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# **Managing the work-family dilemma**

## **- a qualitative study of Volvo IT India**

Thesis work for Bachelor Degree in Human Resource Management and  
Labour Relations 15 hp,

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**Abstract**

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This thesis is written upon a request from Volvo IT India, in order to explain how the organisation can increase gender diversity and the effects an increase might generate. The thesis aims to investigate and understand the respondents' perceptions on why women in India start working and the challenges they might come across. Furthermore, Volvo IT India wants to facilitate work life balance for females which is why the thesis also aims to explore how the employees manage the work and family dilemma from a gender perspective, with an emphasized focus on mothers.

The theoretical and empirical background regards gender diversity, the work-family dilemma, role theory, border theory and flexibility. In order to obtain and fully understand the respondents' thoughts and feelings, a qualitative approach with semi-structured interviews was used. The respondents consist of 12 employees at Volvo IT India; women with children, women without children and men with children, with four respondents in each category. According to the findings, there is a lot that Volvo IT India can gain from having a diverse workforce, for example gender diversity leads to productivity and creates innovation. Work-family interface is something that all of the respondents face, but it emerged that the females experience higher degrees of both work-family interface and vice versa. It was also shown that the respondents were satisfied with their work and the family situation but that the borders between them were more difficult to separate for the females than the men.

Most of the respondents express that having multiple roles is a gratitude for them and the benefits that it generates compensates the downsides. To create a more satisfying work-life balance, decrease gender inequalities and create more equal opportunities for everyone in the organisation the respondents would like to see more flexible work options.

**Keywords:** India, Gender Diversity, Work-Family Dilemma, Volvo Information Technology  
India, Flexibility



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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Background

Due to the fact that India has had strong manufacturing capabilities in the last few decades, India has had a booming growth, which has led to them emerging into a future world leader. Although the knowledge economy has created enormous opportunities for the population of India, a lot of women are still prevented from reaching their full potential by a combination of cultural restrictions, gender discrimination and a lack of resources. (Booz&Co, 2013).

In a quantitative survey conducted by Booz&Co in 2013 in order to show the benefits of empowering women as employers and employees in 128 countries, 45 % of the women in India say that they feel that they are being treated unfairly because of their gender. Along with this it is reported to be a big struggle of returning to work after maternity leave. In the same report, 50 % of the females experience safety concerns related to commuting. The report looked into the level of economic empowerment of women in 128 countries and India was ranked as 115. (Booz&Co, 2013).

With only 39.5 % of India's women of prime working age, 25 to 54, participating in paid work, they are among the countries with the lowest participants range. And as these numbers are declining, with a drop of 9 percentage points in the last ten years, it is not going the right way. According to Madgavkar (2012) this can be explained by two things. Firstly, a lot of the women are choosing to educate themselves for longer periods which means that they enter the workforce later and secondly, because of the financial growth that India and its citizens has experienced, many families can afford to not send their women to work. (Booz&Co, 2013).

This thesis is written upon a request from Volvo Information Technology India as a part of their diversity project and their aim to increase gender diversity within the organisation. The focus will be regarding the employees of Volvo IT India's perceptions and experiences of their work-family dilemma and how this can be facilitated, especially for working mothers. According to Barnett (1993) and Nordenmark (2002) multiple researchers have investigated the effects on how individuals experience having multiple social roles, such as being a parent and an employee at the same time, mainly through a quantitative approach, but there are still unanswered questions on whether it generates positive or negative impact on the individual



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(Barnett, 1993; Nordenmark, 2002). This thesis will not only be valuable and applicable for Volvo IT India but also for the Human Resource profession and research field since it in contrast to most of the previous research in this field has a qualitative approach and addresses issues that are related to the employees perceptions on the work-family dilemma and the effects of engaging in multiple social roles. Furthermore, we believe that this thesis also can be beneficial for India as a country by creating awareness of the positive outcomes of gender diversity, facilitate for women in the workforce and create more equal opportunities regardless of gender and help them towards achieving the third United Nations Millennium Goal which is to “Promote gender equality and empower women”.

(United Nations Homepage, 29 May 2013)

## 1.2 Volvo Information Technology India

Volvo Information Technology (IT) is a global company and a part of the Volvo Group. The company has around 6 000 employees in more than 35 locations around the world and they provide IT solutions, telematics services and consulting services to customers across multiple industries. Volvo IT India deliver a wide range of services in Application Delivery, Application Maintenance and IT infrastructure.

“We aim to proactively propose business and IT solutions to help customers achieve their business goals. With active customer collaboration, we are trusted partners, securing the development of relevant businesses, processes, and IT skill-sets.” (Volvo ITs Homepage, 13 May 2013)

According to The Volvo Groups *Diversity and Inclusion Policy* from 2011, which also includes Volvo IT India, they have a strategic objective to “Leverage diversity through inclusive leadership”. Within the Volvo Group all employees are “equal worth and have equal opportunities, regardless of gender, age, ethnic and cultural background, religion, disability, sexual orientation or other physical or social factors. The working conditions, remuneration practices, and terms of employment are to be such that they are equitable, allow equal opportunities for all, and also facilitate a sound balance between work and private life.



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Discrimination and harassment on any of the dimensions stated above is not tolerated.“  
(Volvo Group Diversity and Inclusion Policy, 2011).

According to an internal survey that was conducted in March 2012 at Volvo IT India they had 21 % females employees within the company. That ratio of female employees is considered too low by the company and they want to focus on increasing their gender diversity and become a more attractive workplace for women. Today Volvo IT India follows the Indian parental leave laws which mean that the employees are entitled to 12 weeks of paid maternity leave funded by the organisation.

### **1.3 Purpose**

The overall aim of this thesis is to develop a broader perspective on women’s work life situation in India, and to understand how they combine a full time job with being a mother. This broader aim is examined by the more specific assignment to explain how Volvo IT India can increase gender diversity and the effects an increase might generate, this thesis aims to investigate and understand their employee’s perceptions on gender diversity and their thoughts on why women enter the workforce. Furthermore, Volvo IT India wants to facilitate work life balance for females which is why the thesis also aims to explore how the employees manage the work and family dilemma from a gender perspective, with an emphasized focus on mothers, as well as investigate what they would like to have in order to achieve a more satisfying work-life balance.

### **1.4 Research Questions**

1. How is gender diversity perceived by the employees of Volvo IT India and according to them, why do Indian women enter paid employment?
2. How do the employees of Volvo IT India perceive and manage the work and family dilemma?
3. What could facilitate for the employees in order to achieve a more satisfying work-life balance?



## 2. Theoretical and Empirical Background

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*In the following section, the theories and the empirical background that have been used to address the purpose of this thesis will be accounted for and will be the foundation for the analysis. The theories that are accounted for are the central theories when it comes to gender and the work-family dilemma. Most research in this field is based on quantitative studies in a western or European context but is still applicable to this study as will be further discussed under 3.6 Ethical Reflections in the Method section.*

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### 2.1 Theoretical Background

#### 2.1.1 The Importance of Diversity

Management diversity has its origins from the American research institutes and was developed in the 1980's. It addresses business strategies and is related to globalisation as well as demographic and technical development. The research institutes presented results that showed that organisations that utilises and values their employee's differences and understands the diversity among their clients, are more profitable (Glans, 2010).

The purpose of addressing diversity in organisations is not to employ members of minority groups, but to utilise everyone's experiences and skills in favour of the organisation. The aim of diversity is to have an equal workplace, by create awareness and identify biases, values and behaviours that affect work process and attitudes. (Hjertson & Svaleryd, 2010).

##### 2.1.1.1 Gender Diversity

Connell (1996) states that one of the most common perceptions in today's society, is that groups of women and men have different sets of traits that characterize their gender. These traits are used to define both masculinity and femininity, and also separate the two genders from each other. Women are seen to be soft, nurturing and caring while men are considered strong, powerful and disciplined. These traits are said to define the genders personalities and explain their actions. The traits that the sexes are characterised by are often given an opposing trait of the other sex, which gives the conception that the genders are two complete opposites. The differences are according to Connell (1996) instead created by different constitutions and





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constraints in a variety of social arenas and are dependent on where the interaction takes place. The fact that there is a hierarchy between the genders, with male being superior to women, contributes a great deal to the gender differences.

According to Hirdman (1988), each society creates and maintains a sequential gender system where women and men are assigned to different tasks, roles and positions. Hirdman (1988) continuously claims that the gender system is based on two principles; keeping the sexes apart and male superiority. This can be compared to Connells theory about the opposing sexes as described above and an example of this is the labour market where men and women can be found in different sectors.

