality and utilisation.

According to the first criteria, information, the researcher should always inform the participant(s) about the aim of the project. The information that should be provided to the participants must include factors that may impact their willingness to participate. The second criteria, consent is about the respondents' right to participate in the research (Vetenskapsrådet, 2002). Before starting the interview the respondents were informed about the aim of the study and permission was asked before recording the interviews. The respondents were also asked

beforehand through phone-calls or e-mails whether or not they wanted to participate. It was a clarification of how the interview was going to be used, which provided the participant an understanding of the original aim. Any other information that was by respondents perceived as sensitive and outside of the understanding of the original disclosure would not be exposed without permission. The respondents were also able to prepare themselves by having access to the interview questions before. A final version of the thesis was also sent out to the respondents before submitting and publishing it as recommended by Vetenskapsrådet's (2002) guidelines. The confidentiality criteria is about protecting the participants' identity from unauthorised parties (Pope & Mays, 2006). All of the participants were guaranteed anonymity, as it was feared that some statements could harm the participant and the organisation they operate in. In the thesis, the names and organisations the respondents work for are not mentioned. The last criteria by Vetenskapsrådet (2002) is utilisation, which states that the collected data only should be used for the purpose of conducting research. All of the participants were informed that their information was going to be used as data for us to analyse in order to complete our research.

4. Empirical Data

In this section, the results and answers from the four interviews will be presented. The material is organised and divided by different themes which each one intersects with one another. The first subsection is about gender, race and class. The respondents reflected upon being treated better due to their Western background. Following the first subsection, we continue presenting results regarding marginalisation and exclusion, as women in the context of being female expatriates, in a male-dominated environment. The last section connects the two themes hierarchy and gender. The interviewees share their opinions regarding how they were treated by their male and female Chinese colleagues and how their gender and/or hierarchical position might have influenced it.

4.1 The candidates

The results from the conducted interviews gave an overall unitary outcome and there were several similarities, but of course differences as well. A presentation of the respondents' gender, age, ethnicity and what industry they were operating in at the time their expatriation can be seen in Table 1 below. All four women had a relatively high position within their company and all worked in male-dominated fields.

Female	Age	Ethnicity	Industry
Respondent 1	56	Swedish	Automotive industry
Respondent 2	47	Swedish	Automotive industry
Respondent 3	39	Swedish	Automotive industry
Respondent 4	42	Swedish-Chinese	Architecture industry

Table 1*: Overview and presentation of participants*

4.2 Gender, race and class

Some of the interviewees, Respondent 2, 3 and 4, used their foreignness to their advantage. For example, they did not feel the pressure from being judged when not acting and behaving according to local Chinese standards since their behaviour would probably be excused by their foreignness. Respondent 1 felt her foreignness was an obstacle, a disadvantage.

Respondent 4 explained some of the Chinese companies' perceptions on Western workforce:

"In China, Western 'extras' are hired in order for it too look like there are foreigners working there [in the company]. Many that are not very qualified got the job, only because they were Western. I was a part of that category, I received more leave. But I got closer to the locals since I speak the language and am Chinese."

Regarding questions asked about how the respondents were treated as women, all four answered they were first treated as foreigners, and second as females. The Chinese workers, both male and female, saw the expatriates' Western origin first and not their ethnicity. To the Chinese local people, being Western is interesting and exciting according to Respondent 1.

The Chinese females treated the Swedish and Swedish-Chinese women well, and were curious of their leadership. Respondent 1 said that they were also more careful while interacting and more reserved when expressing their opinions. Still, the Chinese female workers were described to be very professional. Respondent 3 also described her perception of the Chinese females' behaviour like:

"It's always like that when you come as an outsider, and especially as an expat. It's interesting to be around such a person, you can learn, develop and see different possibilities. You're treated very well."

4.2.1 Being multicultural

As for one of the respondents, Respondent 4, being Swedish-Chinese meant being treated a bit differently compared to the ethnically Swedish women. Even though she is ethnically Chinese, some physical attributes such as style and body language are more Western-like, hence she was recognised as a foreigner. With good language skills, she was valuable for the company, and she described the feeling of them sometimes putting her up on a pedestal, like she was given the best of two worlds. She explained the two different levels of treatment, one concerning the male and female part, the other concerning the Chinese and Western part. Even with her Asian heritage, they saw her Western behaviour, and she was also excused for doing things in a Western way. However, she was also treated like a woman, but her good treatment she said was due to her being a foreigner. She described the Chinese colleagues as being a bit intimidated by her, especially the males. Because of her Asian physical attributes but Western education, they were unsure of which category to put her in and her way of reasoning.

4.3 Preconceptions

Being a Western female expatriate did also give rise to preconceptions and prejudices held about women, and in particular Western women. Prejudices that were mentioned by all of the participants about Western women in the workplace include:

- Strong
- Dominant
- Critical and questioning
- Independent
- Higher demands
- Not as hard-working as their Asian counterparts
- More entrepreneurial

Regarding higher demands, one of the stereotypes mentioned, Respondent 4 commented that if a Chinese employee had acted the same way, that person would no longer be hired by the company.

The majority of the participants also found themselves to have a more critical approach when it came to work. The questioning approach was not appreciated by their Chinese colleagues as they found the Western female expatriates "asking too many questions". Respondent 2 described this approach as being perceived as being junior, even though her intentions was to guide, it was not a well-accepted way of practice in Asia. She continues explaining that if a woman has this type of approach and attitude, it could be perceived as weak whilst it would have been easier to accept if it was a male that had said it.

