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What are the main factors causing stress and what are the coping strategies for Norwegian subordinates working in non-Norwegian multinational companies in the "white collar" part of the Norwegian petroleum sector?

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EU	European Union
EU-OSHA's	European Agency for Safety and Health at Work
LO	Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions (In Norwegian: Landsorganisasjonen)
MNC	Multinational company
NHO	Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions (In Norwegian: Næringslivets Hovedorganisasjon)
NLIA	Norwegian Labour Inspection Authority (In Norwegian: Arbeidstilsynet)
NPD	Norwegian Petroleum Directorate (In Norwegian: Petroleumsdirektoratet)
PSA	Petroleum Safety Authority (In Norwegian: Petroleumstilsynet)
SRQ	Sub research question. SRQ 1 means Sub research question number one, or alternatively the first sub research question.
SSB	Norwegian Statistical Bureau (In Norwegian: Statistisk Sentralbyrå)

Summary

Stress in the workplace represents a challenge and a cost for the individual, the companies and the society as a whole, and is high on the agenda in many countries, also in Norway. Norwegian society and working life have become increasingly multicultural and multinational, and the petroleum sector is no exception. The aim of the study was to get a deeper understanding of the factors that typically trigger stress working in the white collar part of the petroleum sector. The research question for this study is as follows:

What are the main factors causing stress and what are the coping strategies for Norwegian subordinates working in non-Norwegian MNCs in the "white collar" part of the Norwegian petroleum sector?

A qualitative approach through interviews was selected to address the research question. Six respondents were selected from non-Norwegian multinational companies with headquarters in a country with a large Hofstede's power distance (a measure of inequality) from Norway. Four sub research questions were formulated in order to answer the research question.

Norwegian subordinates working in, and being part of a multicultural work environment in non-Norwegian MNCs in the Norwegian petroleum sector experience stress from a variety of factors. The main conclusion in relation to stress is that there are factors causing stress within the organizational culture, the organizational structure, the multicultural work environment, and related to the job situation.

In relation to the organizational culture and structure, both the dominant culture and the hierarchical structure in the MNCs were mentioned as factors causing stress among the respondents. The multicultural work environment was also a cause of stress, and both the culture differences and the use of English as a common language were mentioned. In relation to the job situation, three main factors were mentioned: the unpredictability in demand, lack of support from the supervisor and the supervisor's lack of knowledge. Lack of control was a factor causing stress only to a minority of the respondents.

None of the respondents mentioned any stress due for instance fear of unemployment caused by the current situation in the petroleum sector.

All the respondents were using coping strategies within two or more coping strategy dimensions, but the coping strategies within the problem-focus dimension were most common.

Foreword

The work with the master thesis has been challenging, exciting and not the least a process where I feel that I have learned a lot. In this connection there are many who deserve thanks.

First and foremost, I wish to exercise my deepest gratitude and appreciation to each one of the respondents. I was overwhelmed by their openness and willingness to share their experience and feelings related to the research question. It was their participation and openness that made this study possible.

I would also like to thank my academic supervisor Kristin Engh for good discussions, advice and feedback.

Having had two jobs in addition to writing the master thesis has at time been very challenging. In hindsight I am glad that the preparation for the master and searching for relevant literature and theory started already in September 2014. I would like thank my colleagues who have demonstrated a high degree of flexibility, trust, understanding, and not least helped to keep me motivated during the whole period.

A special thanks to Kurt. I do not have word that may express my gratitude to you. You have shown patience and given me support throughout the entire process of writing the master thesis. You have also encouraged me when I needed it the most. Your good questions and challenges have helped me keeping focus and made it possible to do the best I can. I have felt privileged.

I gave Dad one last promise on his death bed, to complete the study I started in 2009. Today I put in the last sentence in the master thesis and I am officially finished.

This is for you, Dad .....

Laila Potoku
Stavanger, June 15th 2015

There are some twenty different nationalities in the company and they all speak English, but no one really speaks English except the native English and Americans.(…) I experience stress when various professionals internally do not have the same understanding of the English language. This creates problems and stress!

(Quote from a respondent)

1 Introduction

1.1 Stress seems to be increasing in most West European countries

Stress in the workplace seems to have become an increasingly widespread phenomenon, and the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work's (EU-OSHA's) recent European poll in 2013 found that 51% of employees within the European Union (EU) believe that work-related stress is common in the workplace (osha.europa.eu, 2015). The Norwegian Labour Inspection Authority (NLIA) emphasizes the importance of preventing work-related stress in order to reduce the consequences for the individual employee, but also for the companies and the society as a whole (nlia.no, 2015)$^{\text{Trans}}$ *. Employees that suffer from work-related stress often have a high rate of absenteeism, but there are also examples where employees suffering from work-related stress tend to go to work even when they are not able to function normally (called "sickness presentism") (ibid).

Stress in the workplace has a cost, as illustrated by Riga (2006), the cost of dealing with stress-related problems in a typical organization in US amounts to some 20% of payroll. The NLIA also emphasized the commercial benefits of stress prevention: *Prevention and management of work-related stress may (...) lead to a healthier and more productive workforce, lower absenteeism and lead to reduced sickness. The companies can get reduced costs associated with lost productivity* (nlia.no, 2015)$^{\text{Trans}}$.

The theme of stress is also high on the agenda for the two main parties in the Norwegian working life: LO (the Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions), and NHO (the main representative organisation for Norwegian employers). These two were central to the preparation of the Norwegian Working Environment Act (Arbeidsmiljøloven) of 1978. This law regulates the relationship between employers and employees and is a cornerstone of Norwegian working life.

A representative from LO (Svensli et al., 2014) mentions that in the period from the 1970s to early 1990s the focus in the cooperation between LO and NHO was on the development of good work processes, collaboration and broad participation between these two organizations. Svensli (ibid) states that now after decades of system thinking, it is again necessary to draw attention to the psychosocial work environment and to the prevention and management of stress in the workplace.

* the superscript "Trans" means that a quote is translated from Norwegian to English

Norway is also covered in the EU-OSHA's recent European poll (osha.europa.eu, 2015). The interviewees were asked to choose from a list of six possible causes of work-related stress. Job insecurity was perceived as the most common cause of work-related stress in Norway (60%) followed by workload (54%). Thereafter followed lack of support from colleagues and superiors (slightly less than 50%), lack of clarity on roles and responsibilities and unacceptable behaviour such as bullying or harassment (47%) (ibid).

The score of job insecurity in Norway matched answers from other European countries as the most common cause of work-related stress. Further, more than half the workers in Norway (53%) believed that causes of work-related stress are common in their workplace, while 45% said they are rare. This also reflects the position across Europe as a whole. In spite of this, almost ¾ of the workers in Norway (72%) say that work-related stress is controlled well at their workplace (ibid).

1.2 Stress and the modern society

Coleman (1976) called modern times the *age of anxiety and stress*. Modern society and the new ways of working have also been addressed by Sennet (1998) who believes that the world is moving in the direction of *a "new" capitalism with a global and "inexorably" market* (ibid). Sennet also believes that the new ways of working will be characterized by tasks increasingly being solved in teams of various forms, or as project work for customers. The old workplace was characterised by, or had as a requirement, to be "on time", while the new workplace on the other hand, requires that employees always should be "online". The old workplace was characterised by the collective obligations, while the new workplace is more characterised by large individual responsibility. Solidarity and loyalty will be replaced with economic calculations and earnings claims (ibid).

Similar mind-sets may be found in the work of Norwegian working life scientists. Terms like the "honey trap" have been used to describe the situation where the individual recognition and freedom of choice may give returns in the short term, but in the long run the individual is stuck, literally sitting "in the wax". The freedom of choice is an illusion and the modern working life has been described as *greedy, seductive and boundless* (Standal, 2005)[Trans].

Trends within Norwegian society and working life in the last century were increasing population growth, increased ethnic variation, higher education, longer life expectancy, high economic

activity, high employment and *comprehensive restructuring, and that information technology has changed both peoples' jobs and home life* (Hernes, 2008)[Trans].

The comprehensive restructuring refers to several aspects. One example is a change from more production oriented organizations to knowledge intensive work. Another example is that such knowledge intensive work requires increasingly sophisticated IT equipment and systems. The third example is that employees feel that they do not stop working. Away from work, they have to be online in case "something" happens.

In the Norwegian newspaper Adresseavisen's online edition 01.02.2011 one could read that the *job haunts us both in our sleep, at home with the family and in the leisure time. Half of us work more than we should and many of us take the job home with us* (Ørstadvik, 2011)[Trans]. The widespread phenomenon of stress and burnout seems to be related to the modern society.

Stress, health related consequences and absenteeism in the workplace have been important pillars within Norwegian working life research since around 1960's (Blichfeldt et al., 1983). Most, if not all, people will experience stress during their life, at work or in other situations. Early *collaborative projects* between LO and NHO were based on sociotechnical systems theory (Bramlette et al., 1980; Finsrud, 2009) and inspired Lysgaards work (Lysgaard, 1961). Due to the collaboration between LO and NHO, the application of the sociotechnical systems theory in the Norwegian context was different from the more management focused application for instance in the UK (Bakke, 1996).

1.3 The research theme and research problem

The petroleum sector as defined by the Norwegian Statistical Bureau (SSB) is *the petroleum industry and petroleum related industries which produce goods and services targeting the petroleum industry* (ssb.no, 2015). For simplicity this sector may be split between the "industry" part and the "white collar" part.

The "white collar" parts of this sector mean those having a office job onshore with regular working hours, usually have a formal education, working for oil companies, public companies or organizations that have a designated role in the petroleum sector, or various private companies that deliver various services to the first of these. Examples of such public companies or organizations in the petroleum sector are PSA, NPD, and Gassco.

The study for the master thesis was an opportunity for me to go into more depth from an academic perspective on the theme of stress and coping within the "white collar" part of the Norwegian petroleum sector. It may be asked if this "white collar" part of the petroleum sector is more prone for stress than other having an office job at a University, at the local tax office, or various private companies. The petroleum sector in Norway has some characteristics that are quite different from various other companies and organizations outside this sector in Norway: the presence of many affiliated companies of non-Norwegian multinational companies (MNCs)[**] and a multicultural work environment. This will be dealt with further in the next chapter.

In the following the term "non-Norwegian MNCs" will be used instead of "affiliated companies of non-Norwegian MNC". Such non-Norwegian MNC's are formally Norwegian companies, having local administration and leadership in Norway, and should maximize the value creation to the benefit of the Norwegian society. However, these affiliated companies have headquarters outside Norway.

The oil price drop since summer 2014 and the resulting reduction of the activity level within the petroleum sector in Norway has casued an increase in the unemployment with this sector. Has this development increased the level of stress within this sector? The aim of the study was to get a deeper understanding of the factors that typically trigger stress for this group at this point in time, and what coping mechanisms are used. The aim is not to compare this "white collar" part of the petroleum sector with other having a similar job in other sectors in Norway.

Having more detailed data could contribute to better understand why individuals are stressed within this sector and help to get more attention, if required, from various stakeholders in this part of the sector. For instance by contributing to identifying factors that cause stress and identify how they may be avoided, to the benefit of the employees, the affiliated company in Norway, and the Norwegian society.

The theme described above was considered too wide within the time available and the decision was taken to reduce the scope in order to have a manageable research question. This can be done in several ways, for example companies can be categorized as Norwegian companies and non-Norwegian MNCs.

[**]   Hereinafter MNC is used for multinational company

Further, in order to reduce the scope a split between the organizational levels in the company could be done: the simplest method is to categorize the employees as subordinates and supervisors/managers. The former are those on the lowest level in the companies, having varying degree of education. The employees could be split between the nationalities present in each of the companies. As an example for a Norwegian company to split between Norwegians and the other nationalities, and for a MNC, to categorize between Norwegians, the nationalities of the MNCs headquarter, and the other nationalities. With this as a starting point, Figure 1.1 below aims to illustrate ten different perspectives.

Within local Norwegian company or Norwegian MNC's, main factors causing stress and coping strategies for:		
Place in the organization	Employee nationality	
	Norwegian	Other nationalities
Supervisors/managers	1	2
Subordinates	3	4

Within non-Norwegian MNC's, main factors causing stress and coping strategies from:			
Place in the organization	Employee nationality		
	Norwegian	Country of MNC head quarter	Other nationalities
Supervisors/managers	5	6	7
Subordinates	8	9	10

Figure 1.1 Simplified illustrations of ten different viewpoints for
addressing stress and coping in the petroleum sector

My main interest was the subordinate Norwegian employee perspective and therefore perspective 8 was selected. The assumption was that the organizational culture and organizational structure were different from Norwegian companies. .

The research question was formulated as follows:

What are the main factors causing stress and what are the coping strategies for Norwegian subordinates working in non-Norwegian MNCs in the "white collar" part of the Norwegian petroleum sector?

Figure 1.2 below illustates in a simplified manner the target group for the research question.
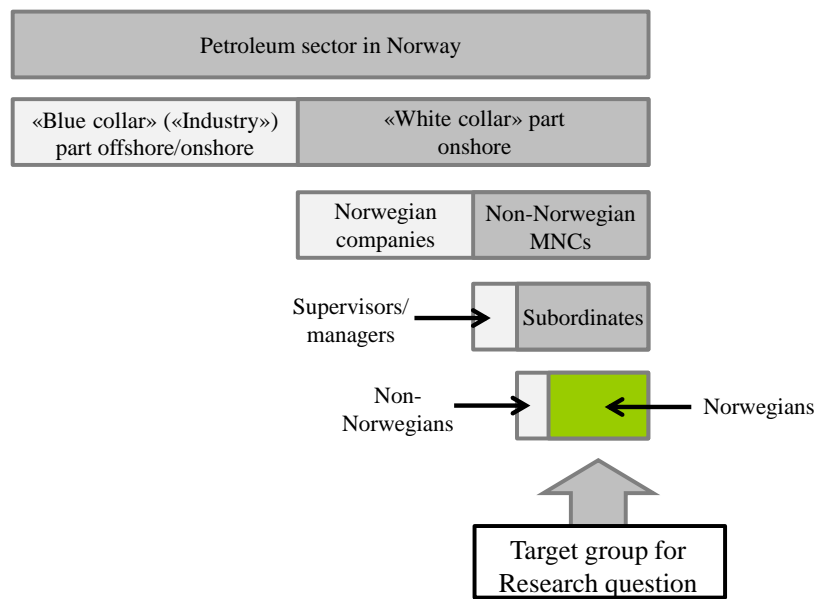
Figure 1.2 Simplified illustration - the target for the research question.

1.4 Structure of the report

Chapter 2 will provide relevant context and background for the research question.

The theory that is used to address the research question is described in chapter 3 and is further split in to four main parts. First the concept of stress, various stress models and coping strategies are presented. Thereafter, a brief overview is given on models to measure the difference between cultures. The last three parts are theory related to characteristics of organizational culture, organizational structure and theory related to intercultural competence and communication.

Further, the choices and decisions that were made in regards to the methodology to address the research question are described in chapter 4. The findings and a discussion of the findings, related to the main factors causing stress and the main coping strategies, may be found in chapters 5 and 6, respectively. Chapter 7 summaries the findings before a conclusion is drawn with the aim to answer the main research question in chapter 8, where also a reflection on further work will be given. Chapter 9 presents my own reflections in relation to the conclusions.