### **2.1.2 Minority Effects**

Moss Kanter (1977) describes three effects of women being a minority in an organisation. The first effect is the *attention*, the fact that women are visible just as women. Their achievements are regarded as female achievements and not as an individual contribution. In order to get recognition for their competence they need to perform more and better than the men. But to not be viewed as aggressive, they are at the same time not allowed to achieve too much and outshine the men. It is often a question of choosing between trying to limit the visibility, and risk being overlooked, and utilizing the publicity which can lead to being labelled a troublemaker. Being part of a minority group also give each member a larger share of the awareness given to that group. Kanter (1977) continuously states that this attention and visibility may result in critical review of the minority group and an increased pressure which can evolve in female leaders in a minority position feel that they have to be just as good, or better, than the men to be seen. As the group grows, each individual becomes less and less surprising and unique. The other effect of being part of a female minority group in an organisation is what Kanter (1977) refers to as a *contrast*, also known as polarisation and exaggeration of differences, which means that the men exaggerate the differences between the majority, the men, and the minority, the female. This is done in order to preserve their own commonalities which often leads to that the females are withdrawn from informal meetings and networks in order to keep the boundaries. The members of the minority are also subjected to loyalty tests in order to reassure that they would not turn against the majority. Signs of



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loyalty may result in being included in more of the dominant activities, such as informal socialisations that may occur. The loyalty test can consist of things such as the assumption that they will not mind sexist jokes or even join in the laughter to show that they fit in. Furthermore it can regard showing gratitude for coming so far, unlike other women, and therefore not show any dissatisfaction towards the group. The third effect that Kanter discerns is *assimilation* and means that minorities are not allowed to be individuals. It is easier to define members of a minority and making assumptions among generalisations among them than in a larger group where differences are easier to allocate. They must always relate to the stereotypes and generalisations that the majority has upon them.

The importance of the group composition is dependent on gender. According to Kanter (1977) females in minority are often being stereotyped and experience many disadvantages whereas men on the contrary, can take advantage of being in a minority and the attention it gives. Furthermore, Kanter (1977) is of the opinion that men and women are basically the same, but because of different conditions in the organisations, they are affected to act as though they were different. Women often end up in “dead end works”, positions with low career opportunities without the possibility of career growth which is why Kanter (1977) believes that mentors or support persons, higher in the hierarchy are important. When females are in positions which do not present the same opportunities and the same power in the organisation as the position the men are in, it becomes a segregating mechanism in itself. The position in the organisation will then overshadow the importance of gender, while the perception of women’s powerlessness/incompetence/unwillingness to pursue a career will tend to be a self-fulfilling prophecy (Kanter, 1977). The reason why men choose to work with other men is according to Kanter (1977) a result of men’s strong sense of homogeneity and conformity. And as leadership is being characterized by insecurity, they require trust and similarity with others.

### **2.1.3 Role Theory**

In work-family literature different theoretical perspectives dealing with the study of behaviour patterns or roles are dominant (Biddle, 1979). According to Netemeyer, Boles & McMurrian (1996) Role Theory describes the different demands of a role such as being a woman, a



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mother, a wife etcetera in terms of duties, responsibilities, commitments, expectations and requirements that are associated with a given role. Researchers have investigated the effects on how individuals experience having multiple social roles, such as being a parent and an employee at the same time, but still there are unanswered questions on whether it generates positive or negative impacts on the individual (Barnett, 1993; Nordenmark, 2002).

According to Barnett (1993) the core roles for women has been suggested to be the family roles, and the core roles for men has been suggested to be the employee roles, and earlier theoretical assumptions emphasized the men's' role of paid employees and viewed the role of father and husband as subordinate. Traditionally there are two hypotheses that establish role theoretical perspectives that address the issues of having multiple roles; the scarcity hypothesis and the expansion hypothesis (Goode, 1960; Marks, 1977; Sieber 1974).

#### *2.1.3.1 Scarcity Hypothesis*

The scarcity hypothesis argues that when a woman take on multiple roles it creates negative consequences on her health and well-being such as stress, and it can also cause conflicts in balancing roles related to work and family (Goode, 1960). According to this hypothesis, individuals have limited energy and time, and therefore adding extra responsibilities and roles creates tensions between competing demands and creates role conflicts (Goode, 1960; Slater, 1963). The problem of having overloaded demands can be solved by the individual in one or two ways; either by demanding as much as possible and performing as little as possible or simply by avoiding certain roles (Goode, 1960; Marks, 1977). Barnett (1993) points out that women and men might deal with this issue in different ways, for example women's core roles at home are presumed by Barnett to require total energy and allegiance. Furthermore, Barnett (1993) mentions that women are assumed to be drained by heavy demands from organisations when they also take on the role of paid employee. However, according to Marks (1977) the expansion hypothesis was developed in the 1970s in order to explain the effects of having multiple roles, which the scarcity hypothesis did not give an answer to.



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*2.1.3.2 Expansion Hypothesis*

The expansion hypothesis suggest that having multiple roles can increase role balance and create greater access to resources such as more financial rewards and social support. Also engaging in several roles can according to this hypothesis, generate both psychological and physical health benefits. The hypothesis argues that individuals are able to create strong attachments to multiple roles and according to this hypothesis the benefits of having multiple roles such as better self-esteem compensates the downsides (Marks, 1977; Seiber, 1974). According to Nordenmark (2002) multiple roles are psychologically beneficial to both men and women. Empirical research that supports the expansion hypothesis indicates that having multiple roles may provide higher job-satisfaction, psychological well-being, higher self-esteem and in some cases allow individuals to find support and satisfaction in one life area while having trouble in another (Thoits, 1963; Sieber 1974). However even though much research on emotional well-being and on multiple roles supports this hypothesis, there are also research that shows that both men and women with multiple roles experience role conflict or role overload (Tiedje et. al. 1990; Holahan & Gilbert, 1979).

*2.1.3.3 Managing multiple roles*

Having multiple roles can be a source of role conflict and at the same time a source of role gratification according to several researchers (Crouter, 1984; Gerson, 1985; Tiedje et al., 1990) Gender differences in work-family conflicts has also been found and supported by many researchers, with women more often reporting greater role conflicts than men. These differences are generally argued to reflect gender differences in responsibilities and roles rather than sex differences. (Cleary & Mechanic, 1983; Holahan & Gilbert, 1979; Crouter, 1984). Several researches have investigated possible factors that might be contributors to work-family conflicts or to work-family gains and various factors have been suggested. Some factors that have been mentioned to predict role conflicts are; the amount of workload, demands both from work and home and the quality of one's experiences in work or parenting roles. (Baruch & Barnett, 1986; Burke, 1988; Duxbury & Higgins, 1991). The expansion hypothesis on the other hand, as previously mentioned, argues that having multiple roles related to work and family generates resources that contribute to greater gains and fewer role conflicts. (Kessler & McRae, 1982; Marshall & Barnett, 1991; Tiedje et al., 1990).



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A satisfying work-life balance is important for many different reasons, psychological well-being being one of them. According to Clark (2000) work-life balance is “satisfaction and good functioning at work and at home, with a minimum of role conflict” (p.751). Furthermore Clark (2000) points out that a sense of harmony in life, satisfaction and high self-esteem are indicators of a successful balance between work and family life.

#### **2.1.4 Border Theory**

People cross borders between work and family life all the time, where the rules, behaviours and thought patterns differ. The two domains, work and family, also differ in culture, purpose and in how task should be accomplished and in what is seen as appropriate behaviour (Clark, 2000). According to Clark (2000) the borders between the different domains, also referred to as spheres, usually consists of three types; psychological, physical and temporal borders. Psychological borders are created by the individuals and define behaviours, emotions and thinking patterns, physical borders define where the different sphere acceptable behaviour occurs and the temporal borders define when the different spheres shift. Furthermore Clark (2000) argues that according to Border Theory achieving a satisfying work-life balance is facilitated when the work and family spheres either are culturally similar and flexible or when the borders are strong and culturally different.

## **2.2. Empirical Background**

### **2.2.1 Profits of Gender Diversity in the Organisation**

As stated by Glans (2010), a positive gender diverse climate will not be achieved by simply hiring the right ratio of men or females, it is achieved when the employees are able to access and enjoy the same rewards, resources and opportunities, regardless of their gender. The ambition is according to Glans (2010) to achieve broadly equal outcomes for both men and women, not exactly the same outcome for all individuals. According to Lindelöw (2008) diversity in organisations can promote business organisation and result in new ideas, increase efficiency and provide solutions to problems that would be impossible to achieve with a homogeneous workplace. Bjärvall (2002) argues that diversity leads to a more considerate



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decision-making when individuals with different mind-sets, experiences and backgrounds are participating and that it attracts a wider group of clients. Glans (2010) believes that diversity in teams leads to an increased ability to develop the employees as well as improve the leadership. Continuously Bjärvall (2002) states that a reason for organisations to invest in diversity and equal opportunities for their employees, is that there is a risk that the competent employees of minority or unequally treated groups may leave the organisation if they do not experience a possibility of career growth..

### **2.2.2 Work-family dilemma**

The relationship and the conflicts between work and family have been discussed for over forty years and the literature that examines the relationship contains several theoretical perspectives to highlight the work-family dilemma. However there is still no comprehensive theoretical framework for this subject according to Allard (2007). Poelmans (2005) points out that a major theme in this literature is that both family and work claim both time and energy. Furthermore there is a general consensus that family and work influence each other in both a negative and positive way (Poelmans, 2005). A separation was made between the family-work interface (family influencing work) and work-family interface (work influencing family) and these two types of conflict are supported by several empirical scholars (Poelmans, 2005). Most studies has previously found that women mostly experience work-family interface, however, a recent study conducted by Flisbäck and Lindström (2013) regarding Swedish artists and their work-family conflicts, show that the women instead experience the contrary, more family-work interface where they want to spend less time at home and more time at work. Flisbäck and Lindström (2013) explains this with regards to their profession as artist, as artists tend to have a strong commitment to their work. Moreover, according to Poelmans (2005) one commonality regardless of culture is that when someone takes on multiple roles they will, in different amounts, experience role conflicts. There are some evidence supporting the expansion theory in regards to that participating in multiple roles can be beneficial for the individuals health but today the majority of the literature focuses on and supports the scarcity hypothesis that contents that multiple roles creates stress and generates negative consequences (Poelmans, 2005). Gerson (2002) on the other hand, points out that even though the



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individuals can experience a conflict between work and family, they can still appreciate both of the spheres.