As female expatriates operating in China, both respondents 1 and 4 recalled encountering customers that sometimes would question their knowledge within their field. It was however not clear for the respondents to conclude whether the prejudice was based on their gender, age, race or other factors:

"First of all, it is not easy to know whether it is the fact that I am a woman or if it is the language as a Western woman that makes it more difficult. The transport industry is also male-dominated which need to be considered. During meetings with clients it sometimes gives of the feeling [of them questioning] 'what do you know about trucks?'. After talking to me for a while they understood that I knew quite a lot…"

4.4 Marginalisation and exclusion

Two out of four participants, Respondent 1 and 2, were sent to the destination as the only females among males. All of the respondents found themselves either in the margin or/and belonging to the minority in different ways, whether it was being female in a male-dominated occupation, environment, or female expatriates in a foreign country. Other factors such as being a white female, or of Chinese origin with Western education and upbringing, were mentioned as to why the respondents experienced being treated differently compared to the

local Chinese co-workers. Three out of four participants were also treated differently by their female Chinese co-workers, which also contributed to the feeling of being different or excluded.

4.4.1 Networking

Respondent 1 claimed that she felt excluded as a Western female expatriate, on everything ranging from being excluded from important information, and mostly not being a part of the social group. Respondent 3 said that this is a fact you will have to accept, as a foreigner you will never be fully included, and it is nothing personal. Social exclusion, as in networking and not always being kept in the loop, was also experienced by half of the respondents in different ways. Respondent 1 reflected upon how information would bypass her on a daily basis, which pushed her towards putting more energy and engagement to make sure she was kept in the loop. This led to challenges when networking. The same respondent (1) did not experience that it was more difficult for her to build a network compared to her male-colleagues.

Another participant, Respondent 2 commented on not feeling included as she belonged to the less represented gender:

"Women are generally a bit worse at networking. It is not the same feeling or sort of inclusion."

"I was on the board of directors as the only woman responsible for business operations. Of course I sensed that I was not part of the 'boys club' in many ways."

Being included and excluded could also vary depending on the type of meeting. The formal networking and the formal events automatically gave majority of the participants a feeling of being included. In contrast to this, informal events and networking did not. Although, not being very interested in participating in these types of informal events at times, Respondent 2 learnt that these meetings were more important than she had expected:

"Sometimes it was decided that we all would go out to drink whisky somewhere and if you're not interested in drinking whisky or like the places people suggest, you tend not to go. But then one should be aware of that these informal meetings involve a lot of decision making and within these informal networks. I had to learn to not back out just because of the reason that I didn't like drinking whisky. I learnt to actively participate anyways even though I didn't find it amusing in order to be included and also in order for the topic of discussion to be relevant. What kind of topics do we discuss as board of directors? How do we speak with one another?"

These informal meetings were set in a male-dominated context did have an impact on how the participant acted when it came to interaction:

"It is often the case that being a woman in a male-dominated environment you're carrying the flag to make sure that people talk to each other the right way and jokes doesn't go 'below the belt'. In the beginning, I took on that role, until I started questioning it."

In contrast to the others, Respondent 3 never experienced any exclusion when it came to networking as she was one of the first at the assigned location. The self-initiated participant, Respondent 4, had contacts through another company she worked with before and did not experience the same type of marginalisation as the two former participants described above. She also built up her network through joining a Swedish community and have both friends and family in host-country.

4.4.2 Advantages of being different

Being marginalised was not always perceived by the respondents to their disadvantage. In the following fragment, the interviewees describe how being an outsider or different instead could be used in their favour in interactions with the HCNs. Factors like hierarchical position, gender and race/ethnicity are introduced by the interviewees when explaining how and why it could be used to their advantage. In this part of the interview Respondent 1 tells us about how her Chinese colleagues acted and behaved towards her:

"... their [Chinese co-workers] cautious behaviour due to the reason that they perceived us as different is according to me an advantage. I am able to use this to my advantage, especially since there are not many women in the higher hierarchical positions."

Interactions with the locals in the workplace through meetings with their Chinese male and female colleagues have not been a problem for Respondent 2, in accordance with Respondent 1, she also felt that she was treated the same way as her male colleagues - if not better. She experiences herself being treated better due to her using another style of leadership compared to the men. At the same time, she points out that she might have benefitted from having her leadership style more feminine compared to males. When Respondent 2 was asked about being treated differently compared to her male colleagues she responds:

"Not in China, in China I felt that I was treated the same way if not even better. Because of the reason that one tends to have a different leadership style as opposed to men, so it was very positive. I was very well-received…"

Respondent 2 describes herself as being put into a special category where she was not first and foremost identified as her gender but rather her designation as executive. Through her hierarchical position her opinions were just as important as others.

"When I arrive to these countries [Korea, Japan and China] as a Western woman, the same rules of behaviour didn't apply to me [compared to the local women] because I was Western, female and also young so I couldn't fit into any of the norms of what 'senior management' traditionally is defined as. I experienced it to be the opposite, as I was perceived as weird [by the Chinese]. There was someone who said: 'You are an UFO for these people as they fail to put an etiquette on you'".