2 Context

2.1 Overall aim of chapter

The aim of this chapter is to give a thorough overview of two issues that are relevant in order to better understand the context of the research question. First of all what are the forces at play that have caused the large increase of migration and expatriation, globally as well as in Norway. Secondly, the petroleum sector in Norway is presented with particular emphasis on the number of nationalities in this sector, and on the diversity of non-Norwegian MNCs within the oil companies in Norway.

2.2 Globalization and global energy market

Most people think about globalization in economic terms, but globalization is used to describe many different processes that take place on a global scale. According to Scholte (2000) there are five related definitions of this term that highlight different elements: internationalization, liberalization, universalization, modernization or Westernization, and deterritorialization.

Globalization has many different dimensions and as such may be seen from different perspectives. Examples are economic, technological, political, cultural, social, and environmental (Saee, 2005). The economic dimension of globalization covers that the countries of the world are becoming increasingly integrated and interdependent. Examples are that there is a global market for various inputs and services required by the petroleum sector worldwide, a global market for energy prices, oil and gas, and a global market for workforce.

A global market for energy prices means that the price is determined by the global supply-demand balance for the relevant commodity. The activity level within the petroleum sector in Norway, for instance investments in new producing fields offshore, is to some extent linked to the oil price level. Therefore a change in demand or supply of oil in the world market, can affect the activity level in Norway. The oil price developments from summer 2014 until today, and all the reports in the media related to the "crisis" for the petroleum sector in Norway, clearly show this.

An important context for the research question is to understand that the petroleum sector in Norway is characterized with the presence of many nationalities and non-Norwegian MNCs. This will be dealt with in the next two subchapters.

2.3 Migration and expatriation[1]***

<u>Migration in general</u>

The number of international migrants was estimated at a total of 214 million in 2010. By 2050, this number could reach 405 million if it continues to grow at the same pace it has grown over the last 20 years (World Migration Report, 2010). These numbers imply that approximately 3.5% of the world's population lived outside of their country of birth in 2010. Some modern migration is a by-product of wars, political conflicts, and natural disasters, but contemporary migration is predominantly economically motivated. Increased competition has reduced travelling costs and has added to an increasingly mobile workforce. The result is culturally plural societies worldwide (Berry, 2005; 2011), and most companies and organizations experience a more ethnically and culturally diverse workforce. Other diversity dimensions in organizations are race, gender, age, disability, sexual orientation, and education (Bhadury et al., 2000; Shore et al., 2009).

<u>Expatriation</u>

The term expatriate is used to describe someone that takes a job in a country other than in his or her own for a period of time (Haslberger, A. et. al., 2014), and constitutes one of the main parts of migration. In general one may differentiate between those sent out by the organization they work for, called *organizational expatriates*, and the *self- initiated expatriates* who have elected to move abroad, either because they have got work, on their own or via contacts, or in order to apply for work (Dorsch et al., 2012; Vaiman et al., 2013; Haslberger et. al., 2014).

The group of *organizational expatriates* can be further split up in subgroups (pwc.com, 2015). Overall the two main types seem to be either a planned rotation to get more experience or that of sourcing professional experience to a particular job or to a project. Both of these may have a short or a longer time of duration, but the period is typically around three years (Brewster, 1991). The number of people on international assignments increased by 25% from 2000 to 2010, and it is expected that there will be a further 50% growth by 2020 (pwc.com, 2015).

The number of international assignments continued to rise unaffected through the financial crisis in the oil and gas industry and the telecommunication industry (Haslberger et al., 2014). This is surprising since the organizational expatriates are among the most expensive people in a local organization. Expatriates typically have a higher salary and many cost and expenses covered, for instance in relation to housing, schools for children if relevant, dental and medical expenses,

***　　a numerical superscript refers to notes in chapter 10

cost for car, and travel for the employee and family from Norway to his/her home country a certain number of times a year[2]. The advancement of various electronic means of communication and access to video-conferencing seem not to have decreased the need for having people on the ground (ibid).

The second types, self-initiated expatriates, are those with a professional experience being sourced to, or themselves seeking, a particular job or project. These typically have local salary conditions. There are many examples of this in the Stavanger area. One of them is the service and modification company Cofely Fabricom, owned by GdF-Suez, has sourced professional experience from India to various jobs within the company (fabricom.no, 2015). There are both types of expatriates within the petroleum sector in Norway, which adds to the diversity of nationalities.

2.4 Petroleum sector in Norway

The start of the Norwegian oil era was with the Ekofisk discovery in 1969 and start of the production in 1971 (snl.no, 2015). In 2012 the combined export from the petroleum sector accounted for 52% of the total export from Norway (ibid)[3]. In the same year the petroleum sector employed some 82 000 people, of these some 77 000 were settled in Norway[4]. Of the employees that were permanently settled in Norway 12.7% were non-Norwegian (ssb.no-2, 2015). This was an increase from 10.2% in 2010 (ssb.no-1, 2015) and 12.2% in 2011. In total 148 non-Norwegian nationalities were present within this sector in 2010 (private correspondence with SSB[5]).

Figure 2.1 illustrates numbers for 2011/12 of non-Norwegian nationalities among the permanent employees for a range of different companies and organizations in the petroleum sector in Norway plotted versus the total number of permanent employees for the same companies and organizations[6]. The data illustrated is more extensive than an earlier version found in Potoku et al., 2013 and covers 55% of the petroleum sector. For example Statoil had at the end of 2012 almost 18 000 permanent employees in Norway and 84 non-Norwegian nationalities were represented.
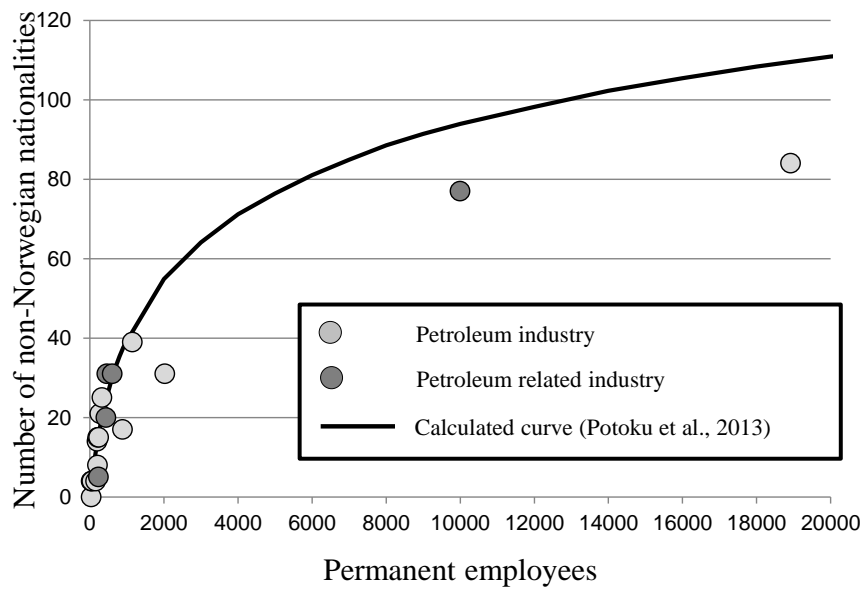
Figure 2.1 Non-Norwegian nationalities versus permanent employees in various companies in the Norwegian petroleum sector in 2011/12. (Extended version of Potoku et al., 2013)

The core companies of the petroleum sector in Norway are the oil companies and these may be used to illustrate the numbers of non-Norwegian MNCs within this sector. An oil company is here defined as a company that already has, or a company that has the right from the Norwegian Petroleum Directorate to apply for, ownership in licences in the Norwegian Continental Shelf. At present there are fifty-five such companies and roughly 75% of these are non-Norwegian oil companies: i.e. they have headquarters outside Norway. Figure 2.2 illustrates the nationalities of the various oil companies based upon data in Appendix C.
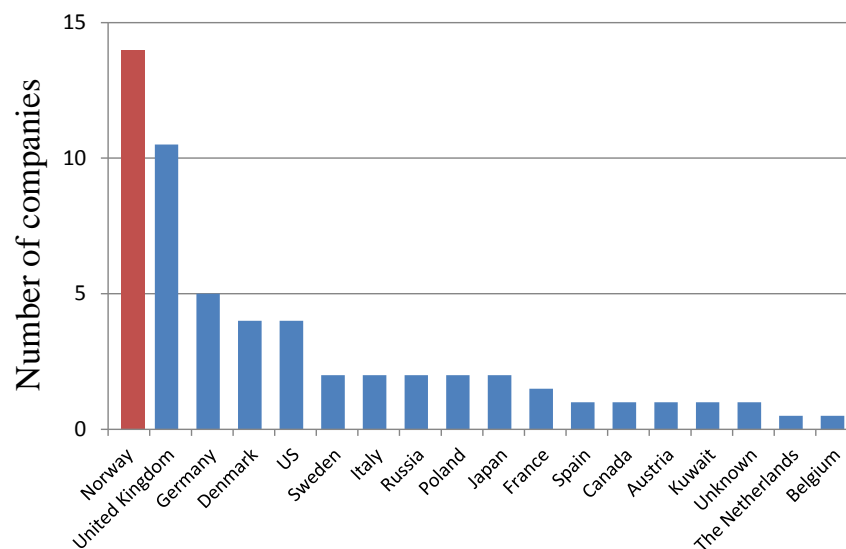
Figure 2.2 Nationalities represented among oil companies in Norway, situation spring 2015

3 Theoretical framework

3.1 Relevant theory for the research question

This chapter will give a brief overview of theory that will be used to better understand and address the research question. The research question has two main parts: stress and coping. The factors that could cause stress for the Norwegian subordinates could be split in two: internal and external factors. Examples in the latter group could be home-work conflicts and family problems (i.e. marriage problems, sickness in the family, private economy). Another factor could be fear of unemployment that may be entirely external or possibly partly internal depending on the situation for the company where the subordinate work.

Stress and coping are interlinked, and a good basis to understand the concept of stress and coping is required to address the research question. Further, it was decided to focus on theory that could be relevant for the possible <u>internal</u> causes of stress for the Norwegian subordinates, where the working assumption was that these could possibly be related to four different issues. The first is the job situation for the subordinates experienced in the combination of job demand, job support and job control. Therefore various stress models will be reviewed in order to find a model that could be used to address the research question and to better understand the findings. The second and the third issue are the organizational culture and organizational structure of the MNC's, and the fourth and last issue is intercultural communication competence. Since the MNCs where the respondents worked were from contries with some distance from Norway on Hoftstede`s power distance, it might be expected that autocratic leadership style might be an issue causing stress. Therefore, elements of this discipline are included under organizational structure.

Figure 3.1 aim to illustrate these four (red ellipsoids). As the figure illustrates, there might be other causes of stress in the work situation. While job support and job control are considered "work resources", coping strategies are "individual resources". Other individual resources like "locus of control", and "self-effiacy" is not addressed.

The above form the basis for the theory that is reviewed in the following. Firstly, the concept of stress is presented and then various models for stress will be reviewed focusing on Karasek's (1979) Job Strain model that developed into the Job Demand-Control-Support (JDCS) model (Sargent et al., 2000; Pinto et al., 2014). The concept of coping and coping strategies will then be reviewed. Thereafter, a brief overview is given on models to measure the difference between cultures. Also theory related to organizational culture, and organizational structure is presented.

Lastly, a high level overview of theory related to intercultural communication and intercultural competence is given.
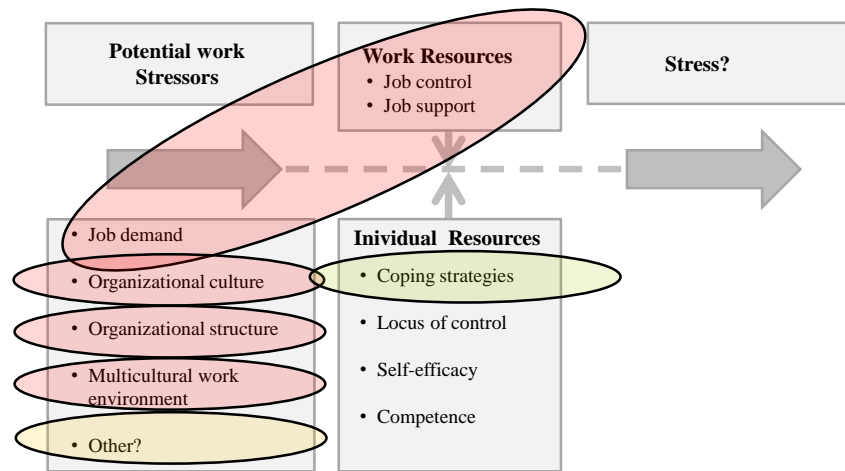
Figure 3.1 Illustration of the main theoretical parts

3.2 The concept of stress

Many in the research literature claims that the father of the stress concept is Hans Selye (Eveerly, et al., 2013; Mason, 1975), while others claim it is Walter Cannon, or at least that he should be credited (Hobfoll, 1989). Cannon is mostly known today for the *flight or fight* response (Cannon, 1915).

In Selye's brief note in Nature (Selye, 1936) the term stress is not used, according to tradition, because the medical establishment at that time found the term non-scientific (Ursin, et al., 2004). Irrespective of this, the term stress, as it is understood today, was first defined by Selye (1936) as *the non-specific neuroendocrine response of the body*. The word *neuroendocrine* was later dropped as he realized that other organ systems of the body in addition to the neuroendocrine system are involved in one or more of the stages of the stress response (Selye 1956, 1971). A more recent definition was *the nonspecific response of the body to any demand*. (Selye, 1974).

Selye was not aware that the term stress has been used for centuries in physics, for instance to describe elasticity. The word stress is an old English term that has been used for pressure or distress, and related to sources of strain (Ursin, et al. 2004). Selye used the term stress as the response of strain, and this caused confusion among scientists and one physician concluded in the British Medical Journal in 1951 that *stress in addition to being itself, was also the cause of*

itself, and the result of itself (Rosch, 2005). Because of the confusion[7], and criticism, Selye started to use the term *stressor* to denote any stimulus that gives a *stress* response (Everly, et al., 2013). See Figure 3.2 on the next page.

When an organism is exposed to a *stressor* an organism might go through three stages, also known as the General Adaption Syndrome (GAS) (Selye, 1976). The initial response is an *alarm*

In engineering sciences

Stress → can cause → Strain

Selye's stress concept

Stressors → can cause → Stress or Strain
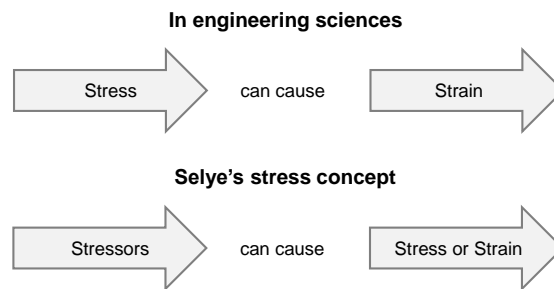
Figure 3.2 The confusion on strain and stress

reaction. The stressor might be so damaging that the organism dies, or if it survives, a *stage of adaption/stage of resistance* ensues. Following further exposure to the stressor, the organism enters a third stage, the *stage of exhaustion* (ibid).

Originally stress was seen in a negative light, but stress can also be positive and helpful when it motivates individuals to perform better. Selye realized this and made the distinction between *eustress* (positive stress) and *distress* (negative stress) (Selye, 1974).