### **2.2.3 Flexibility in organisations**

To help employees avoid conflict between work and family responsibilities, organisations can offer flexible work options such as work from home opportunities, the possibility to vary their times when they start and stop working or the ability to work part time. According to Allard (2007) flex time has been shown to have both positive and negative effects for the organisations. The positive outcome consists of higher productivity and job satisfaction and has also been proved to lead to lower absenteeism. On the other hand, it can be harder for the supervisors to have control over the employees and make sure that the work is completed.

The reason why organisations are offering flex time, despite the consequences, is according to Allard (2007) because employers are increasingly recognizing the employees work family needs. It can both be arranged on a formal basis and as a joint agreement between the employer and the employee. Allard (2007) continuously states that the flexibility can vary throughout the organisations because of individual personal and/or work characteristics. According to the study by Allard from 2007 that is based in Sweden, men have more flex time than women and higher-paid employees have more than the employees with lower salary. Furthermore, Allard describes the different research made of the impact of having flexible arrangements in the organisation. Some researchers are of the impression that employees who have flexible work benefits have lower amounts of work-family conflicts, since they have the possibility to control when, where and how they work. Other researchers argue that it does not decrease the work-family conflict unless the organisation have a family-supportive culture. (Allard, 2007).

### **2.2.4 Work becomes home**

Time Bind is a concept introduced by Hochschild (1997) that refers to the sometimes cloudy distinction between work and home. According to her, the roles of work and home have been reversed. Home has become more stressful, a place with too many demands, while work has become more attractive, offering a sense of belonging. Even though many working parents express regret over the time bind, the fact that they do not have enough time to spend at home,



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their actions in the research implied a different story. Hochschild (1997) found that few working parents adjust their long working hours even when the workplace offers different family-friendly policies that would facilitate for them to be able to spend more time at home, even though most of them, especially working mothers, state that family is first priority. This unwillingness to reduce the work hours, mainly for the women, where according to Hochschild (1997) complicated by the gender discussions as she formulated it "with a gender war on, shorter hours felt like surrender" (p. 107) where the women faced more intense examination of their commitment to work than their male colleagues did.

Hochschild (1997) argues that the modern-day corporate cultures are the main reason why a growing share of parents wants to spend more time at work. That is mainly due to the fact that companies today focus a lot on making the workplace as manageable, civilized and hospitable as possible through promoting collegiality instead of hierarchy, having teamwork approach and communality instead of office politics. The rewards and companionship that work offers, is why people work more than required and why work is a refuge to many people, especially for working mothers who want to escape from a demanding family life with emotional stress and lack of recognition. Another reason for this role reversal that Hochschild (1997) stresses is the cultural climate in modern society in which raising children is given low priority, while working long hours and being devoted and dedicated to a career, are looked upon with admiration (Hochschild, 1997).

Hochschild (1997) argues that this role reversal has been at the expense of the working parents families, which generates a new shift of emotional management in order to repair the damages that the inattention to the family members, especially the children's, psychological needs. One way for parents to cope with this is according to her that they rely on the idea or belief that their children need to learn how to be independent.





### 3. METHOD

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*In the following section, we will explain the choice of method used in this study, the selection of respondents, procedure, data collection and instruments used. We will also describe how the data was interpreted and analysed in order to fulfill the thesis purpose. Furthermore we will discuss the thesis reliability and validity, as well as critical and ethical reflections.*

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According to Widerberg (2002) qualitative research aims to investigate the character and traits among a certain phenomenon as opposite to the quantitative research that measures the quantity and context. As was the central was to explain how Volvo IT India can increase gender diversity and the effects an increase might generate, this thesis aimed to investigate and understand their employee's perceptions on gender diversity and their thoughts on why women enter the workforce. Furthermore, Volvo IT India wants to facilitate work life balance for females which is why the thesis also aimed to explore how the employees manage the work and family dilemma from a gender perspective, with an emphasized focus on mothers, as well as investigate what they would like to have in order to achieve a more satisfying work-life balance. We chose a qualitative hermeneutic approach since we wanted to create an understanding of the respondents' thoughts, feelings and actions. Most previous research in this field is done with quantitative approach and by using a quantitative research method, a larger population could have been heard, which would have created a better validity. But as the focus of this thesis was to interpret the individuals own experiences, as well as our limited preconceptions of paid employment in India, the qualitative research method was chosen (Bryman, 2008).

#### 3.1 Selection of Respondents

The respondents consisted of 12 employees at Volvo IT India. They were chosen from three different criteria; women with children, women without children and men with children, and there was a total of four respondents in each category.

In order to fulfill the purpose of this study we chose to have more interviews with women than men. The reason why we chose to interview both men and women with children was to



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understand how it is to manage both work and family life, from a gender perspective. The women without children were chosen to explore their thoughts and feelings about their future career combined with being a mother. Based on this, the respondents were chosen accordingly by an administrative assistant at Volvo IT India. In retrospect, a systematic sample by ourselves would have been better since it would have given us a better spread of positions, age range and background of the respondents.

### **3.2 Instrument and Data Collection**

Both primary and secondary data have been collected for our research. The primary data consists of the twelve interviews that were conducted with employees of Volvo IT India from a selection of three different groups as previously mentioned. The secondary data consists of articles, books, internet searches and Volvo IT India material.

With acceptance from the respondents, the interviews were recorded and transcribed and notes were taken. To gain a deeper understanding of the problem from a hermeneutic point of view, when there was a need for the investigation to understand how respondents interpret and understand their world, and therefore we chose to conduct a qualitative study with interviews. Another object of the interviews is to identify and detect such characterizations of the interviewee perceptions of their life. According to Bryman (2008), qualitative interviews are suitable to use when the purpose is to obtain detailed and robust response without limit or restrict the investigation. He also points out that qualitative interviews provide flexibility and a focus on the interviewees' own views, experiences, thoughts and opinions. Semi-structured interviews were chosen since they according to Hartman (2004) have a high degree of standardization but lower degree of structuring and this approach gave the interviews the freedom needed in order to achieve the purpose of the report. Furthermore semi-structured interviews accepts follow up questions as well as it is possible to immerse in topics that are relevant during the interview.

The interviews lasted for between 35-70 minutes, longer with the respondents who had children, and shorter with the ones who had not. To make sure that the gathered material was



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interpreted in the same way, both of the researchers were present at all of the interviews. One asked the questions and led the interview and the other one took notes and supported the interviewer when needed. Furthermore to insure the interview guide's reliability it was checked by the supervisor at the University of Gothenburg as well as the contact person at Volvo IT India. In addition, a sample interview was held with a respondent which were included in the study. Another thing that affected the reliability in a positive way was that the interview guide in its design was largely standardized but still gave room for spontaneity and reflection. The interview guide was followed regardless of interviewer (Patel & Davidson, 2011). The basic idea was that the interviews for the most part would result in a common response was, with room for other approaches, to give as complete an answer as possible with a view to facilitating and supporting the issues that the study is based on (Patel & Davidson, 2011).

### **3.3 Data Analysis**

We have used an abductive approach and the findings were interpreted from a hermeneutic perspective. The interpretation and analysis of the data collection was done with inspiration from Grounded Theory which is common for analyzing qualitative data (Bryman, 2008). In order to get an overall idea regarding the transcriptions content, they were read several times. Thereafter we encoded the data to find statements and decide which of the themes they could be placed under. For each statement we marked the respective theme that the statement could be placed under in the margin. We used an abductive approach in our interpretation and analysis of the data collection and we found new themes and subthemes when we read and interpret the transcribed data (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 1994).

### **3.4 Validity and Reliability**

Important research criterion's to relate to when measuring the quality of a study is validity and reliability. Validity means to what extent the study measures what it is intended to measure, i.e. how well the derived results answer the research questions. Reliability on the other hand, measures to what extent the results of the study will be the same if it were to be repeated or if it were affected by random factors (Bryman, 2008). Since this study was



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conducted by a qualitative research method it is hard to examine the reliability and the generalizable since it is not intended to measure something statistical, rather it is looking at the respondents' experiences and perceptions in certain areas. The results of this study will most likely vary from occasion since the respondents experiences, life situations, opinions and thoughts are constantly changing.

Validity can to some extent be controlled, for example by creating an interview guide based on objective, thoughtful and well-formulated questions (Bryman, 2008). This is something that was taken into account by a well-developed and defined interview guide that was designed based on the study's purpose.

### **3.7 Critical Reflections**

We chose to restrict ourselves in terms of both method and theory since gender studies and work-family life environment is a large area. When the study was conducted we chose to make it qualitatively. We are aware that the quantitative component of the study could shed light on the purpose of a different dimension and allowed for generalizability in relation to the entire population. The theories that were chosen are some of the largest in the area and they add reliability to the investigation. There is also no external validity since the results cannot be generalized to other social settings and situations (Bryman, 2008). At the end of the interviews, we experienced theoretical saturation, as many of the answers we got were recurrent.

Furthermore, focus groups could have been useful in this investigation, because focus groups are a good way to get information about sensitive topics, and are good for respondents because they can reflect and discuss opinions and topics with other participants (Bryman 2008). Another aspect that may have been crucial to the outcome is the interview guide. It was read by several people and a test interview was conducted but we cannot fully ensure its validity.