4.5 Hierarchy and gender

All four women pointed out the importance of hierarchy at the workplace. They thought the way they were treated was strongly connected to their designation within the company, and that their experience might have been different if they had lower or higher positions. They thought that their treatment was first due to their position, and second due to their gender. All of the participants were seniors at their time abroad, which according to them resulted in more respectful treatment. The hierarchy is related to age, and some Chinese people were surprised to see young women in charge. Respondent 2 described a troublesome situation where she hired an older man for a job, but eventually had to let him go since he could not handle a woman being his boss, and especially not since she was younger than him:

"I hired a Chinese co-worker that considered himself to be more senior than me, he might have had a more senior job before. He had a hard time having a female, younger boss. It was a heavy two-year period. Eventually I had to let that person go."

To the question whether the local Chinese men treated her differently compared to the local Chinese women, Respondent 2 answered:

"Yes, absolutely. In China, I had the same status as a male [Western] executive. It [the treatment] was much more respectful, regardless of whether it was a man or a woman that encountered me. But concerning the men, it was not as much about male/female, as about hierarchy. The men expect promotion, more visible signs like prestige etc. They expect this more than the females. Other than that, it was almost the same."

Even Respondent 4 encountered a situation where her authority was questioned due to her age:

"A female customer made a comment that caught my attention. She questioned why I was so young. Because I looked very young and that I had a certain style it made them not believe in my ability and skills."

It was not always easy to distinguish whether it was due to the female expatriates' race, gender or ethnicity that made the clients question their knowledge within a certain field. This is quite clear when Respondent 1 reflects back upon encounters with clients that had a more of a sceptical approach:

"First of all it is difficult to know whether it's the fact that I'm a woman, Western or the language barrier that made it more difficult. Given that the automotive industry is considered a male-dominated industry, that also had an impact… During the encounter with clients some said 'what do you know about vehicles?', but after talking to me for a while they understood that I know quite a lot…"

Respondent 1 draws connections to her hierarchical position and that she was a foreign expatriate to explain why she felt as if she was treated better. She also introduces that her gender may have played an important part of this as there were few women in the higher hierarchical positions.

When it came to interactions with the locals, all of the respondents did not feel they were treated any differently compared to their male colleagues from Sweden. Respondent 4 comments her experience and how she felt she was treated during business meetings:

"My opinion mattered a lot as I belonged to senior architect which means that there is a team of architects. And those who work with you see you as their senior in some sort of way, even though I didn't see it like that because back home [in Sweden] you might have the title associate architect but you're not really anyone's senior as you are [equals] in a team. Having responsibility is another thing, and the decisions are taken by all of us together. There [in China] one does not dare to express their opinions in the same way…"

The formal definition of team members and their roles were very different when comparing Sweden to China. It contributed to Respondent 4 experiencing a stronger sense of designation hierarchy through her role as senior architect:

"I did not experience that the major inequality was between women and men, but on a hierarchal level."

"I did not experience that the major inequality was between women and men, but on a hierarchal level."

5. Analysis

The following chapter will present the major, overall findings from the collected empirical data, and discuss its value and importance in relation to the literature review. The analysis is divided into five sections:

1. Gender, race and class
2. Hierarchy and gender
3. Marginalisation and exclusion
4. Being multicultural
5. Constructing new identities

The analysis and discussion will be supported by earlier theories and literature regarding the subject of female expatriation, gender discrimination, *translocational positionality* and intersectionality.

5.1 Gender, race and class

This section will discuss the Western female expatriates' experiences and their connection to their gender and race. When race and ethnicity concepts are utilised, it many times leads to labelling and describing racial and ethnic subgroups (Bhopal, 2007). In the following section, all the interviewees are described as Western female expatriates, due to their citizenship or background in a Western industrialised country. Three of the four interviewees may be labelled as White and the last participant as Asian, as Bhopal (2007) comments the danger of labelling groups of people is negative stereotyping and inaccuracy.

Finding 1: Being female and Western contribute to better treatment comparing to the local female and male employees, and sometimes male colleagues from the same country of origin.

5.1.1 The difference in hierarchy levels between Western and Asian females

One main finding from the empirical data was the fact that all four participants had been treated as foreigners first and foremost, and as female second. In line with Adler's early work from 1987, this still seems to be the case. The female expatriates believed that their good treatment was due to their Western origin, which could be recognised through their physical attributes and behaviour. The four respondents experienced that they were treated better than the local Chinese women, which indicates that Western females were put higher in rank regardless of their ethnicity. Owen, Javalgi and Scherer's (2007) study shows that aspects of the Chinese society might limit the success for native women. It is also important to consider that the interviewees all operated in a country where native females' opportunities might be limited and may not be present at top positions within organisations, when explaining why the Western female expatriates were treated better than local female workers. In addition, their authority and designation might contribute with being treated better than the local female workers. It was unclear how the Western female expatriates were treated in relation to the local Chinese male colleagues, but it was clear that they were treated with more respect compared to the local Chinese women. The interviewees were not sure themselves if it was due to their race/ethnicity that they were treated better, but they all thought it played a significant part, being identified as Western.