3.3 Stress models and coping strategy

3.3.1 Cognitive and epidemiological models

Theories related to work stress may be split in two, cognitive appraisal models and epidemiological models (Ganster et al., 2013). Cognitive appraisal models address the question of *how* psychosocial stressors affect well-being (ibid). The most influential model here is Lazarus's (1966) transactional model (Ganster et al., 2013). The model states that stress resides neither in the person nor the environment, but in the interaction between the two. A more recent model is the Cognitive Activation Theory of Stress (CATS) (Meurs et al., 2011). CATS is an extension of cognitive appraisal models putting emphasis on individuals previous experiences and integrate both positive and negative aspects of a stress experience (Ganster et al., 2013).

Epidemiological models on the other hand aim to address the question of *what* specific features of the work environment have most importance (ibid). The Job Strain model (Karasek, 1979), that later was developed into the Job Demand-Control-Support (JDCS) model (Pinto et al., 2014), has been the most widely used of the epidemiological models (Ganster et al., 2013). Hobfoll (2001) has proposed the Conservation of Resources (COR) model that utilizes a more extensive set of resources than in the Job Demand-Control-Support model (Ganster et al., 2013). Another alternative model is the Effort-Reward Imbalance (ERI) model (Siegrist, 2002). The ERI model assumes that job strain is the result of an imbalance between effort and reward (Bakker et al., 2007; Ganster et al., 2013). The JDCS model will be used addressing and understanding the research question and will be addressed in the next section.

Coping refers to an individual's efforts to manage the psychological demands of any environment that is straining this individual's resources (Lazarus et al., 1984b). The concept of coping and coping strategies will be addressed section 3.3.3.

3.3.2 The Karasek model
In 1979 Karasek proposed the Job Strain model *that postulates that psychological strain results not from a single aspect of the work environment, but from the joint effects of the demands of a work situation and the range of decision-making freedom (discretion) available to the worker facing those demands* (Karasek, 1979). This model has later been known as the Job Demand-Control (JDC) model (Rodrigues et al. 2001; Pinto et al. 2014). The JDC model was criticised after independent testing found the results to be contradictory (de Jonge et al., 1997; Terry et al., 1999; van der Doef et al., 1999), and it was argued that the model oversimplified reality (Baker, 1985; Hobfoll, 1989; Parkes, 1991; Piltch et al., 1994; Johnson, et al.,1988). Johnson (ibid) argued that *social support* has the same important role as *job control* in moderating the relationship between stressor and stress/strain. Hence the JDC model was revised to the Job Demand-Control-Support (JDCS) model by adding a social dimension (ibid).

The JDCS model identifies three main elements in a work environment that affect the well-being of an individual (Sargent et al., 2000; Pinto et al., 2014): *job demand*, *job control*, and *job support*. Embedded in the term *job demand* are various elements at work that an individual subjectively experiences. Examples of stress or strain related to *job demand* from the literature are: work overload (Karasek, 1979; Bakker et al., 2007), time pressure (Bakker et al., 2007), unexpected tasks (Karasek, 1998), job related personal conflicts (Karasek, 1979), role conflict and role ambiguity (Karasek, 1985; de Bruin et al., 2006; Leung et al., 2007), psychologically

demanding (Johnson et al., 1988), noise and heat (Demerouti et al, 2001), and work under load (Leung et al., 2007). Fear of unemployment and occupational career problems have also been mentioned (Karasek, 1979).

Similarly, *job control*, originally called decision latitude (ibid), refers to the influence which an individual has to make decisions about one's work and the possibility of being creative and using, or developing, new skills (de Araujo et al., 2008). Decision latitude has been further subdivided into five: *skills discretion, decision authority, skills underutilization, work group decision authority, formal authority, and union/representative influence* (Karasek et al., 1998). The first two of these are mostly used (de Araujo et al., 2008; Hökerberg et al, 2014). Skills discretion is linked to learning new things, skills level, taking initiative, and repetitive work (ibid). Decision authority is the opportunity to make independent decisions and have a say at the workplace, or *how to do the work* and *what to do at work* (ibid).

Social support refers to support from supervisor, colleagues and co-workers (van der Doef et al., 1999; Pinto et al., 2014). Social support has been further subdivided into six: *socio emotional (co-worker), instrumental (co-worker), hostility (co-worker), socio emotional (supervisor), instrumental (supervisor),* and *hostility (supervisor)* (Karasek et al., 1998).

The JDCS model is illustrated in Figure 3.3 using the first two dimensions: job demand and control. Depending on the combinations of these two dimensions, jobs within each quadrant have been nicknamed *active job* (high *job demand*/high *job control*), *passive job* (low *job demand*/low *job control*), *high strain job* (high *job demand*/low *job control*), and *low strain job* (low *job demand*/high *job control*) (Pinto et al., 2014).
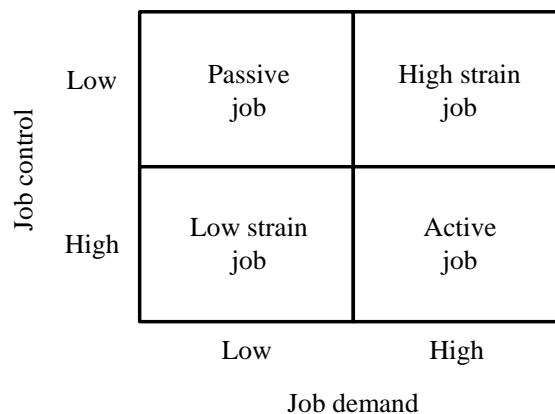
Figure 3.3 Job Demand-Control-Support model (based Bakker et al., 2007)

As an example, from a theoretical perspective *high strain jobs* are more prone to stress than an *active job*, as illustrated in Figure 3.3. When the *social support* dimension was added investigations showed that *social support* can influence directly on the perceived strain independent of the *job demand* (Payne et al., 1988; Parasuraman et al., 1992; Andries et al., 1996; Roxburgh, 1996). Further, that *social support* might have a buffering effect and reduce the stressor-strain relationship (LaRocco et al., 1980; Cohen et al., 1985; Beehr et al., 1990; Terry et al., 1993).

It should be noted that the JDC model, and the JDSC model, are environmental models for prediction of work stress (Karasek, 1979; de Jonge et al., 1999). Irrespective of this the models have also been used to test perception on an individual level of job demand, job control, and distress (van der Doef et al., 1999; Häusser et al., 2010). Parkes (1991) has pointed out that some of the contradictory results in testing the JDCS model may be because individuals have different styles of adaption or coping with the work environment.

3.3.3 The concept of coping and coping strategies

The concept of coping is broad and with a long and complex history (Compas et al., 2001: Lazarus, 1993). Coping is considered a specific strategy which is employed by an individual to manage a potential stressful event (Lazarus, 1966). Coping defined in this way is a conscious strategy, and should not be confused with unconscious defence mechanisms (Kramer, 2010). The coping efforts have two primary functions: management of the problem causing distress and regulation of emotions (Lazarus et al., 1984b; Latack et al., 1992). Coping strategies are considered individual resources alongside for instance locus of control, self-efficacy and competence that can *bolster an individual's health and well-being* (Sonnentag, 2002).

Many researchers have tried to categorize various coping mechanisms, but since coping responses are suited *to specific demands and shaped by the resources and contexts in which they unfold* the numbers are virtually infinite (Skinner et al., 2007). A review by Skinner et al. (2003) resulted in more than 400 different category labels. Lazarus et al. (1984b) made distinction between two main coping strategies: *problem-focused coping* and *emotion-focused coping*. The first of one is driven by the aim to remove or go around the sources of stress, while the second strategy involves attempts to reduce or eliminate stress (Strutton et al., 1993). *Problem-focused coping* and *emotion-focused coping* are the two most widely known and researched coping strategies (Hunter et al., 2004).

Weiten et al. (2008) identifies *appraisal-focused coping* in addition to these two where the aim is directed towards challenging individuals own assumptions in an adaptive cognitive sense. Others have argued for *avoidance-focused coping* as a third coping strategy (Roth et al., 1986; Carver et al., 1989; Endler et al., 1990). Examples of avoidance-focused coping could be to seek to *avoid a stressful situation by seeking out other people or by engaging in a substitute task* (Donnellan et al., 2012). In summary, most of the coping strategies may be classified as demonstrated by Pulla (2012), and this classification which is illustrated in Figure 3.4 below will be used here.

Within the group of *problem-focused coping* strategies, three strategies have been identified by Lazarus et al. (1984a; 1984b): *taking control*, *information seeking*, and *evaluating the pros and cons*. Within the group of *emotion-focused coping* strategies, five strategies have been identified by (ibid): *disclaiming*, *escape-avoidance*, *accepting responsibility or blame*, *exercising self-control*, and *positive reappraisal*.
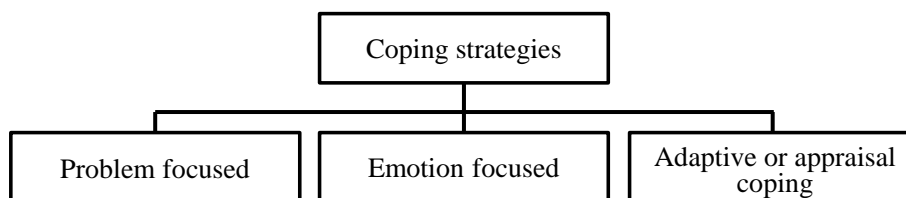
Figure 3.4 Coping strategies (based on Pulla, 2012)

Lazarus (2006) stated that the problem-focused and the emotional-focused dimensions should be viewed as complementary coping functions rather than as two fully distinct and independent coping categories. Some research shows that the use of a problem-focused strategy is more likely to change a situation causing stress to a more constructive situation beneficial to the individual (Carver et al., 1989). Using emotional-forcused approaches for dealing with a stressful situation is more likely to have an unfavourable outcome (Folkman et al., 1986; Folkman et al., 1988; Higgins et al., 1995). Another interesting observation is that the greater capacities an individual has, the less stressful the situation will be evaluated to be and the stronger the individual`s trust that he/she will cope with stress. The individual will use an adaptive coping style and most likely experience no stress (Jelonkiewicz, 2010). Greenglass et al. (2009) states that having a sense of control, high self-esteem, or optimism: will facilitate a selection of proactive coping strategies.

The concept of core self-evaluation (CSE) combines an individual's score of self-esteem, locus of control, and emotional stability (Judge et al., 2002: Judge et al., 1997), and some interesting research has taken place where individuals CSE and selection coping strategies are seen together

(Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2009). For instance it seems that CSE may influence the choice of coping strategy taken by individuals (ibid). Also it seems that individuals that have a higher CSE will engage more adaptive coping strategies, also termed the differential choice hypothesis (Chang, 1998: Chang et al., 1995), and select more of problem-solving coping and less of avoidance coping (Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2009).

3.4 Culture, culture differences and organizational culture

3.4.1 Culture and culture differences

The concept of *culture* covers so many dimensions of a phenomenon that a definition in itself might be difficult, or even impossible. Kroeber et al. (1952) listed 152 definitions of culture, and most of these reflect a certain perspective, for instance as a social anthropologist, or as a cultural anthropologist. An example of the first is Tylor[8] (1874): *that complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, law, customs, and other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.*

Many elements differ between cultures, and cultures can be compared based upon these elements. The fundamental question is whether these elements completely and adequately distinguish between all cultures (Reisinger, et al., 2009). A key question is how many of these cultural elements need to be different in order to determine a cultural difference, and which of these elements are the most significant to indicate such a difference (ibid). The figure below lists 23 perspectives on a culture and which may be considered elements of culture.
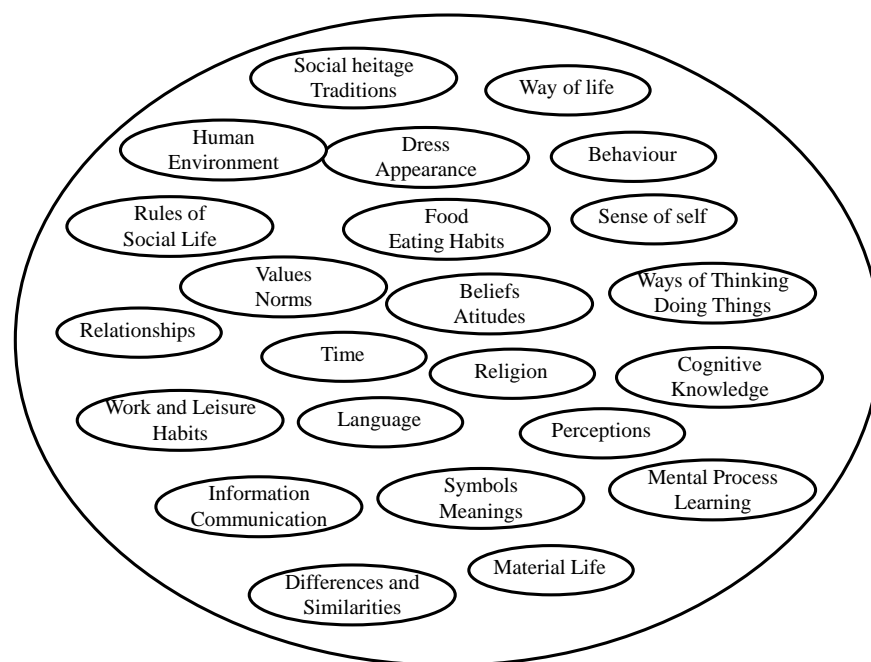
Figure 3.5 The concepts and elements of culture (Based on Reisinger et al. (2009)

Many have attempted to develop a theoretical framework in order to differentiate between cultures. Examples are Parsons (1951), Kluckhohn et al. (1961, 1973), Hofstede (1980; 2001), Hofstede et al. (1990; 2010), and Trompenaar (1997).

One of the most widely utilized dimensions of national culture is identified by Hofstede. Initially he identified four primary dimensions, but over time the dimensions have undergone some change and two dimensions have been added (Hofstede et al., 1990: Hofstede et al., 2010). The six dimensions are: power distance, individualism versus collectivism, masculinity versus femininity, uncertainty avoidance, long-term orientation versus short term orientation, and indulgence versus restraint. Appendix D gives a brief description of these six dimensions. A brief summary of the first three is given below:

Power distance expresses the degree to which the less powerful members of a society accept and expect that power is distributed unequally. People in societies with a large degree of power distance accept a hierarchical order where everybody has a place and no further justification is required. On the other hand, in societies with low power distance people strive to equalise the distribution of power and demand justification for inequalities of power (hofstede.com-1, 2015).

Individualism versus collectivism: This dimension expresses how a society has a preference between a loosely-knit social framework where individuals take care of only themselves and their immediate families (Individualism), and a society where individuals can expect their relatives or members of a particular in-group to look after them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty (Collectivism) (ibid).

Masculinity versus femininity: This dimension expresses how a society has a preference between the two. Masculinity stands for achievement, heroism, assertiveness and material rewards for success, and the society at large is more competitive. Its opposite, femininity, stands for a preference for cooperation, modesty, caring for the weak and quality of life, and the society at large is more consensus-oriented (ibid).

Each of the dimensions range from 0-100, and Figure 3.6 shows as an example how Norway compares with four other countries in Europe, one in Asia and one in North America on the six dimensions of Hofstede.