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### 3.6 Ethical Reflections

Denscombe (2009) states that it is important to make sure respondents do not suffer any consequences as a result of their participation in a research project. Furthermore it is important to inform the respondent about the purpose of the study as well as how the results will be used. Since the interviews was booked through an administrative assistant at the company, we were not able to guarantee the respondents complete anonymity, but we assured them that it would not be possible to identify them through this study which is why we are not able to give a more descriptive introduction of the respondents. All of the respondents have been informed and conformed to these circumstances.

Furthermore we are aware of the risk of western bias since most of the previous research and theories in this field are written in and studied in a western or European context from a western feminist perspective. Post colonialism feminists criticise western feminist researchers' construction of a homogenous, global perception of female identity without consideration of different global social structures. The notion that all women's interests are identical must, according to postcolonial feminists, be abandoned. It should instead be recognised that global power hierarchies, over- subordinates and inclusion- exclusion mechanisms creates power differences between different groups of women. Postcolonial feminists argue that the western middle class feminists must reflect their position in an intersectional perspective in order to break down the global power structures which they claim to do (Lykke, 2009). Due to fact that most studies in this field are based on western research we decided to use since it is applicable and relevant to the findings of our study. We are aware of the criticism and we have reflected on our own background and preconceptions before and during this thesis writing, in order to avoid the creations of a homogenous global female identity and compare our respondents to it. With a hermeneutic approach we tried to be as objective as possible and avoid ethnocentrism which may occur when entering and studying new cultures.

Furthermore, we are aware of the possibility of us writing this thesis for the University of Gothenburg as well as for Volvo IT India and with a Minor Field Study scholarship from Sida



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might cloud and influence our judgment. However, we have focused on being objective and write this thesis to fulfill its main purpose; to highlight the work-family dilemma in India.

## 4. Analysis

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*In the following section, the findings will be analysed and discussed in order to understand the respondents' views and thought regarding gender diversity and how they cope with managing both work and family life and what they would like to have in order to achieve a more satisfying work-life. The findings will be combined with what previous researchers and theories suggest as well as an analysis.*

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### 4.1 Gender Diversity at Volvo IT India

All of the respondents had the same or a similar view of what gender diversity is which meant; equal opportunities for both men and females in the organisation and that no one should be given special privileges just because they belong to a specific gender. Several of the respondents also points out the importance of a broader perspective of diversity. According to them diversity should also contain people with various religions, colour, race and origin. One of the female respondents mentions the society's benefits of an increase gender diverse work force, if more females are working, the opportunities for females in general will increase. Along with this she believes that the society's economy will benefit with more people being able to work. Another respondent sees the positive outcomes of all the diversity aspects "Diversity of people drives diversity of thought and that drives innovation and that include all kind of diversity" Woman without children.

Several of the respondents stress the importance of treating everyone the same and one female respondent specifies that they; "want to be equal, not special" Woman with children. She feels that gender diversity in the organisation is important as long as no one gets any special privileges just because they belong to a specific gender. She wants the same opportunities and career choices as the men. This is consistent with the study by Glans (2010) in which it was stated that gender diversity is achieved when all of the employees can access and enjoy the



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same benefits, regardless of gender. According to Glans (2010) its meaning is to not provide benefits to either of the sexes, but instead making sure that they are treated equally.

Most of the respondents have the impression that males and females tend to think differently which is why having gender diversity is beneficial for the organisation. By combining the different mind-sets of the genders, they feel that the organisation has a lot to gain. It is very important for the organisation to have different opinions, thought processes, agendas and angles. One woman with children believes that women are seen as more loyal and less ambitious and another says that females are more trustworthy. According to Connell (1996), this perception that the different genders are possessing different traits, is one of the reasons why gender inequality exists as it is only created by the society's expectations upon how a person should act based upon their gender. Furthermore, one of the male respondents has the perception that certain kinds of jobs require diverse teams as he believes that females, in general, prefers more repetitive work and that men are faster, better multi-taskers as well as better at decision making. Hirdman (1988) claims that this mind-set is exactly what maintains a sequential gender system, where the sexes are viewed as differences and that it protects the male superiority.

I think it's important it brings you know different perspective to the work environment you try to understand other how other the female feel and then what kind of challenges they have how do they manage both from home as well as the professional side both as personal and as career so it is good perspective I would say.

Male with children

The quote from another of the male respondents circulates some of the difficulties of being a working woman in India since most of the household chores are assigned to the females. They have to combine their paid work with the household work which can be very challenging since they are expected to contribute full time at both work and at home.

One of the male employees states that females are harder workers, which can be connected to Kanter's theory (1977) which discusses the effects of being part of a minority group in an



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organisation. According to Kanter (1977) this creates a visibility and attention that can generate into the women getting the feeling that they have to be just as good, or better, than the men since everything they do is noticeable whereas the men can hide behind others. Many of the female respondents seemed to be very ambitious and appeared to be constantly trying to improve themselves whereas the men seemed more at ease with their contributions to work. One female respondent even explicitly said that she has to work harder than the men in order to get the same recognition. This is also consistent with Hochschild's (1997) theories that women can be unwilling to reduce work hours, even though the organisation offers flexible work options, since they are more visible and therefore it is easier to examine their contributions to work. As discussed above, the differences between the genders can according to Kanter (1977) be exaggerated to preserve the gender systems and can also be the reasons for why females are sometimes withdrawn from informal meetings. The respondents felt that from an organisational viewpoint it was ok to not attend the late night informal gatherings, one respondent had even made this very clear in her job interview where she said;

I don't think I will be able to join an organization that is late night parties and all that but maybe as woman I won't be able to do it, I would like to do it but I will not be able to do it. And it was taken in a very nice way, they said yeah it's fine, we all have the same problem so you don't have to worry about that.

Woman with children

She felt that it was accepted and understood by the organisation but it could, according to her, still lead to exclusion if the women are not to attend these assemblies as it means that they will not be able to include in the information exchange.

## **4.2 Managing the Work-Family Dilemma**

Most of the respondents express that they would like to have a more satisfying balance between work and family life. According to Clark (2000) work-life balance is "satisfaction and good functioning at work and at home, with a minimum of role conflict" (p.751). Clark (2000) points out that satisfying work-life balance is important for many different reasons, psychological well-being being one of them. Most of the respondents express that they are





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pleased with their family and work situation but that they do not experience a completely successful balance between work and family life. That might, with regards to what Clark (2000) mentions, generate different negative consequences for the respondents.

As previously mentioned, Poelmans (2005) points out that both work and family claim time and energy and that is something that is reflected a lot on in the respondent's statements. Most of the respondents, mainly the females, express that it is not always easy to be able to manage both work and family life. A general consensus is that family and work influence each other in both a negative and positive way and several empirical scholars support that there are two types of conflicts; family-work interface, family influencing work, and work-family interface, work influencing family (Poelmans, 2005). According to the findings and statements from the respondents most of them seem to experience more work-family interface rather than family-work interface. In contrast to Flisbäck and Lindström (2013) the respondents in this study, both men and women, would like to spend more time at home with their families and spend less time at work.

...if I could get enough time with my son to see, because he has now started to complaining when I travel he says you are not there, so you know I'll do what I want and not you are not involved you were not there so he says he's already making such statements so that makes me a little guilty that I'm not there with him so if I could have enough time with him at least say 4 to 5 hours of quality time that we could spend with each other and not completely tired and not you know crashing when I go home if I had that that would be perfect.

Woman with children

In their study, Flisbäck and Lindström (2013) explain this with regards to the artist's high commitment to their work, which has also been accentuated by the respondents of this study. Several of the respondents at Volvo IT India work CET hours which means that they arrive home late and that they do not have a lot of time to spend with their families. The findings showed that the family is very important to the respondents and always have the first priority.



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Numerous of the respondents informed that Volvo IT India provides work from home options up to five days per calendar month that can facilitate for a better work-life balance. This consists with Hochschild's (1997) concept the Time Bind, where people express that they would like to have more time to spend at home with their families. However, her research indicates that even though people express that they would like to spend more time at home they do not use the family-friendly policies that the company provides, which on the other hand does not completely consist with the respondents' statements due to this investigation. Several of the respondents stress that the family-friendly policies provided at Volvo IT India such as the work from home options unfortunately is not applicable and given to everyone to the same extent. But the respondents do express in agreement with Hochschild's (1997) research that even though they all would like to have more time at home they still put in more hours than the company requires. For example one of the male respondents stated that he most of the time works approximately eighteen or twenty hours a day even though the employees at Volvo IT India are required to work nine and a half hours a day. That respondent was quite extreme, however, most of the respondents pointed out that they continue to work once they reach home;

I would say I'm a very hard worker so I don't restrict myself to only office hours but I work almost 45 hours but many times I go home and I at least work for 4 or 5 hours extra [...] Because it comes, I don't think anyone [...] would ask you to work at home but it comes with your responsibility.

Male with children

One explanation for that might be the fact that their devotion to work and career focus is admired higher in the modern society than raising children in the modern society as Hochschild (1997) argues. However, this research was conducted in the USA and the cultural differences between USA and India might be the reason why the tendency of prioritizing work over home like the people in her studies did differs from what the respondents in this investigation express.