5.1.2 Western privilege and "the third gender"

In non-Western contexts, whiteness is perceived as superior (Lan, 2011), but in this study, we found that the ethnic Chinese participant (Respondent 4), was perceived and treated as foreign or Western female expatriate despite the fact that the shared the ethnical background as her Chinese co-workers. Based on the experiences of the interviewees, our research suggests that a Western female was respected to the same extent as a Western male executive. Sometimes, even better. This clearly relates to Adler (1987) and Tung's (2004) discussion about the so called *third gender,* where their treatment is strongly related to their gender, but most of all their foreignness. Western female expatriates are simply seen as a new concept, as foreign females by the HCNs. Adler (1987) explains this phenomenon as a result of the small percentage of women being sent abroad, even today the number of female expatriates being sent abroad is much less than compared to males (Global Relocation Trends, 2013). The

Asians believe the few females being sent abroad to be extremely professional, since not that many are allowed to go. Maybe this is one of the reason still to why the Western female expatriates are treated so well, they are assumed to be the best. Our research also showed that half the women were sent as the only female amongst many males.

Three out of four of the interviewees were ethnic Swedes, they had clear visible identity markers, although the associations with whiteness is a constructed identity according to Mane (2012). The term whiteness has been shown to be associated with oppression through history (Berry & Bell, 2011), which partly can explain why the Western female expatriates felt that they were treated better than the local female workers. The aspect of class regarding race and ethnicity is clearly reflected in the experiences of the interviewees as they experienced special treatment. From the conceptual understanding of the white privilege, mentioned by Lan (2011), one could argue that the interviewees, as Western female expatriates would be perceived superior to an Asian male, or in general, regardless of gender. The HCN female workers were already subordinate to the interviewees regarding designation and when majority of the interviewees had their white femininity, to their advantage it is not surprising that the Western female interviewees experienced being "treated better". This finding was also presented in Shome's (2001) article stating that non-white women were subordinate to white women due to the image of white femininity. In addition, Metcalfe and Woodhams (2012) use the concept *geographies of power* and describes the transnational level of power and where it is created by historical, political and economical factors. As for our respondents' positions regarding gender, race and ethnicity, it differs across countries and time. In Asia, their Western origin gets another meaning.

In addition, the Western female expatriates were respected to the same level as their Western male colleagues, which also displays the Western privilege. This is due to different races and cultural backgrounds being related to different class levels. Acker (2006) argues that the class system is closely related to and reflected in the different hierarchal levels. Prividera & Howard (2006, p.32) also says that: "...white femininity is positioned as superior to other femininities just as white masculinity is positioned as superior to other masculinities and femininities.", which describes race's role in the hierarchy. Since whiteness has historically

equalled power and higher class status, it is not surprising that this is reflected in organisations. However, our research shows that it is not only whiteness that influences the treatment they received, since Respondent 4 with a multicultural background also received better treatment compared to the local Chinese women. One could argue that the Western origin also brings some of the privileges that are usually associated with whiteness. This will be further discussed in the "Being multicultural" section in the analysis.

Furthermore, their experienced special treatment came with many benefits for the female expatriates, and if they recognised it, it could be used to their advantage. Some behaviour that may be culturally inappropriate in China, was excused when performed by the Western women, which also shows that being of Western origin had privileges when being in a non-Western context. Respondent 4 reflected in her interview fragment that certain behaviour was condoned by the Chinese colleagues due to her Western background, in the same fragment she also says that it would not have been tolerated at all if a native Chinese employee had done the same. Behaviour like asking a lot of questions, being more demanding and expressing one's opinion are normally doubtful in a Chinese-context according to the interviewees, but it was acceptable in this situation. As Adler (1987) also describes, as long as the locals see the expatriate as a foreigner, they do not expect the Western female expatriates to act according to the cultural norms, and may not judge them accordingly. In fact, it may be in the local Chinese's interest that foreigners act the way they do, that also fuel their curiosity about them. As for the example of Respondent 4, she told us about the event where Chinese firms hire "extras" to fill the foreigner quota in the company, even though these people are not qualified enough. As Prividera and Howard (2006) states, being white has always been synonymous with privilege, and it seem like it is beneficial for Asian corporations to have visible Western employees.

5.2 Hierarchy and gender

This section will discuss to what extent the processes of hierarchy and gender had an impact on the treatment of the Western female expatriates in this study. The hierarchy is analysed based on several aspects such as gender, age and designation.

Finding 2: Western female expatriates in Asia are first treated according to their designation within the company, and then as women.

All four female expatriates found it difficult to distinguish whether their treatment by the local Chinese colleagues were due to the existing organisational hierarchy, or due to their gender. Between organisational hierarchy or patriarchal hierarchy, they all believed the organisational hierarchy played a more dominant role. The stronger hierarchal culture reflected both in society and organisations in China, along with many areas of Asia, are influenced by the history of Confucianism. Hasegawa and Noronha (2014) claim that one of the principal tenets from the philosophical tradition is the hierarchical ordering of social relationships. Further on, they (ibid.) argue that the hierarchical ordering of relationships also includes an obedience towards authority and an emphasised respect for one's age. In a corporate context, it can be seen as high power distance and authoritarianism. Directives from superiors are not to be questioned and compliance is expected. An emphasis on gender role differentiation can also be derived from Confucianism (ibid.).