Delors (1993) claims that culture factors rather than economics or ideology will generate future conflicts between nations and individuals. Needless to say, such conflicts may also be visible in a social context or in a work environment.
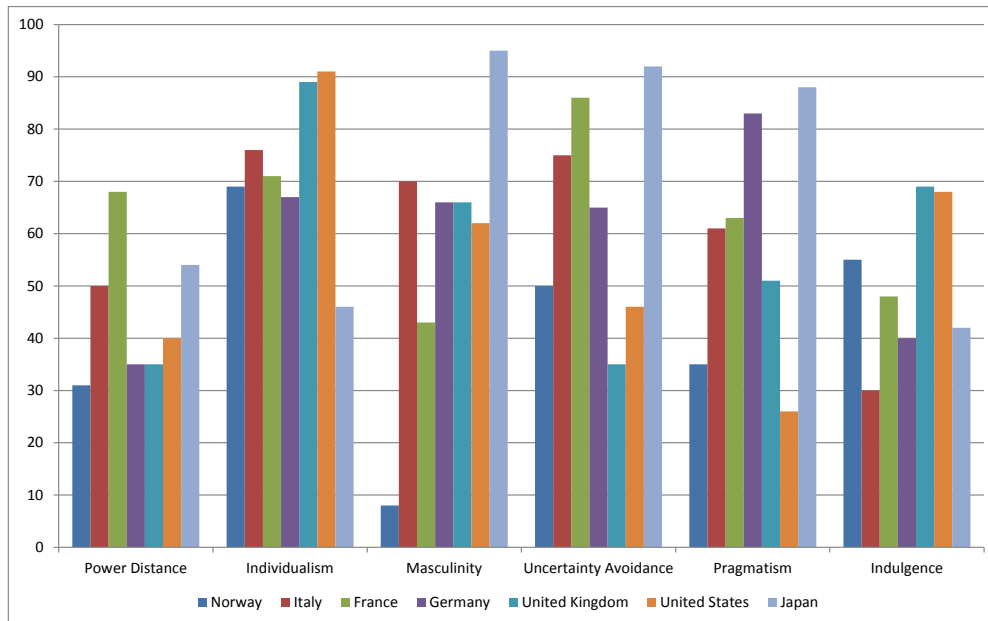
Figure 3.6 Comparing Norway with six other countries for Hofstede's six dimensions

3.4.2 Organizational culture

The most widely used definition of organizational culture is that of Schein (1985):

A pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way you perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems

According to Schein (1985) the organizational culture can be analysed at three levels. The first level is the *visible artifacts - the constructed environment of the organization, its architecture, technology, office layout, manner of dress, visible or audible behaviour patterns, and public documents such as charters, employee orientation materials, stories* (Schein, 1985). The next level is the *values* that govern behaviour, which may be used to understand or analyse why employees behave the way they do. The third level is the *basic underlying assumptions*, which is typically unconscious, but which actually determine how employees *perceive, think and feel* (ibid). These levels are illustrated in the figure below.

Hofstede (1998) defines organizational culture as *the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one organization from others.* Hofstede (ibid) states that organizational cultures differ mainly at the level of practices, and that these are more superficial and more easily learned and unlearned than values forming the core of national cultures. As a
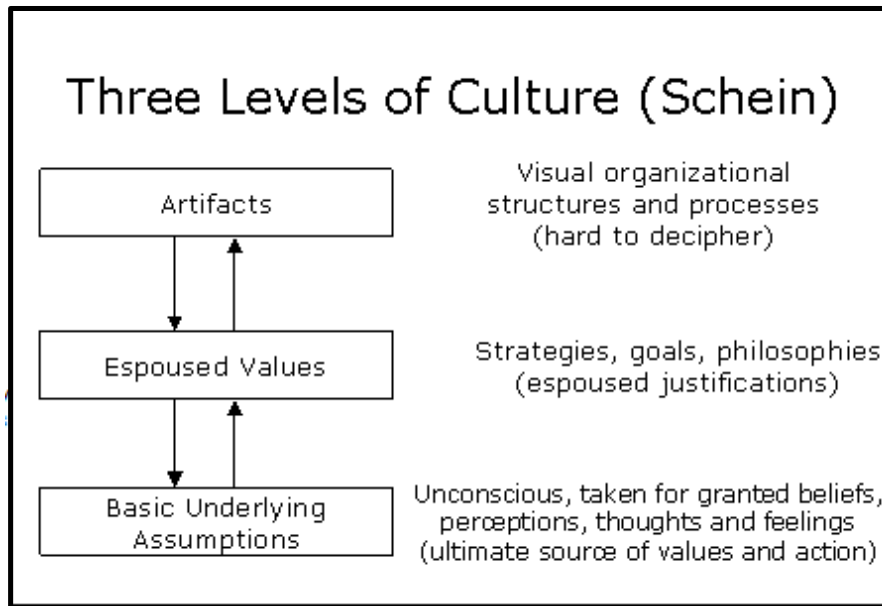
Figure 3.7 The three levels of culture (Schein, 1981)

consequence, the Hofstede dimensions of national cultures cannot be used by comparing cultures of organisations within the same country. The two models describe different layers of our reality (ibid). National culture is however one of the many factors shaping organizational culture next to such factors as personality of founder, feelings of insecurity, expectations of stakeholders and type of technology in use (ibid). Thus, organizations in the same country are typically shaped by the same national culture.

In organizations there might be *subcultures*. Van Maanen et al. (1984) defines subculture as a subset of the organizational members who identify themselves as a distinct group within the organization based on similarity or familiarity, or occupational, regional or national identities.

3.5 Organizational structure and elements leadership styles
According to Covin et al. (1991) there are two main types of organizational structure: organic and mechanistic. An organic organization is charactericed by more open communication, more consensus and is more loosely controlled (a flat structure). A mechanistic organization, on the other hand, tends to be *more traditional, tightly controlled and hierarchical in its approach* (ibid).

Hierarchy used in an organizational context refers to the organizational structure and that there is a single person or group with the most power and authority, and that each subsequent level below has less authority. At each level in this hierarchical structure except the lowest level, there are managers or supervisors. Fayol (1916: in Hofstede, 1980) distinguish between a manager's

statutory authority and his personal authority. The first of these relates to the position while the latter relates for example to his intelligence, knowledge, experience, moral values and leadership.

Globalization, new technology and competition for attractive workforce begs the question are the traditionally hierarchical organizations are fit for purpose (Gundersen et al., 2001). Therefore, private and public organizations have new challenges, and this may have some implications for how to best structure an organization, while at the same time have an effective organization that may adapt to changes. In particular within knowledge based organizations it has internationally been experimented with more flat structures, project- and matrix organizations and team based work- and leadership processes (Yukl, 2013).

Theory X and Theory Y (McGregor, 1960) are two fundamentally different approaches to manage employees. Theory X is an authoritarian management style that considers employees as inherently lazy and that they seek to avoid work, hence an average employee both needs and wants to be directed at work. Theory Y, on the other hand is a participative management style that assumes that provided employees are motivated, they will be self-directed, without control and punishment (Pellegrini et al., 2008). Over time management styles have changed, with a historical trend from a period of autocracy via paternalism toward the current more consultative and participative models (Schein, 1981). Schein's (ibid) perspective must be seen from a development over time in Western cultures. In non-Western cultures there is cultural dimension to leadership (Pellegrini et al., 2008), but also within a Western culture culture norms will function as social laws and specify the acceptable forms of leadership behaviour (Yukl, 2013). These culture norms may also limit the leader's use of power.

3.6 Intercultural communication competence

Perry et al. (2011) reminds us that *intercultural interaction has become a part of our everyday life in our increasingly globalized world.* Working in an international and multicultural organization, intercultural communication and intercultural interaction is a part of everyday work life. Effective intercultural communication is important for the effectiveness of the organization and hence will help to increase the business value. Such effective intercultural communication is, however, also important for the well-being of the individuals in the organization. It creates less friction between individuals and hence also helps to avoid tensions, misunderstandings and possibly stress (ibid).

Intercultural interaction and communication refers to, according to Reisinger et al. (2009), *interaction and communications between persons who are distinct from one another in cultural terms*. The aim of the intercultural interaction and communication theories is *to understand how people from different countries and cultures interact, communicate, and perceive the world around them* (ibid).

Intercultural competence is a term used to describe what is required to be effective in an intercultural setting, and it seems to be a general agreement that it refers to an individual's ability to function effectively across cultures. Johnson et al. (2006) defines intercultural competence as *an individual's effectiveness in drawing upon a set of knowledge, skills, and personal attributes in order to work successfully with people from different national cultural backgrounds at home or abroad*. Although there is a lot of commonality between different definitions of intercultural competence, there is some divergence on the particular contents.

Leung et al. (2014) has summarized the research and has split the characteristic into 3: *intercultural traits*, *intercultural attitudes and worldviews*, and *intercultural capabilities*. The first of these, *intercultural traits,* refers to personal characteristics that determine an individual's typical behaviour in intercultural situations (ibid). The second, intercultural attitudes and intercultural world views *focus on how individuals perceive other cultures or information from outside their own cultural world* (ibid). The individuals may have a positive or a negative attitude towards other cultures. Individuals that are interculturally competent tend to have a positive attitude to intercultural interactions, and typically have a more cosmopolitan rather than an ethnocentric worldview (ibid).

The last, intercultural capabilities are those capabilities that an individual *can use to be effective in intercultural interactions* (ibid). Examples of intercultural traits, intercultural attitudes intercultural worldview and intercultural capabilities are shown in Table 3.1 based upon a summary of the work by Leung et al. (2014).

In order for a cross-cultural contact to be constructive, certain conditions must be present (Bennett, 2001). First of all the *intercultural mindset*: recognition that a cultural difference exist and maintaining a positive attitude. Further the *intercultural skillset*: to use learning-to-learn framework to identify potential areas of misunderstanding and to choose behaviour appropriately. Thirdly, *intercultural sensitivity*, the ability to experience cultural differences in sophisticated ways (ibid). Bennett (ibid) lists what he identifies *as the most common culture-*

general framework (ibid): *language use*, *nonverbal communication*, *communication style*, *cognitive style*, and *cultural values and assumptions*.

Table 3.1 Intercultural traits, intercultural attitudes and intercultural worldview, and intercultural capabilities (based on Leung et al. (2014))

Intercultural traits	Open-mindedness
	Dissimilarity openness
	Tolerance of ambiguity
	Cognitive complexity
	Flexibility
	Inquisitiveness
	Quest for adventure
	Patience
	Emotional resilience
Intercultural attitudes and intercultural worldviews	Ethnocentric-ethnorelative cultural worldview
	Cosmopolitan outlook
	Category inclusiveness
Intercultural capabilities	Metacognitive cultural intelligence
	Motivational cultural intelligence
	Behavioural cultural intelligence
	Linguistic skills
	Social flexibility
	Adaptability to communication
	Cultural tuning in terms of holistic concern, collaboration, and learning

In a multicultural organization in a non-English speaking country, English is typically the common language, and for most of the employees in the organization this language is not their mother tongue. However, even for people from two countries that have the language in common, like US and UK, there might be misunderstandings (ibid). Another issue is that *native English-language speakers often tend to see language as a simple means of communication* Harzing et al (2008).

For employees in an organization having English as the second or third language, the potential misunderstandings are even greater, due to cultural differences and language skills. Harzing et al. (2008) who refers to a situation with managers from different nationalities and belonging to different language groups, mentions that rhetorical skills and fluency in a language is required when using humour, symbolism, sensitivity, negotiation, persuasion and motivation. Gudykunst (1995) mentions that the degree of uncertainty in an interpersonal interaction in a multicultural setting will be inversely correlated with language competence. This means that a low level of

language competence will increase the uncertainty in an interpersonal interaction in a multicultural setting. This might lead to lack of trust, increased anxiety, and overemphasize the importance of group membership on behaviour (ibid).

Nonverbal signals like voice, gestures, eye contact, spacing and touching are understood and perceived differently by different cultures, for instance from *high context* and *low context cultures* (Bennett, 2001). There are different frameworks of communication style, one of the most used is Hall's (1981) *high-context* and *low-context cultures*. In high-context cultures *a lot of the meaning is derived from the surrounding situation rather than from what is said explicitly*, while in a low-context culture most is derived from *explicit statements to convey meaning*. Another way to describe the difference is how different cultures describe a problem. *Some cultures may go straight to the point whilst others may circle round the topic*.

4 Methodology

The choices and decisions that were made with regards to the methodology to address the research question will be discussed and argued for in this chapter.

4.1 Research design

Research design can be systematized in two different ways: extensive and intensive. The extensive design aims to have a more broad approach while the intensive design has a more in-depth approach (Jacobsen, 2004). Research design describes the strategy that is planned to be used when collecting data with the aim to address and answer the research question. Further it will function as a planned route to be followed and as guidance on how to best answer the research questions (Ghauri et al., 2002). It is therefore important to start with the research question that is to be examined (ibid):

What are the main factors causing stress and what are the coping strategies for Norwegian subordinates working in non-Norwegian MNCs in the "white collar" part of the Norwegian petroleum sector?

The purpose of the research study is to gain more detailed insight into Norwegian subordinates' experiences and perceptions working in a multicultural work environment in a non-Norwegian MNC. The mental model behind the internal causes for stress, as mentioned in chapter 3.1, is illustrated to the left in Figure 4.1 and was used to establish assumptions that could be helpful to find relevant angles or perspectives to the research question such that these could help formulating sub research questions.

Inspired by Karasek's JDCS model (Sargent et al., 2000; Pinto et al., 2014) the job situation itself for an individual, as seen through the *demand*, possibly through the lack of *support* and *control* at work is consisting of the inner shell around the individual. The individual is, however, not living in an isolated bubble at work, he or she is working within a multicultural environment that in itself or in combination with other issues could cause stress. The same may be said about the organizational culture and organizational structure of the company. There may be other factors as well that cause stress for the individual, either internally or externally. To the extent there are such other factors the aim is that these should be identified through the study. Lastly, it would be interesting to get some insight in the strategies being used to cope with stress.
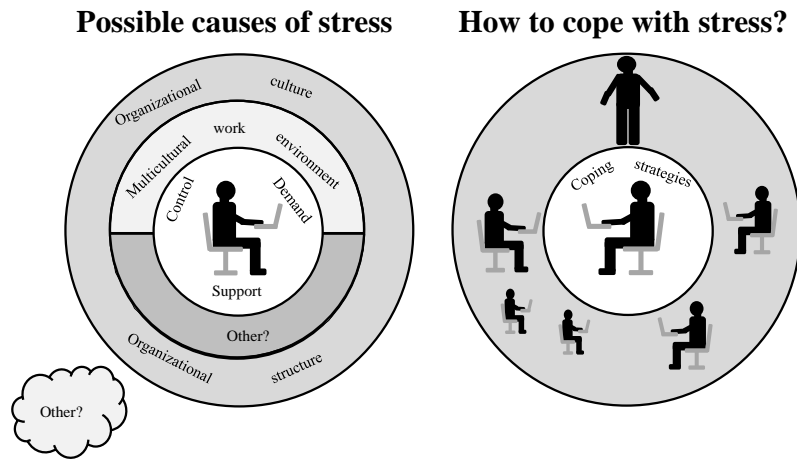
Figure 4.1 Mental model for stress and coping – simplified illustration

Based on this, four sub research questions (SRQs) were defined:

SRQ 1: *What are the main factors causing stress for Norwegian subordinates working in non-Norwegian MNCs in the "white collar" part of the Norwegian petroleum sector?*

SRQ 2: *Are there factors related to the organizational culture, the organizational structure and the multicultural working environment that cause stress for Norwegian subordinates working in non-Norwegian MNCs in the "white collar" part of the Norwegian petroleum sector?*

SRQ 3: *Are there factors related to the three dimensions in Karasek's JDCS model (job demand, job control and job support) that cause stress for Norwegian subordinates working in non-Norwegian MNCs in the "white collar" part of the Norwegian petroleum sector?*

SRQ 4: *What are the main coping strategies used by Norwegians subordinates working in non-Norwegian MNCs in the "white collar" part of the Norwegian petroleum sector?*

The aim with SRQ 1 was to have an overview from the interviewees on factors that cause stress. The working assumption was that such possible factors were related to job demand, lack of support and control for the individual. Further, that the organizational culture, organizational structure and the multicultural work environment could potentially be such factors. Job insecurity in the present economic sitation in Norway could be another important factor. It was therefore considered important to identify such other possible other factors as well.