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Most of the women who have children mentions that their life priorities changed after they got their first child. Previously they focused mainly on their career but since their children were born, they are the ones who have the first priority under almost all circumstances. The younger females who do not have any children yet, all have similar thoughts on how their life is going to change when they have children and are of the understanding that there might have to be some changes in their current work situation such as working less hours etcetera to be able to manage. According to several of the female respondents their career focus tends to decrease once they have a child, at least when the child is younger. That is mainly, according to the respondents, due to the fact that when the child is younger they are more dependent on their mother for nurturing, food and so on. Most of the female respondents who have children feel that having small children is very time consuming, generates a lot of pressure and responsibility but at the same time an amazing experience. Because of the increased responsibilities and duties that comes with having small children was one major reason why the respondents career focus decreased when their children where young. However, the career focus tends to increase again once the children are older and are more independent as they do not need as much attention and attending. The male respondents on the other hand did not express that their life plans and priorities changed once they had their child/children at least not that having a child had any effect on their work situation.

The respondents points out that in India, in most families, the tradition is that the women have almost all the responsibility in terms of household chores and taking care of the children, and that the men are the family providers. That might be one reason why the men did not express that having children had any major effect on their work. Another fact that might be of interest and a possible answer to this is that the male respondents wives all stayed at home and took care of the children when they were young so the men could continue to focus on work.

Work-family interface is something that could be understood from the interviews that all of the respondents experienced, but it emerged that the females experience higher degrees of both work-family interface and family-work interface. Why is that? One explanation could be that gender differences in work-family conflicts have been found and supported by several researchers, with women more often reporting greater role conflicts than men. These



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differences are generally argued to reflect gender differences in responsibilities and roles rather than sex differences. (Cleary & Mechanic, 1983; Holahan & Gilbert, 1979; Crouter, 1984). Another possible explanation could be that men and women experience the work and family spheres different and hence men express a more satisfying work-life balance.

The traditional roles for men and women in India described by the respondents consist with what Barnett (1993) mentions as the core roles for women and for men. The female respondents who have participated in this investigation have multiple roles, for example they have the role of being a woman, a wife, a paid employee and some of them also have the role of being a mother. According to Role Theory there are different demands that are associated with each given role in terms of responsibilities, commitments, duties, expectations and requirements (Netemeyer, Boles & McMurrian, 1996). As previously mentioned there are still unanswered questions on whether having multiple roles generates positive or negative impact on the individual (Barnett, 1993; Nordenmark, 2002).

The female respondents seem to enjoy having different roles, in this case being a woman, employee and for some a mother, at the same time based on several reasons, even though they to a different extent feel that managing different roles sometimes can be hard. Several researches have investigated possible factors that might be contributors to work-family conflicts or to work-family gains and various factors have been suggested. Traditionally there are two hypotheses that address the issue of having multiple roles; the Scarcity Hypothesis and the Expansion Hypothesis (Goode, 1960; Marks, 1977; Sieber 1974).

#### **4.2.1 Challenges of having multiple roles**

Most of the male respondents talked about challenges that women can face when they enter the workforce and how important it is for managers and companies to understand these challenges and help them to the extent that is possible. One male formulated it like this:

...there are both pros and cons when it comes to women working, from an Indian perspective there sometimes are certain challenges which you need to understand, often



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the females go along with their husbands if they are for e.g. moving to another city because of work, family comes first.

Male with children

As Barnett (1993) argues, for females, the core role is at home with the family, which is also the reality for most of the respondents, and this is presumed to require total energy and allegiance. Hence the challenges for the females in India are also the fact that they are not entitled to having the choice of doing as they like as they are assumed to follow their husband. The scarcity hypothesis argues that the tension that can be created while having multiple roles, such as being a mother and an employee, can result in two different ways. The first is by demanding as much as possible and performing as little as possible and the second possibility is to avoid certain roles in order to focus more on others. In the case of this study, the results show neither of these tendencies. The female respondents in this study are perceived as very hard working employees and are at the same time spending a lot of time and effort on their children. But as several of the respondents express that their time is limited, the area where they have to cut back is on themselves. The sense is that they do not tend to spend almost any time on personal focus. One of the respondents had had to make a meticulously schedule for every morning which was the only way for her to find 30 minutes of personal time throughout the day;

But each and every minute is planned and jampacked. There's nothing like left out you know. [...] I have an alarm in my mobile for every half an hour in the morning. Because I know if the alarm rings I know what I should do, that's the way I have done it in the morning, [...] Evenings are a little bit better. Saturdays and Sundays are once again you have to get ready for the week things [...] I started realizing that I become worse on weekends. Weekdays are better [...] and at least I have a chance to sit when I come to office, I can relax but Saturdays and Sundays are horrible, I don't even get a minute and sit. When I want to go and sit something comes up and I start running towards that...

Woman with children

This consists with Hochschild's (1997) research that argues that home has become more stressful and that the workplace offers some peace. However, as previously mentioned even



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though much research on emotional well-being and on multiple roles supports this hypothesis, just like much of the findings of this study show, there are also research that shows that both men and women with multiple roles experience role conflict or role overload ( Tiedje et.al. 1990; Holahan & Gilbert, 1979).

Furthermore, one commonality regardless of culture is that when someone takes on multiple roles they will, to different extent, experience role conflicts (Poelmans, 2005). So even though the respondents' points out many positive aspects of engaging in different roles, which will be addressed later on, they also express the challenge of managing and balancing different roles and the different demands that come with each role. According to the scarcity hypothesis all individuals have limited energy and time and therefore engaging in different roles can create tension between the competing demands of each role and the negative consequences for the individuals' health and well-being (Goode, 1960; Slater, 1963). The main question is therefore not as to why the women are working, instead one can ask why they chose to work even in the cases where they have the possibility to stay at home?

#### **4.2.2 Benefits of having multiple roles**

As written in the introduction, there are not very many women in India participating in paid work so the question was asked as to why the female respondents joined the workforce essentially. Most of the respondents said that they as women are capable of doing so much more than to just stay at home and take care of the children and the house. So why shouldn't they? According to the respondents, regardless of gender, they believe that it is good for women to work and hence take on yet another role. The main reasons that almost all of them mention, is the fact that women become more independent in many senses, they get more confident and get a broader perspective on life and what is happening around them. One respondent express her option on why people should work regardless of gender like this:

I think in general to be able to reach you full potential as a human being regardless of your gender I think you should be able to have an opportunity to do whatever you really want to do. And finance of course is a bi-product of that so yeah, I think it's a bit sad if



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someone still thinks in this day and age if women has to be restricted to just cooking and household chores. I think it's just a bit sad because they have much more talent than that.

Woman with children

Another respondent expresses her feelings about women working like this:

Women get independence, financial independence, you get more confident if your life doesn't revolve around your husband, good to have our own focus and have goals.

Woman without children

One aspect worth mentioning, that a couple of the respondents points out, is the fact that work is voted as a sign of intelligence and that working gives women broader views and opportunities so they can explore their own ideas and contribute to the workforce and society as a whole. One of the male respondents believes that women's thinking process will be different when they start working and that they can bring different perspectives than men. The same respondent also said that he thinks that there are a lot that men can learn from successful females who are able to manage both family and work. This aspect was also mentioned by another woman with children "Managing everything at home and work means she is going to be a great multi-tasker. Women put in a lot more effort."

A conclusion that can be drawn from this is that participating in the workforce gives the females a sense of belonging in the society and even though they are hardworking and successful they first and foremost see themselves as mothers as is also suggested by Barnett (1993).

For the female respondents it was always their plan to have multiple roles such as being a mother, a wife and an employee. It was clear to all the female respondents that they wanted to study and work and that they as women are capable of doing so much more than taking care of their families and housework. A majority among the females points out the financial and independent aspects that work provides. One respondent with children concludes her thoughts on why she decided to start working:



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Basically I mean the same mentality that you reach your education and you want your education to be put forward and to see it's a women in a work area, financial stability for yourself and your family.

Woman with children

Most of the respondents come from families where their mothers were house-wives but they were still encouraged to get an education and start working. That might be because their mothers did not want the same thing for their daughter and instead see that they were able to provide for themselves and not be dependent on someone else as they were. However some of the respondents were brought up in families where women normally choose stay at home and not go for an education or work these females had to struggle to convince their families on how important work and education was for them. Another woman with children believes that it is important to live a good life, to explore a platform where you can live a rich life and be able to balance both family life and also invest your time in an area that you are good in. Furthermore a female respondent without children points out that one of the advantages of working is that you know what is happening in the outside world.

Several of the statements from the respondents indicate that having multiple roles is a gratitude for them in agreement with what the expansion theory argues. The reasons why the female respondents decided to start working essentially and why some of them also wanted to return to work after maternity leave also indicate and agree with the expansion theory. For example the expansion hypothesis suggest that having multiple roles can increase role balance and generate greater access to different resources such as more social support and financial rewards like the respondents also points out. The hypothesis also argues that engaging in several roles can generate both psychological and physical health benefits. Furthermore the hypothesis argues that individuals are capable of having multiple roles and that the benefits that it generates can compensate the downsides (Marks, 1977; Seiber, 1974). So according to the respondents they all believe that for women to have multiple roles, in this case being a working woman, wife and for some mothers because it generates positive consequences for them, for their families and for the society. All of the reasons why they all believe that it is





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good for women to work support the expansion theory. Mainly in the sense that the respondents express that they have or that they believe that those who have multiple roles experience high job-satisfaction, higher self-esteem and more confident as previously mentioned (Thoits, 1963; Sieber 1974).