What is important to emphasise is the female expatriates' designation within the company, as it affects the outcome of their answers. They were all senior executives during their time abroad, which consequently put them higher in the different stages of the organisational hierarchy. However, Respondent 2's story about when she hired an older Chinese man for a job shows an exception of the finding that designation is always considered the dominant factor between hierarchy and gender. He questioned her authority due to her young age and her gender. Not only did he consider himself superior in terms of age, but also in his position as a man. Respondent 2 explained his resentment towards working for her as a result of him belonging to an older generation, influenced by traditional thoughts of a leader. According to

Respondent 2, she believed that the older Chinese man's perception of a leader was that a leader should be senior and male. His perception of a traditional leader might be influenced by the hierarchical ordering of social relationships and gender differentiation according to Confucianism, where respect towards seniors is emphasised, as well as the superiority of the male gender (Hasegawa & Noronha, 2014). Even Respondent 4 mentioned her skills and authority being questioned by clients due to her young age, which also shows the age aspect. This also reflects the different dimensions of hierarchies regarding age, designation and gender, and that her designation was not enough for her to be accepted as higher in rank by the Chinese man, as she was both young and female.

5.3 Marginalisation and exclusion

In this section, being marginalised and belonging to the minority in this study took on three dimensions, including the complexities of intersectionality.

Finding 3: Being marginalised as a woman does not have a strong impact on senior executive women when working in hierarchical cultures, as their authority matters more. On the other hand, female expatriates face additional challenges compared to males due to the male-dominated environment, regardless of designation of the female expatriates.

All respondents could relate to being marginalised or belonging to the minority in the context they were put in. The first dimension is about all of the respondents being Western female expatriates. Secondly, they were all working in male-dominated environments and lastly, being both Swedish-Chinese. These three dimensions are shown in Table 2 below.

1. Western female expatriates
2. Females in a male-dominated occupation and environment
3. Western female expatriate sharing same ethnicity as HCNs

Table 2*: Three dimensions of being in the margin/belonging to the minority*

5.3.1 Marginalisation as an advantage

Concerning female expatriates, the issue of marginalisation can be seen in the fewer assigned female expatriates abroad, which according to Altman and Shortland (2008) is not even half of the number of male expatriates. Even so, none of the respondents felt as if they were treated worse or had more difficulties when building networks due to them being women, although studies (Berdahl & Moore, 2006) suggests that women face hostile receptions in traditional environments or occupations dominated by (white) males. Our finding suggests that other factors such as hierarchical position within the company might have had an impact on the female expatriates not being excluded in the male-dominated context. All of the respondents belonged to the category of female senior executives, and because of their positions, the colleagues might not have wanted to actively exclude these executive women because of their status. A general similarity experienced by all female expatriates in this study was that they never personally felt exclusively excluded due to their gender compared to their male colleagues from the same company. It must be clarified that although having some experiences of exclusion due to being in a male-dominated environment or due to them being Western female expatriates, their authority as senior executives always rolled in their favour.

The female expatriates' top positions in the company were in their favour, and some factors behind this such as being of the t*hird gender* and seen as foreigners before females, is in line with Adler's work (1987). In a male-dominated environment, being a part of the minority or being the only female on a higher level, as one of the respondents was (Respondent 2), it points towards female expatriates being respected due to competence and qualifications more than being excluded and discriminated because of their gender. It is also in accordance with Tung's (2004) statement that HCNs assume that the female expatriates being sent are very competent, which is also explained by Adler (1987) to be due to the reason that Asian people assume that the females would never been sent abroad unless they were excellent. This might have been even more important for the female expatriates' Chinese colleagues, as hierarchical ordering of relationships and gender differentiation, according to Confucianism is still present in Chinese mentality today (Hasegawa & Noronha, 2014). With other words, the respondents did not see their gender as the main barrier for building relationships with the host-nationals, as many described they were treated equal to their male colleagues from Sweden, if not

better, which indicates that other factors such as being Western, cultural background or having a certain position mattered more than their gender when it came to feeling included and networking.

Besides being perceived as the *third gender* as mentioned in the section "Race and Gender" above, the respondents all stressed the advantages of being different and not easily being put into a category by the HCNs. There were not many Chinese females who had similar designations as senior executive, making the four interviewees stand-out even more as female expatriates in a male-dominated environment. The HCN female workers did not show hostility towards them, in contrast to Taylor and Napier's (1996) study about Japanese women's resentment towards working for a foreign woman. The interviewees described the native female workers' curiosity about them and also their interest to learn from them. Being Western female expatriates in a male-dominated environment strongly contributed to the interviewees "standing out" or as Respondent 2 was told, being an "UFO" (outsider). Findings from Adler (1987) also supports the claim that being different often can be used to female expatriates. She (ibid.) argues that a higher visibility makes not only native workers a bit more curious but also clients, which is consistent with the female expatriates' experiences all together. During the interviews when the topic marginalisation or exclusion was brought up, the interviewees stressed that being different had more advantages than disadvantages according to their own personal experiences. This is also in accordance with Czarniawska and Sevon's (2008) conclusion about being both foreign and female do not serve as a double-disadvantage, instead the assumed disadvantages based on their foreignness and subordinate gender turned out to be advantages. Theoretically following the analysis of Czarniawska and Sevon (2008) about foreign women in male-dominated professions, the Western female expatriates should even have a greater chance of succeeding compared to the native female workers.

5.3.2 Excluded in a male-dominated environment

All of the respondents mentioned that the majority of their colleagues, if not all, were male colleagues operating on the same hierarchical level. Even though the women were privileged in the sense of their Western origin, they often felt subordinate in their positions as women.