Irrespective of the outcome on SRQ 1, the next two SRQ's would specifically address the working assumption mentioned above. Lastly, SRQ 4 dealt with the second part of the research question: what are the main coping strategies.

Figure 4.2 illustrates the relationship between the research question and the four sub research questions. Several research methods could be appropriate to address the research question.

The purpose of an *explorative method* is to gain more information, knowledge and better understanding for a chosen subject or theme (Blaikie, 2010). The explorative method, therefore, was found to be best suited for the research study. Further, the research study is hermeneutically anchored, since the aim is to gain unique and distinctive information related to how the

RQ What are the main factors causing stress and what are the coping strategies for Norwegian subordinates working in non-Norwegian MNCs in the "white collar" part of the Norwegian petroleum sector?	*SRQ 1* What is the main factors causing stress for Norwegian subordinates working in non-Norwegian MNCs in the Norwegian petroleum sector?
	SRQ 2 Are there factors related to the organizational culture, the organizational structure and the multicultural working environment that cause stress for Norwegian subordinates working in non-Norwegian MNCs in the "white collar" part of the Norwegian petroleum sector?
	SRQ 3 Are there factors related to the three dimensions in Karasek's JDCS model (job demand, job control and job support) that cause stress for Norwegian subordinates working in non-Norwegian MNCs in the "white collar" part of the Norwegian petroleum sector?
	SRQ 4 What are the main coping strategies used by Norwegians subordinates working in non-Norwegian MNCs in the "white collar" part of the Norwegian petroleum sector?

Figure 4.2 The research question with the four sub research questions

Norwegian subordinates perceive their reality related to the research question (Ghauri et al., 2002). Lastly, an inductive approach is taken where theory and the empirical data that is gathered will be seen against each other, and also where several understandings are presented, to provide a more complete and fulfilling interpretation (ibid).

4.2 Choice of method

Interview is a conversation with a structure and main purpose to go deeper than the spontaneous conversation (ibid). The research study is based on an intensive approach where the aim is to go as much in-depth as possible and to present as many shades as possible of the theme and

phenomenon that are studied. The aim is to focus on the subordinates experiences. Given the time available a longitudinal study was not possible and a cross-sectional approach was chosen to be the most appropriate (Blaikie, 2010).

The purpose of the research study is not to arrive at representative figures for Norwegian subordinates in the petroleum sector, but to gain a deeper insight in the experiences and perceptions from Norwegian individuals in the petroleum sector, in relation to the research question. A qualitative approach seemed to be the best method to achieve such deeper understanding of the social phenomena (Ghauri et al., 2002).

There are three different types of the qualitative approaches: observation, qualitative interview, and focus groups (Johannesen et al., 2010). The qualitative interview method was elected to be the best suited for the research study, in order to get the respondents view and experiences, or as Blaikie (2010) puts it, *their perception, knowledge, attitude, believes and values.*

4.3 Selection of respondents

The plan was to contact companies within the petroleum sector in order to perform the interviews. Although such initial contacts were made to three MNCs early in December 2014, it proved difficult to get a reply from any of these. Therefore, a back-up plan was initiated late January 2015: to use a modified snowball method to have a group of respondents (Blaikie, 2010). Three persons working in the petroleum sector were asked to provide names of potential candidates who could be contacted for interviews. Although a large personal network could be used, this chosen approach preserved an objective distance to each of the possible respondents.

This approach gave more than twenty names of potential candidates for interviews from seven different companies. Six candidates were selected from these twenty, based upon three simple criteria. First of all, the MNCs where the potential respondents were employed should have headquarters in a country with some distance to Norway on Hofstede's power dimension. Secondly a maximum of four MNCs should be represented. Lastly, minimum one of these should be from Europe and at least one of these should be from outside Europe.

Thagaard (2009) states that a method of selection should be used that give us persons who are willing to participate. The selection process explained above is a selection based upon availability (ibid). The original plan was to interview a group of employees in a department, in one or two MNCs. Diversity of the respondents is important. Having performed interviews as

planned could have ended up with a group that was too narrow in background, role and responsibility such that the results could be one-sided or biased. Irrespective of the selection process in the end, the result was a group of respondents that most likely were more diverse than could have been with the result based upon the original plan.

In the following, words like "participants in the interviews" and "interviewees" will be used synonymously with "respondent".

4.4 Planning and preparing the qualitative semi-structured interview

Kvales's (2009) seven stages of how to prepare, conduct and analyse an interview was the starting point. An interview guide was prepared to get more from each of the interviews (ibid).

The "structure" and "purpose" of the interviews matured over a long period in line with reading theory related to the working assumption in combination with own reflections. Each interview, including introduction, questions, follow-up questions when required and summing up, was planned to take approximately one hour. The estimated effective time for the questions was 50 minutes. Within this time a maximum of seven questions were assumed possible, with the possibility of questions for clarification and follow-up questions. The seven questions were based on the four sub research questions and are included in Appendix A, while the interview guide can be found in Appendix B.

As mentioned the assumption was that factors related to all of the three dimensions in Karasek's JDCS-model (Sargent et al., 2000; Pinto et al., 2014) could be a source of stress. Further, that the organizational culture, organizational structure and the multicultural work environment could be potential factors causing stress, but there could also be other factors. With this in mind an open question was prepared related to SRQ 1 (question 1 in Appendix A).

Irrespective of the outcome of the first question, it was interesting to ask questions targeting specifically the organizational culture and the organizational structure in order to verify if there were factors causing stress, and also to gain further information. Similarly, it would be interesting to ask questions related to the multicultural work environment. In combination two open questions were prepared to address the SRQ 2 (question 2 and 3 in Appendix A).

In the same manner, irrespective of the answers to the first question, it would be interesting to ask questions targeting each of the dimensions in the JDCS-model (ibid). A total of three open questions were prepared with the aim to address SRQ 3 (question 4, 5 and 6 in Appendix A).

Finally, an open question was prepared to address the second part of the research question, which was the basis for SRQ 4: what are the main coping strategies that are used (question 7 in Appendix A).

To avoid any misunderstandings of the questions, a brief introduction to each question was prepared where other words were used than the words in the questions. As an example, if the question contained the word *stress*, the introduction would use words like *strain* and *challenges* related to emotions connected to stress (Lazarus, 1966).

The questions were prepared trying to avoid terminology (words/expressions) from the theory or literature. Validity pertains to *the extent to which our observations indeed reflect the phenomena or variables of interest to us* (Pervin, 1984). In order to enhance validity of the results, there should be minimal risk that the questions are interpreted differently than the intent of the question. Lund (2002) states that to the extent that there is compliance between theoretical concept and operationalized concept we have construct validity.

4.5 Collection of data

A choice had to be taken whether or not to submit some pre-reading material to the respondents to inform about the theme for the interviews, and also possibly to submit the questions. According to Miles et al. (1994) there are pros and cons related to this question. Andersen (2011) argues that respondents could be biased if information is given beforehand. A decision was therefore taken not to submit any pre-reading material or questions to the interviewees. The background for this decision was that such prior knowledge could affect the information that would be gained from the interviews. Silverman (1993) states that the interviews should give *an authentic insight into peoples' experiences*, and it was felt that this was best achieved if the respondents had no prior knowledge and that the interview took place in an impulsive setting.

At the start of the interview a brief introduction was given related to the research question. Thereafter, as ice breakers some questions were asked about the respondent's role and responsibility in the MNC, and also about length of experience in the petroleum sector in general and in the current organization.

According to Thagaard (2009) it may be challenging to conduct the interview, and at the same time be able to take notes to capture the most important statements from the respondents. Further, taking notes reduces the social interaction that takes place during the interview, for

instance reduced eye contact and observation of the body language (ibid). On this background the decision was taken to use an audio recorder during the interview.

In order for the respondents to be as comfortable as possible, they could select where the interview should take place. In the end, two interviews took place in a meeting room where they worked, three interviews took place outside the MNC, and one of the interviews took place in the home of the respondent.

4.6 The process of analysis

It may be appropriate to describe the process of reducing and analysing the data collected from the interviews. As mentioned in sub-chapter 4.4, Kvales's (2009) seven stages of an interview investigation were used. The process after completing the interviews cover two of Kvale's (ibid) seven stages: stage 4 (transcribing) and stage 5 (analysing). As also mentioned by Thagaard (2009), within qualitative methods a common approach is to analyse data from text, for example transcribing of interviews based upon audio recording. The starting point was therefore to transcribe all interviews based on the audio recordings, a process that varied between four and six hours for each respondent. This is slightly in excess of Blaikie's (2010) assumption that a good transcriber will use at least three times as long time as the interview itself. The result was approximately 60 handwritten pages from the six interviews.

According to Blaikie (ibid) the qualitative data analysis, equivalent to Kvale's (2009) stage 5 (analysing), is a special kind of coding. The coding process involves two stages: open coding and axial coding. In the first stage, open coding: the data is broken down in categories and sub-categories. In general the axial coding stage involves using coding paradigms, where the researcher needs to reflect and think about possible mechanisms and causal conditions, contexts and interaction strategies in order to be able to describe the phenomena that will be studied (ibid).

The next phase in this process was to perform data reduction through classifying the collected data, or as referred to above, the open coding based on the transcribed data. Dey's (1993) conceptual process was followed by first breaking the data collected up into smaller bits, assigning these into categories and/or keywords/themes from theory related to the research question.

This approach made it possible to structure the data in a matrix to facilitate the third and final phase, which was to make connections between categories and/or keywords/ themes. It must be

said that the coding process of the transcribed material was a trial and error process, or a spiral process, as mentioned by Dey (ibid). The aim using of this method was to gain a better understanding and to discover new knowledge from the collected data to confirm or not, existing theories related to the research question.

4.7 Credibility criteria

4.7.1 Validity

The research design for a qualitative study needs to consider the questions of validity, reliability and credibility. Further, it is appropriate to ask if the findings from the study can be generalized. Can findings from the research study be transferred to another similar study? These are questions that need to be addressed and taken into consideration. Below some experience in relation to these questions will be discussed.

Evaluation of validity is a continuous process that functions as a control mechanism in order to help staying on track. Problems of validity can also be caused by systematic errors in the answers from the respondents. Such errors may occur and should be taken into consideration (Skog, 2013). These types of errors can for instance occur if an interviewee has misunderstood the question or consistently answers in a way to portray a different picture of him than what he actually is (ibid).

Another error that can occur during the interview sessions is related to sensitivity and validity. Sensitivity is related to how the interviewer captures what is being said, while validity on the other hand is linked to how to avoid the parts a researcher is not interested in. Such errors may occur during semi-structured qualitative interviews (ibid). In order to secure validity, it was decided to use a tape recorder to secure as correct representation of the findings as possible.

To be able to improve the validity of the answers the questions and follow-up questions should balance two issues: first of all the questions shall be easily understood, at the same time as they address the specific issue behind the question. At the end of the interview, an open follow-up question was asked in order to allow the respondents to mention other possible elements that had not been covered.

In order to enhance the reliability of the results, the questions that were formulated (questions 1-7 in Appendix A) should not be leading or biased (Kvale et al., 2009). The aim was further to allow the respondents to freely answer based on own experience. A challenge in general in an interview session, and possibly even more so with open questions, is that answers may be short,

or unclear. To prepare for such possible answers some follow-up questions were included in the interview guide (Thagaard, 2009) (Appendix B). Further, to test the questions and answers, two pilot tests were conducted with persons similar to the target group. Findings from these pilot tests are not included here.

In order to secure validity it is important that the findings are not affected by the researcher's own standpoint and personal experience, since this may permeate the findings and conclusions Guldvik (2002). This has been taken into consideration and therefore to avoid such an error, a continuous reflection was made with the academic supervisor as well as viewing the findings versus the theoretical frame. Further, to strengthen the validity, the same introduction was given to all interviewees. Choosing a qualitative approach may strengthen the validity by using direct quotes from the interviewees, to better explain and understand the phenomenon that is studied (ibid). That the quotes had to be translated into English was not considered to reduce the validity.

The key to a proper understanding of the research question is openness to possible other circumstances that may explain the experiences which the interviews will reveal. In the end the overall results need to be seen across the entire group of interviewees and various personal characteristics for each individual might be important. A straightforward statistical average could be strongly misleading (Guldvik, 2002).

4.7.2 Reliability

Reliability determines whether the findings can be repeated with the same measurement or technique that was used to achieve the initial results (Blaikie, 2010). There is a fundamental difference when evaluating the quality of studies within qualitative and quantitative research, and the concept of reliability can be said to be irrelevant in qualitative research. Stenbacka (2001) puts it even more strongly: *the concept of reliability is even misleading in qualitative research*.

During the research process it was considered what could be done to increase the validity of the findings, and that a reader should trust the perceptions through the statements from the respondents. This mentality was followed through the whole research process. The aim of this research study was to present research findings that accurately reflect the situation, or circumstances, that are investigated, and that these are supported by evidence (Blaikie, 2010).

4.7.3 Ethical considerations

Kvale (2009) mentions the importance of ethical consideration all the way through the research process. Of particular importance is *informed concent*, c*onfidentiality* in the research process, and the *consequences* for the future.

Prior to taking the decision late January 2015 to go for the snowball method, the academic supervisor was contacted in order to check if this would pose any issues, for instance that the Norwegian Social Science Data Center had to be contacted. Following a brief discussion with the academic supervisor, the conclusion was that there was no need for this since no personal information would be given during the interviews, only the interviewees' personal thoughts, experiences and perceptions.

As mentioned in chapter 4.5 it was decided to use an audio recorder during the interview. To secure *informed consent*, all of the respondents were informed prior to the interviews that full confidentiality would be secured: no names, age or organizational affiliation would be mentioned and lastly that quotes from the interviews would be altered, if necessary to secure *confidentiality*. It was also informed that the English language would be used and that would further possibly mask individual quotations. Each of the participants in the interviews was asked if they accepted that an audio recorder could be used. It was explained that the recordings would be destroyed after the work was finalized. Lastly, it was asked if they had further questions. None of the respondents had, and all of the respondents accepted that audio recorder could be used.

Regarding *consequences* for the future, these issues do not seem so relevant for this study as long as the respondents have given *informed consent* and *confidentiality* is secured.