### **4.3 Work and Family, two different spheres**

As previously mentioned it appears as if though most of the respondents experience both work-family interface and family-work interface, and that a majority of the women express higher degrees of the first one (Poelmans, 2005). Why is that? According to Clark (2000) people continuously cross borders between work and family life spheres. The spheres differ in culture, purpose, rules, behaviour and how task should be accomplished. During the interviews both spheres were addressed and according to the respondents' statements it appeared that the women express to have more difficulty in balancing and smoothly cross between the borders without thinking about for example how their child is doing in school when she is at work.

For the male respondents it seems as if though their borders between work and family life are stronger and that their two spheres are more culturally different and that can, according to what Clark (2000) stresses, be one of the reasons why they express to have a more satisfying work-life balance than the women. The findings of this study indicate that the women express lower work-life balance satisfaction than the men do, and it might be to the fact that they have more pressure on them within their different spheres and roles. For example as previously mentioned, in India traditionally women have almost all the responsibility when it comes to taking care of the children, the cooking, cleaning. Furthermore most of the females with children mentions that their life priorities changed after they got their first child, previously they focused mainly on their career but since their children were born they have first priority under almost all circumstances. This change in terms of life priorities was not mentioned by the males.

Clark (2000) argues that psychological borders are created by the individuals and define behaviours, emotions and thinking patterns, physical borders define where the different sphere



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acceptable behaviour occurs and the temporal borders define when the different spheres shift. Most of the females pointed out that not only did their life priorities change, or were believed to change, when their first baby was born, also the work amount at home increased a lot and most of them had to make some adjustments in terms of spending more time at home and less at work. Before they had their children for most of them work had the highest priority in most situations but once they had their child that changed now they have first priority under almost all circumstances. One of them point out that her career focus decreased after having her children and that now she wants to focus on her children, on what is next in life for them. Furthermore, several of them express that having children drastically changed and increased their responsibility and tasks at home such as care for and nurture for their children, feed them, clean up after them etcetera. To be able to have time to manage all these tasks, most of them decreased the extra amount of time that they spent on work outside of office hours. Especially one of them stated that she used to work from home at nights but now she has decided not to open her laptop once she gets home. This makes her feel as if she is spending more time at home in the evenings.

The females with children also stated that when they returned to work after their maternity leave their own, as well as others expectations on them increased at work. Most of them seemed very happy to get back into the corporate stream again but that it was emotional to leave the baby at home, especially since Volvo IT India, only provides three months of maternity leave in accordance with the Indian parental leave laws.

...there are times when I think oh I am missing out so much of my sons growth and I should just quit and sit at home and there are times when I have very clear career goals about my career [...] and you know I have ambition so I'm suddenly switching between these two things and there are times when I'm traveling and I really miss my son when my husband says that a he did this today he said this today and I should have been there you know enjoy all these things there are ups and downs...

Woman with children



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The female respondents also pointed out challenges of returning to work, one of them mentioned that some of the men did not believe that she would be able to handle the pressure and the stress of returning to work.

And I feel that oh no, this is not for you sometime when a male colleague come in so then you have to work harder as a women who comes back in after maternity leave. I feel she has to work at least twice or trice more to prove to all these guys that motherhood hasn't changed my ability to perform. I don't know why men think like that, many men think like that.

Woman with children

One of them did not make any adjustment in her work life after she had her child but she did get some snide remarks from male colleagues because she was going home early although she had put in the required amount of hours. Furthermore, another respondent mentioned the when she got her baby she had more pressure on being back at home at a certain time in order to take care of her responsibilities at home. That combined with her leaving at a certain time and not being able to work overtime was according to her not always welcomed or acceptable by her colleagues.

...it creates a kind of unsatisfactory feeling within the team when some urgent work has to be done and people who don't have other responsibilities can stretch and people who live close by can stretch but I can't stretch I have to be home...

Woman with children

So for the female respondents with children it seems as if both the family sphere and the work sphere changed after they had children, the work load and pressure for them to perform well both at home and at work increased.

According to Clark (2000) the borders between the two spheres usually consist of three types; psychological, physical and temporal borders. It appears that all three types of borders, psychological, physical and temporal, between work and family life is expressed to be more difficult to separate and balance for the females than the men. As previously mentioned one



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reason why the men does not express as much challenges of managing and being able to balance work and family life as the women does might due to the fact that their statement indicate that their two spheres are more culturally different and the borders between them stronger (Clark, 2000). For the women the two spheres are culturally different and their roles and duties in each differ, but however for the women the borders do not seem as strong as the men, especially not the psychological and the temporal as previously mentioned. According to the border theory achieving a satisfying work-life balance is facilitated when work and family spheres either are, as they are for the male respondents, culturally different and when the borders are strong or when the two spheres are culturally similar and flexible (Clark, 2000). If that is correct then that might be one explanation why the female respondents express more challenges since their statements indicate that their borders are more flexible and their spheres culturally different. However one interesting fact is that the women, even though they mention many challenges of being able to manage both work and family life they also express that they are pleased with both their current work situation and family situation which consists with Gerson (2002). So just because they sometimes find it hard to balance the two spheres does not mean that they are unsatisfied within each sphere. For example one respondent believes if you can manage to have a good balance between work and home life it makes sense to continue working after maternity leave and she also pointed out that she loves her job and what she is doing; “If you have a good enough balance it makes sense to stay and continue but more than that for me I think more than everything else I love my job I love doing what I do” (Woman with children).

Several of the respondents, both men and women, pointed out that they are very pleased with their current work situation and they enjoy working for Volvo IT India for many reasons. They believe that the organisation has a good professional work culture that emphasizes on work-life balance and that it is a people centric organisation which is needed to decrease the work-family conflict (Allard, 2007). Furthermore, every respondent expressed that their family is very valuable, important and when they spoke about their family with a sense of pride and joy in their voices. This consists with another aspect that Clark (2000) also points out; that a sense of harmony in life, satisfaction and high self-esteem are indicators of a successful balance between work and family life.



#### 4.4 Flexibility in organisations

As is studied by Allard (2007), flexibility in organisations may cause both positive and negative outcomes. The respondents who participated in this study were all of the opinion that flexibility was crucial for them in order to create an improved work life balance and facilitate the complexities of caring for a family while working full time. Volvo IT India's policies offer five days a month work from home option, but according to the respondents the opportunity to use this policy varied according to which manager the employee has. Some managers were very understanding and allowed more flexibility than the policies offered whereas for others it was hard to even use the five allowed days. Allard (2007) also mentions the negative aspect of flexibility as it can be hard for managers to supervise the employees and to control if they are in fact working when they are at home. From the respondents it was clear that this was something that was not recognised as they experienced that they worked more efficiently and for longer amounts of time when they stayed at home, since there were less distractions. Furthermore, they experienced that they saved a lot of time of commuting which they instead could spend on their assignments and tasks leaving them with more time to spend with their families. Another respondent also enjoyed the possibility of working from home but had to be very clear to her husband that she was "working from home, not at home", as he was of the impression that she at the same time could manage some of the household chores or taking care of the children. One of the respondents was in favour of having flex time, but was at the same time arguing for the difficulties it could cause such as the supervision and the ability to make sure that the work was actually done. The respondent was of the opinion that Volvo IT India should still have the flexible options, but that it should be limited. However, another respondent expresses the trust, but points out that the company has to provide a good infrastructure to make the work from home policy applicable

...give them good infrastructure so that they can work from home I think also sort of trust them when work from home yes they really are able to, they will be they will take the responsibility and they will deliver so you don't have to do micro-management for them.

Male with children



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As is also stated by Allard (2007), the flexibility options for the employees can vary depending on the manager even though policies exist. This is something that has been very clear in the interviews. Some has had the possibility to have very generous flexibility opportunities and others have had difficulties using the five days that they are entitled to. A conclusion of this is that the policies are interpreted in different ways by the managers which lead to an injustice in the usage and unequal opportunities for the employees. Allard (2007) also suggests that men have more flexibility than women, which is not the case in this study since both the men and female respondents express that this policy is generally used mostly by the women and more specifically, the mothers, which can be explained by the different cultures in Sweden and India. Most of the respondents pointed out that in India in general, the household chores are the female's responsibility. This means that even if both the man and the female are working full time, it is still the females' duty to take care of everything at the home and the children. This may result in the females needing more flexible work options to be able to manage these things and hence, she will be the one to use the work from home opportunity and flexible work timings.

When the female respondents were asked what could facilitate their work family balance as well as their transition back from and to maternity leave, one of the main concerns were that they wanted the organisation to improve and develop the policies and making them applicable to all of the employees, as stated before but worth repeating is that they wanted to be treated equally, not specially. Another thing that all of the respondents wished for was to have the ability to extend their maternity leave. Furthermore, the concerns that came mainly from the females who had not yet had children, about the affects a child would have on their career, as well as the other way around, the affects a career would have on their children and family can be connected to Kanters (1977) theory regarding mentors in the organisation in order to support the female employees so that they do not end up in "dead end works". The mentors can support and encourage the females in a man dominated work force.