This could be seen in one of the situations Respondent 1 encountered, where her knowledge and skills within her field were questioned by her clients due to the fact that she was female. The intersection of gender and class can be seen in the experiences of the female expatriates involved in this study when it came to networking and the social interactions as well. First of all, they were all highly educated, Western and held top positions in their companies. This finding is consistent with Berry and Bell's (2011) description of female expatriates belonging to a certain class. The similar male-dominated context is not surprising as the number of female expatriates being sent abroad are still much lower compared to males, (23% according to Global Relocation Trends report from 2013), even though their qualifications and skills were equal to those of male expatriates. This naturally leads to few women occupying top positions abroad, since the majority that are sent are men (Berry & Bell, 2011). Due to the lower number of female expatriates, they are often naturally put in a male-dominated environment.

Although not feeling excluded exclusively due to their gender by their Chinese colleagues, the male-dominated environment sometimes made some of the female expatriates feel a sort of social exclusion outside of work. Respondent 2 mentioned informal meetings where they would for instance all go out and drink whisky together. She implicated that this activity outside of work was chosen by her male colleagues, which proves the effects of operating in a male-dominated context. Even though she was not always keen on participating, Respondent 2 understood and learnt that informal decision-making sometimes took place during these meetings, which made her participate. In her interview segment, she also mentioned the pressure she had at times, due to her being a woman, was to ensure that the topic of conversation would be held on a decent level. This indicates that there was some sort of disempowering exclusion as mentioned by (Anthias, 2002). Due to her gender she felt a pressure, an extra responsibility to make sure everyone, majority males, were conversing on a decent level regarding topics.

5.3.3 Social interactions

Besides the mentioned reasons related to gender in general, the HCNs' attitude and perception towards women as well as the female expatriates' knowledge about the country

may also impact social situations and daily interactions. Because of the reason that Confucianism still influences thoughts and behaviour in China today (Selmer, 2002; Varma et al, 2012), it is relevant to reflect over its impact of the behaviour of the Chinese colleagues in our case. Looking at the Chinese mentality and how the women are perceived according to Confucianism, it is clear that women hold a subordinate role to males, which is also mentioned by Hasegawa and Noronha (2014) when discussing gender differentiation as one of the principal tenets of Confucianism. Besides being excluded in a non-work context, Respondent 1, mentioned being excluded from information on a daily basis. Language barriers play a significant role in this too, as valuable information gets lost in translation. Excluding Respondent 1 from daily information made her, and the other female expatriates that participated in this study, act much more engaged and put lot of energy on being included. Besides explaining this incident through language barriers, China's negative perception towards expatriate women might also be relevant in this situation, as Owen, Javalgi and Scherer (2007) state. To involve the HCNs' perception and attitude towards women, it might have made it more difficult for the female expatriates to fully be included. Combining the lower social status women have in China due to societal values and a negative stereotypical perception of female expatriates, it partly explains why some of the female expatriates did experience some sort of exclusion despite the overall feeling that they got respected more than excluded as senior executives.

The Chinese male colleagues would seem more intimidated by Respondent 4 than the Chinese female workers. This shows that even though Respondent 4 is ethnically Chinese, her "Western" behaviour might have acted as a barrier when building cross-gender relationships. In her case, other aspects of why she felt like this can be pointed at cultural norms as well, which might have prevented the Chinese colleagues to freely interact with her. The stronger hierarchical culture in China compared to Sweden, as proposed by Confucianism's influence, Hasegawa and Noronha (2014) suggest that the respect for authority and one's superiors was another barrier when interacting. If the Chinese colleagues held lower positions in the company, there might have been more difficult for them to befriend or build a social relationship with them. Caligiuri and Lazarova (2002) mention that

it might be inappropriate in hierarchical cultures for employees to befriend senior managers for both genders.

5.4 Being multicultural

This section will discuss the special treatment that follows Respondent 4 who is multicultural, and who also was perceived as Western, in spite of her Chinese ethnicity. Since this thesis has only studied one respondent sharing the same ethnicity as the HCNs, it is not possible to draw any general conclusions based on her subjective experience. However, her experiences are still valuable to analyse as it contributes to a wider understanding and complementary dimensions when discussing race and ethnicity

As an EHCN, Respondent 4 was first-hand perceived and treated as a foreigner, despite her Chinese ethnicity. Compared to the three ethnically Swedish female expatriates that were involved in this study, Respondent 4, had a slightly different experience. Respondent 4's knowledge about the culture and her language skills indicates that the adjustment and integration with the locals were much easier as she shared their cultural background. Being ethnically Chinese, but raised and educated in Sweden, makes it even more difficult to put her in the categories of Western female expatriates. On one hand, it is possible to categorise Respondent 4 into the Western female expatriate category, but on the other hand, her physical attributes, deeper understanding of China's culture and her language skills, sets her aside from that traditional category. The situational constraints that makes it difficult to build relationships with HCNs as mentioned by Caligiuri and Lazarova (2002), does most likely not apply to Respondent 4. She was able to fully communicate with the host-country nationals using their native language, which increased her opportunities of learning, adjusting and integrating faster in China compared to the other expatriates. Besides this, she had her family and some friends living in China. Family support and general social interactions with HCNs, such as colleagues, are all helpful tools during the cross-cultural transition according to Caligiuri and Lazarova (2002). Language skills appear to have been a key for Respondent 4 as she mentions that if she had not known Chinese, but had the same ethnicity, it would have been to her disadvantage instead.