4.8 Strengths and weaknesses

The research study was initiated in the fall of the autumn semester 2014. It was assumed that it would not be easy to get access to an organization in the petroleum sector, mainly because of the theme, but also because of the oil-price market situation since summer 2014. The petroleum sector experience falling oil prices and a process of cost cutting and reorganizing started in various parts of the petroleum sector. It was difficult to get in touch with the right persons in the different companies in order to get access to interview employees. In the end the interviews were done with a group of respondents that were very positive and eager to talk about their experiences in relation to the research question. The benefits with a qualitative approach and an interview setting are several. The main benefit is to go into more depth on the theme and to get a clearer, deeper insight, and a better understanding of the interviewees' experiences, thoughts and meanings. Further, by interacting in an interview setting follow-up questions may be asked when required in order to avoid misunderstandings.

A few of the respondents mentioned in various ways that they appreciated that the interview took place without the knowledge of the MNC they worked for, because if this had not been the case they could not have been so open in fear of being "recognised". Carrying out a qualitative investigation in cooperation with a company could therefore pose a challenge in this regard, in particular if there are "few" respondents.

A quantitative approach to the same research question would be interesting, but might not provide the same depth as may be achieved by a qualitative approach. The analysing part revealed that the questions asked during the interviews were quite appropriate and right to the point. The main reason for this statement is that during the coding of the interviews it was discovered that almost the same words were repeated by different interviewees. It may be appropriate to ask if conducting the study in one or two organizations could have provided different findings. It is felt quite strongly that a better and more diverse group of respondents could hardly be possible. Certainly summarizing findings over only six interviewees cannot be generalized, and only follow-up studies can possibly conclude on this.

There may be several possible weaknesses with the present study: in the preparation, execution of the interviews, the analysis and not the least the presentation of the findings. Starting with the first of these four, it may be argued that having extended the interview sessions with half an hour could have provided more in-depth information. This would also have allowed for more than seven questions. It may be argued that the seven questions could have been formulated better and that for instance more than one question should have addressed coping strategies.

When conducting the interviews, a weakness is possibly that too much emphasis was put on the work situation and the personal interaction between the subordinate and supervisor/ colleagues. The introduction to the questions, and the questions themselves did not intend to limit the scope, however, one should be open for that the respondents interpreted it differently. The same may be said regarding coping strategies that took place outside the work environment situation. For instance, only one of the respondents mentions an individual coping strategy like this.

When it comes to the analysis and the presentation it may be said that having given the transcribed interviews to ten different researchers, there could possibly have been up to ten different conclusions. To the extent this part in the current study is a weakness or not is not so easy to say, but possibly so.

5 Findings and discussion – Factors causing stress

5.1 Background and structure of presentation

The presentation and discussion of the findings for the first part of the research question, main factors causing stress, will be done in this chapter. The next chapter will deal with the presentation and discussion of the second part of the research question, coping strategies, as illustrated in Figure 5.1. Factors causing stress were addressed by the three first sub research questions, as also illustrated by the encircled bottom left part of the figure below.

The findings in this chapter will be presented in three sections. Firstly those related mainly to the organizational culture and organizational structure. Thereafter the findings related mainly to the multicultural work environment, and lastly, those related mainly to the work situation and linked to *job demand*, *support* and *control* for the respondents.

RQ
What are the main factors causing stress and what are the coping strategies for Norwegian subordinates working in non-Norwegian MNCs in the "white collar" part of the Norwegian petroleum sector?

Factors causing stress?	**Coping strategies?**

SRQ 1	SRQ 4
What are the main factors causing stress for Norwegian subordinates working in non-Norwegian MNCs in the "white collar" part of the Norwegian petroleum sector?	What are the main coping strategies used by Norwegians subordinates working in non-Norwegian MNCs in the "white collar" part of the Norwegian petroleum sector?

SRQ 2	SRQ 3	
Are there factors related to the organizational culture, the organizational structure and the multicultural working environment that cause stress for Norwegian subordinates working in non-Norwegian MNCs in the "white collar" part of the Norwegian petroleum sector?	Are there factors related to the three dimensions in Karasek's JDCS model (job demand, job control and job support) that cause stress for Norwegian subordinates working in non-Norwegian MNCs in the "white collar" part of the Norwegian petroleum sector?	

Chapter 5 — Chapter 6

Figure 5.1 The first part of the research question – factors causing stress

5.2 Perceived stress related to organizational culture

According to Hofstede (1981) the *subculture of an organization reflects national culture, professional subculture, and the organization's own history.* As an illustration, assume a French company that developed over time to an MNC maintaining its headquarter in France. The French national culture is according to Hofstede (ibid) expected to affect the organizational culture of the French company, and also of an affiliated company of such MNC in Norway. *Dominant*

culture is defined here as the culture of the country where the MNCs headquarter is located, while *national culture* is defined as the culture of the country where an affiliate is located, here more specifically the *Norwegian culture*.

In several quotations from the respondents the actual name of the country or the nationality of the MNC were mentioned, and where required to have more readable sentences, "France" and "French" are used instead. In order to avoide any doubt, none of the MNCs is based in France. The term *dominant culture* is also in some instances used instead of the nationality.

The organizational culture *reflects national culture* (ibid). The criteria used for the selection of the MNCs where the interviewees work was that MNCs should have background from and having headquarter in a country with some distance to Norway on Hofstede's power dimension. Power distance is a measure of inequality, and applied at the work place, a large power distance refers to that the relationship between subordinates and leaders are almost existentially different (Hofstede, 1993). Applied to the present study, a key question was if this caused stress for employees from the *national culture*.

Based on the findings the main factor causing stress was related to the *dominant culture*. Most of the interviewees described how they perceived two different cultures in the organization, the *dominant culture*, or "official culture", with roots and values mainly from the headquarter, and the second that was a more Norwegian culture.

Dominant culture

A shared view among most of the respondents was that in their respective MNCs there were two different cultures alongside each other: the *national culture* and the *dominant culture*. In addition to these two, several of the respondents mentioned that there are other subcultures in the MNCs, also national subcultures. The first of these, the *national culture*, is easy to understand, since in all three MNCs there is an overwhelming majority of Norwegian employees. The largest group of non-Norwegian nationalities in the MNCs in Norway is the group of employees from the country where the MNCs headquarter is located. This in combination with cultural inheritance and attitude among the employees from this country, and not the least the mark of the same culture on the organizational culture may explain the strength of the *dominant culture*.

Whatever the cause, most of the interviewees mentioned it and described the impact of this in various ways, one example was how these two cultures struggle to adapt to each other:

There are two different cultures in the company in Norway, the official organizational culture based on the "French" culture and the other is the Norwegian culture. We try to adapt to the "French" organizational culture, we have to go to cultural awareness courses, because it is expected that we should learn to understand this culture.

To observe two distinct cultures within the respective MNCs was described as challenging for the respondents but even so, through the descriptions and examples given, there seems to be a genuine interest and willingness to learn more about the *dominant culture*. It is the lack of the same interest and willingness from the *dominant culture* that seems to create the gap between these two cultures and causing stress for some of the interviewees.

What is the source of this disinterest, and can it be explained? There may be several factors causing this, for example countries where the respective MNCs have their headquarters have a population much larger than Norway, and maybe this is part of the background. Another explanation is that most of those from the *dominant culture* are expatriates who are only "visiting" Norway for a few years, so why bother? As mentioned in the context, three years seems to be typical (Brewster, 1991). A third explanation may be found in the characteristics of their culture, as possibly measured through the various dimensions of Hofstede et al. (2010). Regrettably, it is not possible to answer or confirm based upon the material at hand and the applied method.

The disinterest from the *dominant culture* was explained in many ways: *The "French" have no interest or ability to adapt, they will not.* This interviewee also said that he felt that he needed to adapt to the *dominant culture* more than he would like to, in order to avoid stress. The view on the MNC was different between the two cultures according to the respondent: "…*for the Norwegian employee the company is a Norwegian company in Norway, but for expatriates from "France" it is a "French" company in Norway"*.

Leung et al. (2014) split intercultural competence in three: *intercultural traits*, *intercultural attitudes and worldviews*, and *intercultural capabilities*. The second of these *focus on how individuals perceive other cultures or information from outside their own cultural world* (ibid). Individuals that are intercultural competent tend to have a positive attitude to intercultural interactions, and to have a more cosmopolitan rather than an ethnocentric worldview (ibid).

Does the worldview of the individuals from the *dominant culture* impact the ability, interest and willingness to adapt to new cultures? The findings may suggest that those from the *dominant*

culture have a rather ethnocentric worldview, at least as seen from the interviewees:"… *there is no interest or willingness to understand and or partly adapt to the Norwegian culture"*. It should also be said that the picture is not entirely black or white: a few examples were given of positive attitude towards Norwegian culture from the *dominant culture*. The tendency overall, however, was that such attitudes were mentioned as a cause of stress for themselves by several of the respondents.

It is not only those in the *national culture* that have a view on the *dominant culture*, the reverse seems to be true as well. Both cultures seem to have a view on the other culture group with regard to non-verbal communication and communication style. Non-verbal communication and communication style are two of the main elements of Bennetts (2001) culture-general framework for effective intercultural communication. "*Norwegians don't have passion*!" This is a statement from one in the *dominant culture*, according to one respondent. This suggests that a certain communication style is expected from the *dominant culture* in order to have an effective exchange of views.

That the supervisors from the *dominant culture* have another way of communicating seems clear from several statements, for instance: "*…if they disagree with you, you`ll notice it"*. An interviewee described situations where he felt literally abused: "*You may be reprimanded like hell, but they don't mean anything with it! They just disagree and it is important to show it"* It is not difficult to understand that this type of behaviour can be a cause of stress for a subordinate. It may be convenient to ask how two so different cultures may function effectively in an MNC where decisions need to be taken each day on complex technical, economical and operational issues.

"*The law of Jante* [9] *is standing strong in Norway, but I cannot say that it does so in other countries."* The Law of Jante describes a condescending attitude towards individuality and success. The respondent's interpretation is an interesting observation of the difference between the cultures, and this is "*one of many culture shocks you experience in the company"*, he says.

The respondents gave several examples which in their view illustrated a lack of respect and understanding from those from the *dominant culture*. This was mentioned as a challenge and a source of stress. An interviewee gave several descriptions of what could be seen as illustrating culture differences. One of these descriptions was that of a representative from headquarter visiting the MNC being completely shocked "*…when he saw that I was a woman. He had seen*

my name so many times and in so many documents, that he had thought I was a man! "Oh, you are a lady?""

For instance, using Hofstede's masculinity versus femininity dimension, the behaviour which is considered "normal" in the relevant country, is decided by a combination, the traditional and the modern society (hofstede.com-1, 2015). This is most easily seen in regard to what is considered female occupations and male career choices. Women should consider more "soft" career roles: caring for home, children, elderly and the sick (ibid).

Other examples were given in regards to lack of respect for Norwegian laws and regulations, related to business as well as employee rights. The OSHA's recent European poll (osha.europa.eu, 2015) showed that Norwegian working life was no exception when it came to unacceptable behaviour such as bullying and harassment, and that this caused stress for the individuals that were exposed to such behaviour. Similar findings were found in this study as well.

The respondent refered to above mentioned that she had a supervisor that came with unlawful comments regarding the right in Norwegian working life to take maternity leave, and she felt being harassed and gender discriminated: *"It's like being back in the Stone Age! In the eyes of many male European nationalities, a woman is not worth as much as a man!"*

It may be appropriate to ask if the interviewee is particularly sensitive in general, or if it is due to a seemingly long list of other and much harder statements from her non-Norwegian supervisor. In this respect, would another female Norwegian subordinate with another prehistory interpret the situation differently? As mentioned by Berger et al. (1967) different people and groups of people will construct their own reality. Therefore a supervisor and a subordinate may view and interpret a situation differently (Jacobsen et al., 2007). Was that the case in the situation referred to above? The views on women are different in some other cultures, as it seemed to be here by those in the *dominant culture*, but this does not make it an acceptable behaviour, independent of where it occurs.

One of many characteristics of Norwegian culture is "equality", and when the opposite is observed from the Norwegian subordinates it seems like it cause frustration and stress. As mentioned in the context, for non-Norwegian MNCs within the petroleum sector many of the non-Norwegian nationalities and in particular those from the *dominant culture* are working under expatriate conditions. This typically means a higher salary and some costs and expenses are

covered. This was mentioned as a cause of stress for some of the respondents, as exemplified here:

> *When expatriates come here and get most of their private expenses covered it is not strange that we get pissed when we are told that we cannot order pens to the company!*

The fall of the oil price after the summer 2014 has caused many companies to reduce costs, and the view expressed above is a bit similar to anger and frustration that were expressed in the media in the spring 2015[10] (tu.no, 2015).

5.3 Stress related to organizational structure and elements of leadership styles

Covin et al. (1991) mentions two main types of organizational structure: organic and mechanistic. While an organic organization may be characterized by open communication, consensual mindset and more loosely controlled, a mechanistic organization tends to be *traditional, tightly controlled and hierarchical in its approach* (ibid).

Based on the score for Norway on the power dimension (hofstede.com-2, 2015), Hofstede summarizes some elements that may be relevant for Norwegian employees. Examples are that hierarchy is accepted but for convenience only, power should be decentralized and the managers should count on the experience of their team members. Further that the employees expect to be consulted and that control is disliked. Summing up, this is the characteristics of an organic organization. The common denominator from all the interviewees was that the factor causing stress was the hierarchical structure of the MNC they were working in.

Hierarchy

Hierarchy used in an organizational context refers to an organizational structure such that there is a single person or group with the most power and authority, and that each subsequent level below has less authority. Globalization, new technology and competition for attractive workforce beg the question (Gundersen et al., 2001): Are the traditionally hierarchical organizations fit for purpose? In particular within knowledge based organizations there has been experimentation with more flat structures, project- and matrix organizations and team based work- and leadership processes (Yukl, 2013). In Norway such experience with ways to organize work is lagging behind (Gundersen et al., 2001). Irrespective of this, when the word hierarchy is used in a Norwegian context it typically has a negative meaning. The main reason for this is that people in general in Norway favor low power distance (hofstede.com-2, 2015).

A hierarchy structure may provoke negative perception and emotions when applied, as in this instance by the *dominant culture*, in a country where this is not favored, as mentioned above. The respondents were selected from MNCs that had some distance from Norway on Hoftstede`s power distance dimension (ibid) with the underlying assumptions that the organizational structure was possibly different from a typical Norwegian company.

Learning organization is a term used on a company that facilitates the learning of its members and continuously transforms itself (Pedler et al., 1997). Most companies and MNC would claim they are such learning organizations. Working in a learning organization requires good and effective communication to arrive at the most effective solutions. To not being able to express your opinion to your supervisor, because the supervisor can only be addressed in a certain manner or because the supervisor thinks he/she "knows" everything since he/she is a leader, seemingly does not provide the value of a learning organization. Experiencing this type of behaviour was described to provoke feelings such as ignorance and not to be taken seriously by the supervisor. A challenge expressed by several of the respondents was that they could not see that there would be a solution to this in the near future.