## 5. Conclusions

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*The conclusions will provide an answer to the purpose of this thesis, which was to investigate and understand Volvo IT India's employee's perceptions on gender diversity and their thoughts on why women enter the workforce. The thesis also aimed to explore how the employees manage the work and family dilemma from a gender perspective, with an emphasized focus on mothers. Furthermore the purpose was to develop a broader perspective on women's work life situation, which will lead to a better understanding of their situation and as well, facilitate for future research in this field. Hence the study will also benefit for the human resource field as well as women working in India.*

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According to the findings, gender diversity leads to productivity and creates innovation and the organisation has a lot to gain from having a diverse workforce. By combining different thoughts, skills, experiences and mind-sets the organisation will according to the respondents, develop increased leadership skills and conclude in a better work environment for the employees. By being part of a minority group in the organisation, the female respondents feel that they have to achieve and perform better than the men in order to stand out and be visible. This creates another issue for the organisation as it is important to not only have gender diversity, but to also have structures of how to manage the aspects of having a gender diverse work force in order to prevent situations like this.

Regarding the respondents' personal perceptions of the work-family dilemma, the majority of the respondents express that they are pleased with both their family situation and their current work situation. However, they would all like to have a more satisfying balance between the two spheres and to be able to spend more time at home and less at work. Work-family interface is something that all of the respondents face, but it emerged that the females experience higher degrees of both work-family interface and vice versa. This might be due to the fact that the female respondents express more role conflicts than men and /or because the respondents experience the two spheres differently, in terms of responsibilities, duties, commitments, expectations and requirements.

Even though the respondents' points out many positive aspects of engaging in different roles, they also express the challenge of managing and balancing different roles and the different



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demands that come with each role. According to the respondents, regardless of gender, they believe that it is good for women to work and hence take on yet another role. Work is a sign of intelligence and work gives the females independence, broader perspectives and opportunities so they can explore their own ideas and contribute to the workforce and society as a whole.

For the female respondents with children, both the family sphere and the work sphere changed after they had children, the work load and pressure for them to perform well both at home and at work increased. Although the most of them were happy to be back in the corporate stream, they all felt that it was hard to leave their babies back home. All three types of borders; psychological, physical and temporal, between work and family life is expressed to be more difficult for the females to separate and balance than the men. One explanation why the female respondents express more challenges is because their statements indicate that their borders are more flexible and their spheres culturally different. So just because the females sometimes find it hard to balance the two spheres does not mean that they are unsatisfied within each sphere. Most of the respondents express that having multiple roles is a gratitude for them and the benefits that it generates compensates the downsides in line with what the expansion theory argues.

In order for Volvo IT India to benefit from, as well as increase their gender diversity in the organisation and at the same time facilitates the work-family dilemma for their employees, mainly the working mothers, there has been some suggestions from their employees. To create a more satisfying work-life balance, decrease gender inequalities and create more equal opportunities for everyone in the organisation the respondents would like to see more flexible work options, such as work from home, part time work, flexible timings etcetera. This would facilitate for them to manage the work-family dilemma and have better control over their life-choices. The respondents enjoy working at Volvo IT India since they experience that the company provide a good work environment, but the flexibility and the policies that the company provide today are interpreted and used differently among the managers. This could be implemented better by the organisation and the managers through awareness on the importance of diversity and equality in order to treat all the employees in an equal sense.





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In conclusion, today the positive aspects of engaging in multiple roles compensates the downsides, but for that to continue and in order to achieve a more satisfying work-life balance for the employees at Volvo IT India we recommend that they address these issues and requests from their employees. If the employees are not given more control and the flexibility that they need to manage the work-family dilemma, it can generate negative consequences for the employees. Therefore, we believe that this thesis can be used as a foundation for Volvo IT India's future diversity initiative in order to help them in their journey to increase their gender diversity and become a more family friendly organisation. Furthermore, as this thesis has taken on a qualitative approach unlike many of the previous studies, it contributes to the expansion of studies regarding the work-family dilemma. It also gives a rare and inspiring view of employees of a different culture than the one of Sweden, even though the concerns and apprehensions are somewhat similar. From a HR point of view it is interesting to compare these findings to studies conducted in other countries in order to create a greater intercultural understanding.

And last but not least, with this thesis we hope to be able to contribute, even in the smallest amount possible, to achieve the third millennium goal which is to promote gender equality and empower women, especially in India where the participating of women in the paid work force is so low.

## **6. Future Research**

As previously mentioned there are still unanswered questions whether engaging in multiple social roles generates positive or negative impact on the individual (Barnett, 1993; Nordenmark, 2002). Our study has addressed this question and according to our findings the respondents express that engaging in multiple roles is beneficial for them in many aspects. But we would like to encourage future researchers, especially within the HR field, to continue to investigate this area. Preferably in Eastern Countries through a postcolonial perspective since most of the previous research in this field is conducted and studied in and by researchers from Western Countries. Furthermore, we believe that more qualitative research is needed since it regards individuals' perceptions in contrast to previous research, which is mainly



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quantitative. We also believe that it would be interesting to conduct comparative studies with people in other companies, sectors and from other backgrounds to investigate and understand the work-family dilemma for the population of India from a broader perspective.

This thesis addresses the work-family dilemma, the benefits of having a more gender diverse workplace and why women, according to our respondents, join the workforce. By encouraging and supporting females to start working and facilitate for them to balance both work and family life we believe, as previously mentioned, that it would benefit women in India as well as India as a country by bring more people into the workforce. But by encouraging and increasing gender diversity in the workforce in India another dilemma emerges and would be interesting to explore; when women join the workforce does India as a country have the social structure to manage the tasks that women nowadays do? Such as caring for children and aging parents.

Another aspect that we have come across in our thesis writing is that there is a tendency among the people in the workforce of India, according to our respondents, to work more than the company requires and that many people do not use the leave that they are entitled for. It would be interesting to understand why that is? And what consequences it might generate? We believe that equality is something that has be implemented and founded in people's mindsets and values and that this has to start at home, within the family. So in order for companies to have more gender diversity and more equality within the organisations we think that more research has to be done in India with focus on equality within families.



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## APPENDIX 1

### Interview guide – Female with children who have returned to work

Researchers: Sara Windrup and Jenny Fransson

Name of respondent:

#### 1. General background information:

- 1.1 How old are you?
- 1.2 What is your relationship status?
- 1.3. How many children do you have?
  - 1.3.1 What are their ages?
  - 1.3.2 Do you want/plan on having more children? Why/Why not?  
(1.3.3 Does your children have the same father?)
- 1.4. How many parental leave periods have you had and how long did they last?
- 1.5. Were your pregnancies planned?

#### 2. General work situation

- 2.1. What is your present occupation and place of employment?
  - 2.1.1 How long have you had this position?
  - 2.1.2 Number of years in the organisation?
  - 2.1.3 What motivated you to start working at Volvo IT India?
- 2.2 In short, what are your previous work experiences?
- 2.3. What were your key factors and motivation to start working? Essentially?
- 2.4. What are your thoughts about the responsibilities you hold with your current job?
  - 2.4.1 How many hours per week do you usually work?
  - 2.4.2 How many hours per week did you work previous to your pregnancy/ies?
- 2.5. What is your yearly salary?
- 2.6. What is your partners present occupation, education and income?

#### 3. Personal values, culture and family profile

- 3.1. Can you tell us about your family situation and background?
- 3.2. Can you recall your decision-making process about having your first child? What major factors did you consider (if any)? Were there any differences with the second (or third) child?
- 3.3. Can you describe your situation regarding childcare today?
  - 3.3.1 Has anyone been involved in helping to take care of your child/ren? How? Who?
- 3.4. In terms of domestic work, what is your household dynamic like now, as compared to before you had a child? How was the division of tasks decided upon?
- 3.5. Do you have any special responsibilities in your private life outside of work?
  - 3.5.1 If yes, did this influence your choice of returning to work?

#### 4. Gender diversity

- 4.1 How would you define gender diversity?
- 4.2 What are your personal thoughts about gender diversity?





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- 4.3 Why do you think that Volvo It wants to focus on gender diversity?
- 4.4 How do you think your employer defines gender diversity?
- 4.5 Have you noticed any increased focus on gender diversity within the organisation in your daily work? If yes, please exemplify?

**5. The respondents regards about women and work**

- 5.1. What are your thoughts, generally, about women working? (Exemplify)
- 5.2 How do you see yourself and your career goals?
- 5.3 Have you noticed any changes in terms of life priorities since you first entered the workforce?
- 5.4 Can you describe your life plan in terms of working and having children?
- 5.5. Could you describe how you manage your time with regards to work and home life?
- 5.6 What, according to you, would be a satisfactory balance between work and family/home life?
  - 5.6.1 How close to achieving this balance are you today?
  - 5.6.2. What would it take to achieve that balance for you? What could facilitate it?

**6. Working as a mother, maternity leave, the transition**

- 6.1. Why did you decide to return to work after maternity leave?
- 6.2. What factors influenced your choice to return to work after you became a mother?
- 6.3 Could you describe your family's reactions and thoughts about your decision to return to work.
- 6.4. What were your thoughts and feelings about going from work to maternity leave?
- 6.5. What were your thoughts and feelings about coming back to work after maternity leave?
- 6.6. Could you describe the transition from maternity leave back to work?
  - 6.6.1 Please describe what was particularly difficult/easy?
  - 6.6.2 Adjustments in work schedule, hours, and home schedule that you had to make?
- 6.7. When you returned to work, did you have the impression that you were treated any differently, as a result of your maternity leave?
- 6.8 What were the biggest advantages/disadvantages of being away from work during your maternity leave?