There is another dimension of intersection where her mixed-cultural background emphasises that culture needs to be seen as a multi-layered construction. Respondent's 4 experiences in China as a female expatriate does not agree with earlier studies on female expatriates sharing the same background as the host-country, when comparing the intersectionality concerning East and West. According to a study, Japanese-American female expatriates were first being perceived as being more Asian rather than Western, and contributing to Japanese men being less willingly accept the Japanese-American women as competent professionals (Taylor & Napier,1996). In the interview fragment of Respondent 4, she believes to have been treated differently, not only due to her more Western way of working and thinking, but also other physical attributes and behaviour which made her stand out more. A study by Tzeng (2006) does confirm that ethnicity plays a significant role when it comes to how the female expatriates are received in the host-country, but the study itself limits to comparing Caucasian female expatriates with non-Caucasian female expatriates in Taiwan. It was presented in the same study by Tzeng (2006) that Caucasian females in Taiwan were treated and accepted better than non-Caucasian females, having their foreigner status to their advantage, whilst other female expatriates of Chinese origin faced other challenges as they were judged according to local norms and behaviour for females. These two earlier studies implicate that locals treat the female expatriates differently depending on their ethnicity. White female expatriates with a Western background, upbringing and education were treated better in Asia due to the reason that the locals did not judge them strictly according to their norms, values and behaviour, as opposed to the Asian female expatriates of Chinese origin. The class differences are clearly displayed in Tzeng's (2006) study. When using Respondent 4's example as an EHCN, none of the earlier studies' findings mention this result when taking the factor of being an EHCN in consideration. She was neither judged according to the local norms even though sharing the same ethnicity as the host-country, nor is the reason behind her being treated better due to her being both white and of Western background true. Exposed to two cultures, she can be seen as belonging to a sub-cultural group.

5.5 Constructing new identities

The complicated interplay between gender, race and class is the foundation of the theory of *translocational positionality* which explains how one's identity can change depending on the location. All participants in this study experienced a shift in their treatment due to the new context they were put in. This is in line with the theory presented by Anthias (2008), which supports our findings by presenting identities as social processes that are translocational. The identities of the participants of this study could be said to be female, Western and Swedish (or Swedish-Chinese). These translocational identities can sometimes be contradictory (ibid.), which were the case for the women in this study. They were put in different positions depending on which category that one chooses to look at. To clarify, their positions were contradictory when looking at several categories at once, and when comparing the different positions the women were put in depending on from which perspective they were analysed from. The translocational positions are depending on the context when the location is not fixed (ibid.). Even though the female expatriates may be given advantages due to their foreignness and the reconfigured identity, some parts of their identity remained the same, such as their gender. In some aspects, the *third gender* theory may apply, as they changed location to a Chinese context, but for other scenarios they are still put in inferior positions as women. This was the reality for all respondents. Even though the expatriates moved across nation borders, it does not automatically change their own view of their identity, such as gender, ethnicity and class. It may change others perception of them concerning one or more categories, but one's self view are likely to remain the same (ibid.). The females are likely to view themselves as before, while their answers to the interview showed a clear insight of the shift of their perceived identity by others. As Anthias (2008) claims, the original assumption about a Western person can be disrupted by an individual that is non-white or of mixed race. This was the situation for Respondent 4, who was Swedish-Chinese.

Figure 1 below summarises the three main findings in this thesis and presents how they are interrelated with gender, race and class/hierarchy. The figure gives an overview of the complexity of intersectionality, and displays the findings from the Western female expatriates' experiences in China.
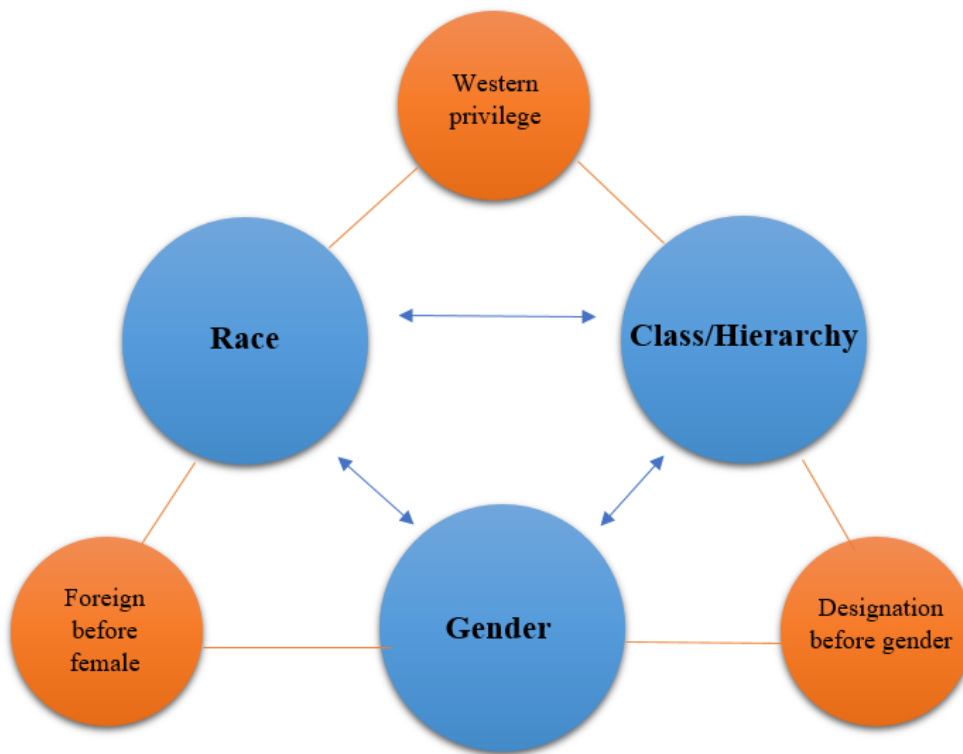