Hofstede's power dimensions show that some countries have a large distance from what is considered appropriate in a Norwegian context at work. The results from the study seem to confirm that this type of behaviour and mindset exist in the respective MNCs, exemplified with the description from this respondent:

> *The hierarchy in the company is totally different from what we are used to in Norway. For example you cannot just walk into the supervisor's office and, state your opinion or get help and support.(..) A supervisor from the dominant culture is very concerned about the hierarchy structure in the company and that they are leaders. They expect that you shall speak to them in a completely different tone, something we are not used to here in Norway!*

The respondents mention that their supervisor or part of the management team are typically non-Norwegians, and acting in a way which seems to be representative for the *dominant culture*. Adler (1997) reminds us that the manager's attitudes and behavior, in many ways are not conscious and influenced by the culture where they grew up. In this respect, the findings seem to confirm this. Further that having "arrived" at a certain level in the MNC demands respect from below, deserved or not:

> *Those from the dominant culture are really hung up on what level you're on, as an engineer you cannot say to someone who is higher in the hierarchy how things should be done. They even think that because they are leaders they know everything (...) at least they try to give the impression of this.*

The typically Norwegian leadership style is participative and based on equality (hoftstede.com-2, 2015). What the Norwegian subordinates experience is almost the opposite and it seems like they perceive such behaviour from a supervisor as unacceptable. The management in their respective MNCs seemed to be more concerned with titles and roles than performing leadership and having respect for the subordinates:

> *It is very hierarchical here with many fancy titles that you've never heard before and many times they even invent a title in order to get a position. Foreign companies in Norway often have some kind of visions and statements. They fail in a big way to live up to these statements! One of them is: You should respect each other! It is far from what happens in reality!*

In a Norwegian context employees expect that power should be decentralized, that the managers should count on the experience of their team members and control is disliked (ibid). The experience in the respondent's workplace seems to be the opposite, as exemplified with this respondent's statement:

> *I have experienced that many non-Norwegians have been yelled at and reprimanded in an open office landscape because they had not, according to the supervisor, done the job properly! It was unpleasant!*

According to the respondent above this was done by a very authoritarian supervisor from an English speaking country. There had apparently been several such episodes, and in the respondents mind this was done more or less to set an example and to some extent create fear. The example above shows a style of leadership that seemingly is appropriate for the supervisor, while for others in the *national culture* it is not acceptable. That it can be damaging for the subordinates experiencing it, is obvious.

It may be relevant to ask if there are societial norms whithin the *dominant culture* that influence the behavior of supervisors from this culture. For instance, deviation from such conformity of societal norms could result in pressure from other members of that culture group and possibly reduce respect, as mentioned by Fu et al. (2000).

Fayol (1916: in Hofstede, 1981) distinguishes between a manager's statutory authority and his personal authority. The example above shows the importance of a supervisor to balance the use of these two and take into consideration what types are most effective in given situations.

Cultural norms will function as social laws and specify what the acceptable forms of leadership behaviour are (Yukl, 2013). Cultural norms may also limit the leader's use of power. The examples from the interviewees seem to illustrate a conflict between what is acceptable and what is experienced, and hence constitutes the main factor of stress for the respondents. As mentioned by Yukl (2013) such autocratic leadership behaviour in a country with other cultural values is not necessarily ineffective, but as mentioned by House et al. (1997) such leaders do not understand how effective other forms of leadership could be.

5.4 Stress related to the multicultural work environment

Being part of a work environment, where interaction, communication and also cooperation with other individuals are necessary, may sometimes be challenging. Add to this that some ten to fifteen percent of the employees are non-Norwegian and that ten to twenty different nationalities are present, representing a multitude of languages and different cultures. Further that each individual in the MNC is unique with respect to experience, expectations, education and mindset. All of this results in a bit more challenging work environment. Based on the finding two main factors caused stress for the respondents related to the work environment: culture differences and use of English as a common language.

Culture differences

Hofsted (2001), Jacobsen et al. (2007) and Gullikstad et al. (2005) point out that each individual has its cultural background, independent of nationality, and that this cultural background is marked by heritage, environment, group affiliation and not the least by experience and expectations. Based on this it can be concluded that none of the national groups that are present in the individual companies are homogenous. This also applies to the group of Norwegian employees.

It may be convenient to ask the question: What causes most stress, the organizational culture or the presence of a multi-national and multi-cultural group in the companies? The view on this was not unanimous among the respondents. "*What stresses me most is not the organizational culture but the presence of all the other national cultures in the company*", said one of the respondents. Another respondent said the opposite: "*… the multicultural work environment is positive, but the organizational culture is stressful.*" A third respondent, an engineer pointed out that "*..culture*

does not have much to say, when you have to deal with technical matters, we think alike, regardless of country, language and culture." These quotations clearly demonstrate that the respondents, all Norwegian nationalities, are quite inhomogeneous in their views in line with theory (ibid).

The six respondents had different levels of education but similar number of years of experience. It is interesting to note the statement from the engineer above that culture is irrelevant when dealing with technical matters. One could ask the question if multi-cultural groups at work having similar educational background and having similar work tasks experience less stress. Not necessarily, as the first statement in the paragraph above is also from an engineer.

There are many nationalities in the MNCs where the respondents work. Each individual of these different nationalities has their own intercultural skillset (Bennett, 2001). Bennett's (ibid) culture-general framework includes: language use, nonverbal communication, communication style, cognitive style, and cultural values and assumptions. The multicultural work environment where the respondents work was a cause of stress for some of the respondents, as illustrated by one of these:

> *It is a challenge with the mutual cultural understanding in this company. First of all since the company I work for is a multinational company, but also due to all the other nationalities and cultures.*

In order to better interpret the findings especially with regards to why the culture differences are perceived to be so prominent, one has to interpret the situation the respondents are in. This can especially be so when trying to understand the individual's orientation of the world and their perceptions (Blaikie, 2010). To be able to do so questions need to be asked with regards to the findings.

First of all, it seems that all of the respondents are aware of the different cultures that are represented in the MNC. It should be mentioned that none of the respondents said one negative word on any of the nationalities or cultures. It seems to be the sheer magnitude of different nationalities, and hence cultures, in the MNC that was the cause of stress.

It may be appropriate to ask why this is the case. One of the respondents said that his problem was that he always had to modify a message according to whom he was talking to: "*You have to adapt what you say and how you say it according to whom you talk to and the background and*

culture of the recipient." Another said that the number of different nationalities: " *...gives rise to a number of challenges and misunderstandings, and that stresses me!"*

May it be so simple that Norwegians in general are not accustomed to a multicultural work environment? Maybe they were previously stressed by the fact that someone at work was talking a Norwegian dialect. Suddenly it is not the man from Helgeland or the woman from Sognefjorden that is the problem at work. They struggle to understand the tension between the pipeline engineer from Pakistan and the female process engineer from India. All of them understand messages from their supervisor differently.

The findings do not allow for more in-depth analysis of which elements of the intercultural contact and communication with individuals from other nationalities at the workplace that were a challenge and cause of stress, but it can be argued that Norwegians are newcomers to this working environment.

Many of the nations in the world today are, or have been, in conflict with each other for example due to territorial claims or religion. With so many different nationalities in a company there could be conflicts. One of the respondents describes the difficulty putting together teams in the workplace:

> *The fact that there are so many nationalities internally makes it difficult to put together teams. You can't put a man from India with a lady, for example, regardless of nationality. Moreover, you can't put a Russian in the same room with Chinese or one from Iran with someone from Iraq or a Pakistani with an Indian, or a Serb with a Croat, so it is like a solitaire!*

He also mentions that:

> *…they can be very aggressive and they take almost the "knife" up immediately! But they do not mean anything bad: it is a way of communicating! It is their culture.*

There are culture differences between various nationalities and these may be measured using various dimensions (Hofstede, 1990; Hofstede, 2010; Trompenaar, 1997). Using the model of Hofstede (2010) as an example, all of the dimensions of his model may be appropriate to use for measuring the culture differences between the different nationalities in a company. This approach does not take into account possible historical events regarding conflicts between nations. When considering this as well the picture becomes somewhat more complex. Taking

into account that no group of nationalities within a company is homogenous and that each individual is unique with its intercultural skillset, the picture might become even more complex.

The findings in general seem to illustrate Delors' (1993) arguments in regards to how cultural factors can generate conflicts between nations and individuals. It can be argued that this is not considered by the respondents to be a great source of stress, or pose great conflicts, especially since a common shared understanding is that the individuals from the different cultures do not mean any harm, it is "*just their way of communicating*" as mentioned by the respondent above. Maybe this can be explained by the fact that the respondents have learned how to cope with these types of issues and not to take them personally? It is not possible to go into more depth on this as well, but based on the findings one can argue that this seems to be the case for these respondents.

Understanding the culture differences and exercising influence in multi cultural work enviroment are regarded as an essential compentency of the "global manager" (Smith et al., 1988). Based upon the findings, it can be argued that the supervisors in the respective MNC`s, seem to be lacking such competency and leadership.

Communication and use of English as a common language
Communication is a term that has a rather wide meaning and covers for instance both verbal and non-verbal communication. In order to understand the finding from this study both of these need to be considered. Especially how the subordinates understand and interpret the communication they have themselves with different cultures or how they should understand observed communication between different cultures in the MNC.

On a high level, based on the findings, it seems like native English speakers in the company use the language as a simple means of communication and think that if the words are understood, also the meaning is understood: "*The worst are Americans and Brits that have no room for understanding that others interpret things differently, based on their cultural standpoint.*" Harzing et al (2008) mentions that *native English-language speakers often tend to see language as a simple means of communication*, which seems to support such findings.

One of the respondents submitted after the interview a chart from a presentation that was held in an internal culture awareness course, and this chart is included in Appendix D. This chart illustrated through examples and with some humour how phrases that are said by native English speakers are perceived differently from the intent. That such culture awareness course was held

show that the company in question is aware of that use of English as a common language may pose challenges.

An alternative is to understand the findings as different frameworks of communication style, and more specifically Hall's (1998) high-context and low-context cultures. While in a low-context culture most of the understanding from the communication is derived from explicit statements to convey meaning, in a high-context culture a lot of the meaning is derived from the surrounding situation rather than from what is said explicitly. Another respondent stated that, yes English is the common language "…*but it is perceived and understood differently among all the nationalities represented in this company.*" This may be the result of several issues like cultural differences and different language skills, but a contributing factor might be a high-context and low-context communication.

Another way to describe the differences between nationalities and cultures is how a problem is described. While some cultures may go straight to the point, others may circle around the topic (ibid). This is also described as the difference between the linear and the more contextual style of communicating. One of the respondents described the difference between Norwegians and "those" from the *dominant culture*: *"Norwegians talk more direct, for example saying: "Do this" rather than "Could you please do this". Those from the dominant culture are talking more around the bush, and I see that there have been several misunderstandings in relation to this.*"

It may be that the answer is not related to Hall's (ibid) high-context and low-context cultures, but more to the fact that non-native English speaking individuals often lack the vocabulary and fluency in the English language. Harzing et al. (2008) mentions that in a situation with managers from different nationalities and belonging to different language groups, rhetorical skills and fluency in a language is required when using *humour, symbolism, sensitivity, negotiation, persuasion and motivation*. It will be argued that this is also the case between employees in general, and applied to the findings here, between a Norwegian employee and a native English speaking supervisor or colleague. Several of the respondents pointed to the fact that language skills varied, and also that Norwegians were perceived, in particular by native English speakers, to be blunt and direct, almost rude. One example is: "…*Norwegians speak English as they think in Norwegian, and are therefore often perceived to be direct and rude...*" Another respondent stated: *"...when we Norwegians speak English we are more directly and don't use words like "please". We say for instance "sign here" rather than "could you sign here, please."* The respondent explain that this is considered as rude by the native English speakers

Many of the respondents mentioned that the understanding of the English language varies among the employees in the company they worked for, as an example:

> *There are some twenty different nationalities in the company and they all speak English, but no one really speaks English except the native English and Americans.(…) I experience stress when various professionals internally do not have the same understanding of the English language. This creates problems and stress!*

As pointed out by Gudykunst (1995), the degree of uncertainty in an interpersonal interaction in a multicultural setting will be inversely correlated with language competence. This means the less the language competence, the larger the uncertainty this may create in such a setting. This might lead to lack of trust, increased anxiety, and overemphasis of the importance of group membership behaviour (ibid). The result for the respondent above was that he: "…*experiences stress in relation to the fact that various professionals internally do not have the same understanding of the English language.*"

A totally different angle was mentioned by one respondent. It was not the use of English that caused stress, but that foreigners in the MNC having had Norwegian language courses and have been in Norway for several years and still they cannot speak Norwegian:

> *It is not the English language that is the problem but those foreigners who have been here a number of years and have had Norwegian training still does not speak Norwegian! That means we must hold meetings in English just because one of the project team is a foreigner and does not speak Norwegian. (…) But sometimes we hold meetings in Norwegian anyway, and then the foreigners get a bit pissed.*

English is used as a common language for MNCs in many countries, and it may be convenient to ask if an organization that experiences such misunderstandings as illustrated by the findings above, is an effective organization? Perry et al. (2011) reminds us that an effective intercultural communication in an international and multicultural organization should help to increase the business value, through less friction between individuals and thereby avoiding tensions, misunderstandings and possibly stress. It may be argued, based on the findings, that all of the three MNCs where the respondents are employed seem to show signs of misunderstandings between culture groups and hence possible inefficiency

5.5 Stress related to job demand, support and control

The aim of Karasek's JDCS model (Sargent et al., 2000; Pinto et al., 2014) is to assess psychological strain in the workplace and to identify other aspects of the work environment that may increase or reduce stress, also called moderators, such strains related to demand. The two most commonly used moderators that affect the well-being of an individual in the work environment are control and support (ibid). This was the main reason for addressing these two moderators with separate questions in the interviews.

The majority of the respondents mentioned unpredictable demand from their supervisor as a factor of stress for themselves in their respective companies, and this came out as the main factor under job demand. Under the job support dimension, lack of support from their supervisor came out as the main factor. For most of the interviewees the flexible working time scheme in Norwegian companies provided control, but the control of specific tasks varied strongly with the job the various respondents had within the respective MNC. It will be convenient to split the discussions in three parts: job demand, job support and job control.

5.5.1 Job demand

The main reason for using Karasek's model was to get a deeper understanding of the respondent's experiences of their job situations and execution of work tasks. Selected respondents from non-Norwegian MNCs had an opportunity to see if, and to what extent, factors related to the organization culture, organizational structure and possibly also the multicultural work environment affected the individual's job situation and execution of work. The findings seem to confirm that elements of the above influenced the respondents in various ways with regard to the job demand dimension. In particular examples related to an autocratic leadership style and misunderstandings due to the multicultural work environment were mentioned. These themes were already mentioned in the preceding sections, but a few examples are provided below.

One of the respondents worked in a project environment, being part of parallel projects. The project managers were partly Norwegian and partly from the *dominant culture*. In such projects it is common that many different technical disciplines need to cooperate, and the project manager should understand the various parts of the projects. The respondent said it is "…*nice to have a manager that understands what you are doing and working with"*. That seems not always to be the case: "*..some project managers create a lot of fuss, without really understanding what the problem is, and that can create stress."* The respondent explained further that she was met with lack of understanding from a project manager from the *dominant culture* but what stressed her

most was the combination with an autocratic behaviour: "…"*I am the boss and I am talking!" I get a bit pissed when a project manager talks like that. (...) I do not like to be commanded over!"*

Many of the respondents were working in departments, teams or projects with colleagues from several other nationalities and cultures. Several of these respondents mentioned that messages from the supervisor could be understood differently by the respondent's colleagues, as was the case for this respondent: *"...identical information from the supervisor or other parts of the management is understood differently and that can be stressful"*. In particular when an individual cooperates with other colleagues, it is important that messages from the supervisor are understood similarly by all. This did not always seem to be the case, and it can be argued that this can lead to suboptimal performance and reduce the efficiency of the group.