**If they are on parental leave for at least the second time:**

- 6.9 Has it become easier or more difficult to get back to work after parental leave? In what way? (Exemplify)

**7. The organisations role**

- 7.1. How do you think your employer regards working mothers?
  - 7.1.1 How is this noticeable? Where do you think that impression comes from? Can you remember a special occasion/situation when this occurred?
- 7.2. How do you think your employer regards parental leave?
  - (7.2.1 How is this noticeable? Where do you think that impression comes from? Can you remember a special occasion/situation when this occurred?)
- 7.3. Can you tell us about your employer's policies on parental leave?



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- 7.3.1 How/where/when did you find out about these?
- 7.3.2 How adapted to your personal situation would you say these policies are?
- 7.4. Does your workplace have family-friendly policies?
  - 7.4.1 If yes, can you name them?
  - 7.4.2 If yes, how suited to your life situation are they?
- 7.5. What role did the company play in your transition to and back from maternity leave?
  - 7.5.1 Did they do anything to facilitate the transition?
- 7.6 What do you believe are the advantages/disadvantages of working and raising children when working for/at Volvo IT?
- 7.7. Do you have any suggestions to Volvo IT on how to facilitate for female employees with children working within the organisation?

**8. Working at Volvo IT vs previous workplaces**

- 8.1 Can you please tell us about how they work/worked with gender diversity at your previous workplace/s?

*Any further questions?*

**Thank you for your participation!** Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions or thoughts about the interview or our thesis!



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## APPENDIX 2

### Interview guide – Females without children

Researchers: Sara Windrup and Jenny Fransson

Name of respondent:

#### 1. General background information:

- 1.1 How old are you?
- 1.2 What is your relationship status?

#### 2. General work situation

- 2.1. What is your present occupation and place of employment?
  - 2.1.1 How long have you had this position?
  - 2.1.2 Number of years in the organisation?
  - 2.1.3 What motivated you to start working at Volvo IT?
  - 2.1.4 In short, what are your previous work experiences? Workplaces, employers?
- 2.2. What were your key factors and motivation to start working? Essentially?
  - 2.2.1 How many hours per week do you usually work?
- 2.3. What is your yearly salary?
- 2.4. What is your partners present occupation, education and income?

#### 3. Personal values, culture and family profile

- 3.1. Can you tell us about your family situation and background?
- 3.2. Can tell us about your decision-making process about having children? What would be the major factors for you to consider if you in the future want to have children? (if any)
- 3.3. Can you describe how your situation regarding future childcare is? (if they plan to have children)
  - 3.3.1 Would your friends and family/extended family be involved/can be involved in helping to take care of your child or children?
- 3.4. In terms of domestic work, what is your household dynamic like? How are the tasks divided? How was the division decided upon?
  - 3.4.1 Do you imagine your household dynamic would change if you were ever to have children? How so?
- 3.5. Do you have any special responsibilities in your private life outside of work?

#### 4. Gender diversity

- 4.1 How would you define gender diversity?
- 4.2 What are your personal thoughts about gender diversity?
- 4.3 Why do you think Volvo IT are focusing on gender diversity?
- 4.4 How do you think your employer defines gender diversity?
- 4.5 Have you noticed any increased focus on gender diversity within the organisation in your daily work? If yes, please exemplify?



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**5. The respondents regards about women and work**

- 5.1 What are your thoughts, generally, about women working?
- 5.2. How do you see yourself and your career goals?
- 5.3. Have you noticed any changes in terms of life priorities since you first entered the workforce?
- 5.4 Can you describe your life plan in terms of working and having children?
- 5.5 What, according to you, are the biggest factors in achieving a satisfactory balance between work and home life?
- 5.6 Could you describe how you manage your time with regards to work and home life?
  - 5.6.1 What would facilitate it?

**6. Working as a mother, maternity leave, the transition**

- 6.1. Do you think you would continue to work after you had a child? Would you want to go back to work?
- 6.2 What kind of impact would you imagine having a child would have on your work?
- 6.3 What possible factors do you believe could/would influence your choice to return to work if you become a mother?
- 6.4. Could you describe how think your family would react and think about your decision if you decided to return to work after you became a mother?
- 6.5. Could you describe how you would imagine the transition from maternity leave back to work would be like?
  - 6.5.1 Please describe what you think will be particularly difficult/easy?
  - 6.5.2 Adjustments in work schedule, hours, and home schedule that you can imagine that you would have to make
- 6.6. Do you have the impression that you might be treated any differently, as a result of possible future maternity leave?
- 6.7. What do you think would be the biggest advantages/disadvantages of being away from work if you had children and took maternity or parental leave?

**7. The organisations role**

- 7.1. How do you think your employer regards working mothers?
  - How is this noticeable? Where do you think that impression comes from? Can you remember a special occasion/situation when this occurred?
- 7.2. What do you think your employer regards parental leave?
  - How is this noticeable? Where do you think that impression comes from? Can you remember a special occasion/situation when this occurred?
- 7.3. Can you tell us about your employer's policies on parental leave?
  - 7.3.1 How adapted to your personal situation would you say these policies would be?
- 7.4. Does your workplace have family-friendly policies?
  - 7.4.1 If yes, can you name them?
  - 7.4.2 If yes, how suited to your life situation are they?
- 7.5. What role can you imagine that the company will play in your future transition to and back from maternity leave if you had children?
- 7.6. What do you believe are the advantages/disadvantages of working and raising children when working for/at Volvo IT?



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7.7 Do you have any suggestions to Volvo IT on how to facilitate for female employees with children working within the organisation?

**8. Working at Volvo IT vs. previous workplaces**

8.1. Could you please tell us about how they work/worked with gender diversity at your previous workplace/s?

*Any further questions?*

**Thank you for your participation!** Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions or thoughts about the interview or our thesis!



## APPENDIX 3

### Interview guide – Male

Researcher: Sara Windrup and Jenny Fransson

Name of respondent:

#### 1. General background information

- 1.1 How old are you?
- 1.2 What is your relationship status?
- 1.3. Do you have children?
  - 1.3.1 How many children do you have?
  - 1.3.2 What are their ages?
  - 1.3.3 Do you want/plan on having more children?

#### 2. General work situation

- 2.1 What is your present occupation and place of employment?
  - 2.1.1 How long have you had this position?
  - 2.1.2 Number of years in the organisation?
  - 2.1.3 What motivated you to work at Volvo IT?
- 2.2 In short, what are your previous work experiences?
  - 2.4.1 How many hours per week do you usually work?
  - 2.4.2 How many hours per week did you work before you had your first child?

#### 3. Personal values, culture and family profile

- 3.1. Can you tell us about your family situation and background?
- 3.2. Can you recall your decision-making process about having your first child? What major factors did you consider (if any)? Were there any differences with the second (or third) child?
- 3.3. Can you describe your situation regarding childcare today?
  - 3.3.1 Has/would anyone been involved in helping to take care of your child/ren? How? Who?
- 3.4. In terms of domestic work, what is your household dynamic like now, as compared to before you had a child? How was the division of tasks decided upon?
- 3.5. Do you have any special responsibilities in your private life outside of work?

#### 4. Gender diversity

- 4.1 How would you define gender diversity?
- 4.2 What are your personal thoughts about gender diversity?
- 4.3 Why do you think Volvo IT wants to increase their gender diversity?
- 4.4 How do you think your employer defines gender diversity?
- 4.5 Have you noticed any increased focus on gender diversity within the organisation in your daily work? If yes, please exemplify?



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**5. The respondents regards about women and work**

- 5.1. What are your thoughts, generally, about women working? (Exemplify)
- 5.2 What are your feelings towards working with female co-workers? Both as colleagues and managers e.g. Elaborate. Imagine.
- 5.4 Can you describe your life plan in terms of working and having children?
- 5.5. Could you describe how you manage your time with regards to work and home life?
- 5.6 What, according to you, would be a satisfactory balance between work and family/home life?
  - 5.6.1 How close to this are you today?
  - 5.6.2. What would it take to achieve that balance for you? What could facilitate it?
- 5.7 What impact has having children had on your work situation?

**7. The organisations role**

- 7.1. How do you think your employer (VIT) regards working mothers?
  - 7.1.1 How is this noticeable? Where do you think that impression comes from? Can you remember a special occasion/situation when this occurred? Examples?
- 7.2. How do you think your employer regards parental leave?
  - (7.2.1 How is this noticeable? Where do you think that impression comes from? Can you remember a special occasion/situation when this occurred?)
- 7.3. Can you tell us about your employer's policies on parental leave?
  - 7.3.1 How/where/when did you find out about these?
  - 7.3.2 How adapted to your personal situation would you say these policies are?
- 7.4. Does your workplace have family-friendly policies?
  - 7.4.1 If yes, can you name them?
  - 7.4.2 If yes, how suited to your life situation are they?
- 7.6 What do you believe are the advantages/disadvantages of working and raising children when working for/at Volvo IT?
- 7.7 What do you believe are the biggest advantages/disadvantages of being away from work during maternity leave?
- 7.8 Do you have the impression that females are treated any differently as a result of them coming back from their maternity leave? If yes, exemplify.
- 7.9. Do you have any suggestions to Volvo IT on how they can facilitate for female employees with children working within the organisation?

**8. Working at Volvo IT vs previous workplaces**

- 8.1 Can you please tell us about how they work/worked with gender diversity at your previous workplace/s?

*Any further questions?*

**Thank you for your participation!** Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions or thoughts about the interview or our thesis!