Figure 1: *Intersectionality Matrix* (Created by the authors)

6. Conclusion

6.1 Findings and contribution

This thesis has contributed with a multi-layered analysis of the experiences of Western female expatriates in Asia, and researched how their experiences differ depending on the complex intersection of gender, race and class. This study has illustrated the different advantages that follows the respondents' Western origin, and that these advantages are also applicable to ethnically Chinese women with a Western background. The historically profound privileges of whiteness are still present in Asia, and can be seen as connected to the general idea of the "West", which leads to the multicultural female also experiencing the privileges.

It can be concluded that the local Chinese workers first judge the Western female expatriates by their foreignness, and second by their gender. Likewise, it can be concluded that they are also treated according to the perceived established hierarchy first, and secondly based on their gender. Our study has shown that Western female expatriate with high positions in a very hierarchical culture can use their designation to their advantage, and prevent effects of marginalisation and/or exclusion. However, additional challenges for female expatriates remain as they are usually put in male-dominated contexts, due to the marginalisation of female in the labour market where women do not have the same opportunity to work abroad as expatriates as men. The findings above enlightens how intersectionality complicates Western female expatriates' experience in the workplace in South-East Asia.

To conclude, all participants in this research were marginalised for their gender, but privileged for their whiteness and/or Western origin, and as the concept of *translocational positionality* shows, one's identity when including culture, gender, race/ethnicity and class have different meanings depending on different locations. By not easily being put into a category, with other words being an outsider and female, did work in the female expatriates' favour when also combining it with their designations as senior executives.

6.2 Suggestion for future research

It is difficult to clearly state any defined levels of order between race/ethnicity, gender and class/hierarchy since all of these factors are interrelated. As its essence itself claims, they are all connected and should not be separated in order to fully comprehend the most accurate view of the complicated phenomenon as this thesis treats. Due to the chosen context and the limitation of the number of multicultural participants, the conclusions are mainly applicable to the situation researched, even though some results from this study may be generalisable as it has shown consistency with earlier findings and research. As mentioned, the intersectionality is very complex, one's identity should be seen as a multi-layered cultural construction with many dimensions depending on each individual.

Further research through the intersectional lens on this subject, with a higher number of participants with different ethnicities, mixed races and lower designations, would be of interest. This would be in order to deepen the understanding of these social processes of how expatriates are perceived and treated in different geographical locations or spheres. In addition, a study that includes a comparison of the male expatriates' experiences would also be of interest.

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Appendix

Interview questions

<u>Outline:</u>

1. Explain the purpose of the interview
2. Explain how the answers will be used in the thesis, ask for permission to use direct quotes
3. Inform the interviewee how long the interview will be
4. Ask if there are any questions before the interview begins
5. Ask for permission to record

<u>Background:</u>

- What is your current job-title? What areas are you responsible for?

- What are your previous experiences of working in Asia? Which company did you work for at that time?

- What was your designation when you worked in China/other Asian countries?

- How were you chosen for this international assignment?

- How long was your duration in China?

<u>Before travelling</u>:

- How did the company prepare you to work abroad/in Asia?

- In what way did the preparation affect how you experienced your visit in China?

<u>Questions regarding main topic</u>

- Were any other colleagues assigned to the same destination at the same time?
  - Were they female/male?

- What is your spontaneous perception of the Chinese locals' view on women?

- Were you treated differently compared to your Swedish male colleagues?
  - If yes, how, and by who?

- How were you treated by the local female colleagues compared to by the local males in the company?

- How did the local Chinese men treat you compared to how they treated the local Chinese females?

- How was your values/proposals/ideas received and perceived by the locals during meetings?

- To what extent do you believe your treatment was connected to your designation within the company?

- Do you think you would have been treated differently if you had a higher or lower position in the company?

- How did you build a business network?
  -Do you believe it was harder for you as a woman?

- Did you ever feel excluded in terms of access to information or participation in decision making?
  -How and by who?

- Did you change anything in your behaviour in order for you to fit in better?
  -If yes, how?

- Did you behave in a certain way in Sweden that you took for granted, but felt was not appropriate in China?

- Did someone at the workplace in China behave in a certain way that surprised you?
  -How? What happened?

- What do you think are the biggest challenges as a woman in the Chinese workplace?

- Did you experience preconceptions/prejudices about Western women?
  -What were they? Describe

<u>Reflections after expatriation</u>

- What do you wish your Chinese colleagues would have done differently concerning certain issues?

- What advice would you like to give to Western women that will work in a similar workplace abroad?

- What would you have done differently if you had the chance to visit again?

<u>Questions for multi-cultural candidates</u>

- Do you think you were treated differently due to your Asian heritage/ looks compared to your ethnically Swedish female colleagues?

- Was you Asian heritage to your advantage or disadvantage?