Irrespective of the above, the common denominator among the interviewees was that unpredictability of demand seemed to be the main factor causing stress related to the job demand dimension.

Unpredictability

Unpredictability at the workplace refers to situations that have a negative impact on the individual and includes the imminence, duration and temporarily uncertainty related to events (Lazarus et al., 1984a). Several other authors have discussed individuals' perceptions in relation to timing and frequency of changes in the workplace (Glick et al, 1995; Monge, 1995). Glick et al (1995) differentiates between infrequent changes and frequent changes. In the former case these may be perceived as discrete, or if more frequently, a series of discrete events.

The events and situations that were mentioned by the respondents seemed to be more in the category of frequent changes rather than infrequent changes. In this case, employees are more likely to perceive this change as unpredictable rather than as discrete events. Unpredictability in the workplace in the form of constant surveillance from the supervisor seems to be the case for the respondent below. This extreme example caused stress for the individual. A respondent describes a supervisor waiting for her to make mistakes and using that against her:

> *It is not nice when you feel you are being watched all the time! You are also told that you are watched! That stresses me. I feel not trusted and I am dissatisfied when the supervisor just comes in and alters my working tasks. "I am the boss and you shall respect me and obey me!" The supervisor uses any and all occasions to nail you. It's like*

being thrown under the bus so you can get hit! If he finds something positive, he takes the credit for it and you are not told. On the other hand you get told of if he blames you for something. Supervisors from this culture are not used to a subordinate answering back. Then it gets a bit messy!

Predictability and safe working conditions are key ingredients for a good and effective day at work. An attitude and behaviour from a supervisor as illustrated above is the opposite of this, and hence not the best premise for creating value for the MNC. Feelings like anxiety, frustration, insecurity and stress were mentioned by this respondent.

The impression from the interviews was that the daily work situation varied quite a lot between the different respondents, and may be divided in to three groups. The first group consisted of one third of the interviewees that seemed to have a work situation where most of the time was spent in their own office. The second group consisted also of one third and seemed to spend more than half of their time in various meetings internally and externally to the MNC. Such meetings could be planned for weeks or months in advance. The third group, also one third of the interviewees, had a daily work situation in between these.

In a hierarchical system, requests from the MNCs headquarter most often will get high priority with supervisors and managers in the affiliated company. In many instances the detailed handling of such requests will be done by a subordinate in the Norwegian company. A subordinate that had a work situation characterized by the second group above had many seemingly unpredictable requests from the headquarter. That meant that planned activities are not considered important anymore and have to be stopped, as mentioned by the subordinate: "*It stresses me when unexpected demands and requests come from the headquarter because then I have to drop everything!*" In such instances it will often also have consequence for many other people, for instance that a presentation should be held or a meeting should be chaired. The respondent described that letting people down stresses him: "*I experience stress when I feel that I disappoint people!*"

Change of demand, or unpredictable demand, from the supervisor or others may be challenging but what if this happened and you are not told? That was the situation for one respondent once in a while. "*There is not much predictability in the workplace. What you thought you should do may change radically during the day*", the respondent mentions, but what creates stress is that: "*My supervisor may change what is expected of me during the day without it being communicated to me!*"

This statement indicates a day at work that must be challenging for the respondent, since the expectation from the supervisor may be altered but <u>not</u> communicated. It may be appropriate to ask how it is possible to perform in such a company.

Another respondent had tasks that could change if a situation occurs in the North Sea where for example production stops on a platform, and immediate action is required in relation to this. Alternatively that a customer needs input rather quickly, and the respondent could be asked to do this even if this was not his task according to the job description, or as he said: "*… I feel that my job description is really just an illustration of tasks*".

Karasek (1979) refers to elements of strain/stress, related to demands, such as unexpected tasks. The lack of predictability can give rise to a work situation that may be experienced as chaotic and unpredictable (ibid). Such a situation can cause stress and it will most likely affect the efficiency at work. It may be said, based on the findings, that it seems like unpredictability is a common denominator, however the extent to which this may be generalized remains uncertain.

Another insight into the findings may be found in a study by Mohr et al. (2010). Here dynamic tasks as stressors faced by managers were studied, and Mohr et al (ibid) mentions unpredictability of a task and social support by mangers' supervisors as potential moderators of perceived stress. It is expected that the same should be true between a subordinate and a supervisor in the respective MNCs. Conversely, a large degree of unpredictability would increase stress.

<u>Stress factors not mentioned</u>

In the theoretical section several potential strain factors related to job demand were mentioned. Comparing the findings with that list, it may be of interest to note stress factors related to job demand that the respondents <u>did not mention.</u> It is interesting to note that role ambiguity and role conflict did not seem to be an issue. Similarly, no environmental issues like noise or heat, were mentioned although some of the interviewees were in an open office landscape. Lastly, no issues related to fear of unemployment in this rather low oil price world were mentioned, and no issues related to career problems.

It may be appropriate to ask why these factors were not mentioned. There are three main possible causes for this. Firstly that the respondents did not see these factors as important as those mentioned. Secondly, that there were no other issues. Thirdly, that the respondents tended interpreted to be more focused on interpersonal and intercultural relationships than i.e. noise.

5.5.2 Job support

Johnson et al. (1988) argued that social support is equally important as job control in moderating the relationship between stressor and stress/strain. Support is an integral part of Karasek's JDCS model (Sargent et al., 2000; Pinto et al., 2014). Two of the most important parts of the job support dimension, are support from the supervisor and support from colleagues.

Support, or rather lack of support seems to be a widespread experience among most of the respondents, and surprisingly lack of support from their supervisor. Some of the respondents also mentioned lack of support from colleagues in the same department, in affiliated companies in other countries, or in the headquarter as a cause for stress. On the other hand, two of the respondents talked in favorable terms about support from colleagues. A surprising finding was that many of the interviewees complained about lack of knowledge from their supervisor.

Lack of support from supervisor or colleagues

Social as well as professional support from colleagues and supervisors are both crucial in order to have a good and efficient work situation for an individual. Although lack of support seemed to be quite common, the findings gave wide ranges. Some respondents were quite firm in their view in relation to both the supervisor and their colleagues: "*I get no support from my supervisor or colleagues!*" Being in such a working environment must be challenging and not very effective. Add to this that her supervisor from the *dominant culture* seemingly has a behaviour that made her feel anxious and stressed. She described a situation at work: "*I felt like being backstabbed by my supervisor, and he literally verbally abused me over the phone so that everyone could hear*".

Such autocratic behaviour as mentioned above from a supervisor is not considered acceptable within the Norwegian working environment. It may be convenient to ask why the supervisor portrays such behaviour, but more importantly why such a supervisor may continue in the same position. The respondent was asked whether she had addressed this, and other episodes that were mentioned during the interview, with her supervisor. The reply was yes, but she mentioned that it was difficult to have a sensible dialogue with the supervisor that denied everything.In the present circumstances in the petroleum sector with low oil prices and cost cuttings it may be argued that it can be challenging even to take this up if an individual fear of losing their job.

La Rocco et al. (1980) demonstrates how support may function as a buffer and help reduce stress. On the other hand, lack of support may be a source of stress as was the reality for this respondent: "*Lack of support from my supervisor gives me stress, but I don't take it personally! (...) I wish that my supervisor could give me the support, but no..*"

Working in an MNC meant for some of the subordinates that they either were working on joint projects with, or that input was required from, colleagues in affiliated companies of the MNC in other countries. Lack of support related to situations as described above was the case for one of the respondents: *"I have colleagues in other countries which I need input from"*. Having a physical distance meant that he could not just go to the colleague office, *"… things need to happen via telephone and e-mail and that creates extra stress when I don't get what I was promised."*

All of the respondents describe and expressed that support from both supervisors and colleagues are important aspects for their well-being and job satisfaction. Lack of support affected them negatively and for some was described as a source for stress. These findings are all supported by literature where this is stated to be an important part of the individual's job satisfaction (Karasek, 1998; van der Doef et al., 1999; Pinto et al., 2014).

Working in an MNC also means contact with and requests from the headquarter and quite often, at least according to one of the respondents, it was impossible to give the information that was requested. What stressed this respondent was among other things the lack of support from the Norwegian supervisor that knew that such requests could not be met, *"…when a request comes from the headquarter my supervisor is just nodding although he knows that it is not possible to do this."* Irrespective of this, the supervisor did not support the respondent: *"He just says "Yes", and then he turns to me: "It's your responsibility, fix it!" It's empty words and he knows it .. "*

Social support refers to support from supervisor and colleagues (Van der boet, 1999; Pinto et al, 2014), the findings seem to indicate that the socio-emotional (co-workers) and the instrumental support seem to lack within most of the MNC, at least as experienced by the respondent above. Yukl (2013) mentions a wide variety of behaviour that may be characterized as supportive leadership. Such beahaviour may for instance result in that the subordinate shows more loyalty, but maybe more importantly experiences less stress due to increased self-confidence.

Supervisor does not have enough knowledge

A manager or a supervisor may use the statutory authority Fayol (1916: in Hofstede, 1981) to provide support to a subordinate. There might be different opinions regarding how important the knowledge part of the supervisor's personal authority (ibid) is, but if the supervisor shall provide support such knowledge is required. That half of the respondents mentioned that their supervisor did not have enough knowledge came as a surprise.

This seemed, at least in the opinion of this respondent, to be the case with this supervisor from the *dominant culture*: *"The supervisor doesn't have enough knowledge. You have limited or no support and that is stressful"* The respondent further mentioned that in his opinion this is partly due to culture differences, but mainly due to the hierarchical organizational setup and a system where expatriates from the dominant culture are provided good jobs without proper education and experience. The respondent states that the supervisor tries to act as if the knowledge is there.

Companies within the petroleum sector are considered learning organizations with the possibility of high earnings and hence also are known for high salaries compared to other sectors. It may be argued that competition among learning organizations is not best served with supervisor-subordinate relationships like the one mentioned above. The findings showed that half of the participants in the interviews had such experiences.

5.5.3 Job control

Job control gives an employee ability and freedom to make decisions about his or her work activities (de Jonge et al., 1997; de Witte et al., 2007). Such freedom may be of two different types. The first covers control over use of skills, control of time, and organizational decisions (Karasek et al., 1997). Another is personal freedom, for instance related to making private phone calls, receiving private visitors or having the ability to perform private errands during regular working hours without asking for the supervisor's approval (ibid).

Lack of, or reduced, control typically enhances the chance of stress in the workplace (Karazek, 1997). There are three main findings from the study. First that such freedom mentioned above varies from almost none to (apparently) total freedom: "*I have flexibility to choose what I would like to do, almost each day. Further, we have the flexible hours system, and that gives also a lot of freedom.*" Secondly that the flexible working time scheme in Norwegian companies gave flexibility and contributed to the control, and lastly that control seemed to vary strongly with the job the various respondents had within an organization.

The place in the hierarchy is important, and an interviewee explains that he seemingly can use negotiation tactics to modify a task in order to have more control, and hence less stress: "*In the company where I work it is possible to a certain degree to negotiate a bit on tasks you are assigned*". The respondent further explained that when assigned a task you should not just accept it as handed over, but try to negotiate so that the degree of control is higher and the chance of success increases. This was not possible with requests from the headquarter: "*That's why requests from the headquarter are so stressful, there is no room for negotiations.*"

The respondent below describes a culture where hierarchy plays a major role on a daily basis, and he feels like he is a tiny part in a much bigger picture where nothing is clear, and where responsibility and commitments are not aligned. This seems to result in that the respondent does not have full control and this gives rise to stress: "*You are just a small part of a big puzzle. All commitments are taken by the management and they don't see the big picture. (...) Nothing is delegated, responsibilities and obligations are not aligned*". He has control over tasks assigned to him and has influence, he claims, but the consequence of the misalignment of commitment and responsibilities results in that he does not have control all the way.

The ability to take decisions related to one's own work situation is part of decision latitude or job control (Karaek, 1979), and refers to the influence an individual has to make decisions on one's work, the possibility of being creative and using, or developing, new skills (de Araujo et al., 2008). A respondent does not have much ability to do so, based on the following description: "*...after her new supervisor came as an expatriate from the headquarter*". She continues saying that there is no possibility to influence and "*…he tries to make the impression that he is interested, but it is quite the opposite*". She explains that after several episodes with the supervisor "*...I do my job and often tend to use my spare time after work to secure my own back."* There does not seem to be much chance for skills development for this respondent.

All the respondents emphasize the need for control in their working environment, which in turn they felt gives them a feeling of independency and codetermination. It is also important to portray that you have control to the supervisor and other managers according to a respondent: "*you must never say that you don't know. Give the impression that you know (....) just say something! They will never remember it anyway, you will never get caught!*"

"They" was a reference to supervisors and managers from the *dominant culture*. He continued: "*..it is important because a supervisor or one from the management may come asking. Image is important! Have some papers under the arm and make the impression that you know in case someone asks!*" The respondent explained further that if the management has the feeling that the respondent does not have control, he/she could risk being yelled at and explained in quite hard words how useless he/she is. The interviewee explained that this type of behaviour would indeed cause stress.

6 Findings and discussion – Main coping strategies

6.1 Structure of presentation

The second part of the research question is, as illustrated in the figure below: What are the main coping strategies that are used by the Norwegian subordinates working in non-Norwegian MNCs?

RQ
What are the main factors causing stress and what are the coping strategies for Norwegian subordinates working in non-Norwegian MNCs in the "white collar" part of the Norwegian petroleum sector?

Factors causing stress?		Coping strategies?
SRQ 1 What are the main factors causing stress for Norwegian subordinates working in non-Norwegian MNCs in the "white collar" part of the Norwegian petroleum sector?		**SRQ 4** What are the main coping strategies used by Norwegians subordinates working in non-Norwegian MNCs in the "white collar" part of the Norwegian petroleum sector?
SRQ 2 Are there factors related to the organizational culture, the organizational structure and the multicultural working environment that cause stress for Norwegian subordinates working in non-Norwegian MNCs in the "white collar" part of the Norwegian petroleum sector?	**SRQ 3** Are there factors related to the three dimensions in Karasek's JDCS model (job demand, job control and job support) that cause stress for Norwegian subordinates working in non-Norwegian MNCs in the "white collar" part of the Norwegian petroleum sector?	
Chapter 5		Chapter 6

Figure 6.1 The second part of the research question – coping strategies

The aim of this chapter is to present and discuss the findings. First an overview of the findings is given showing the grouping of individual coping strategies within the three coping strategy dimensions: problem-focus, emotion-focused and avoidance focused. Thereafter a more detailed presentation of the individual strategies is given within each of the three coping strategy dimensions. A summary and discussions of how the coping strategy is used by the respondents are provided at the end of the chapter.

Sonnentag (2002) considers coping strategies as individual resource alongside for instance locus of control, self-efficacy and competence that can *bolster an individual's health and well-being*. Many different individual coping strategies were mentioned by the respondents and these strategies were grouped together using the three main categories or dimensions of Pulla (2012): *problem-focused*, *emotion-focused* and *adaptive or appraisal coping*, where appropriate individual coping strategies were grouped together under a name characteristic name. It may be

convenient to start with an overview of the findings within each of the coping strategy dimensions.

6.2 Overview of the findings

A large spread of coping strategies was found within all of the three traditional coping strategy dimensions: problem-focused, emotion-focused, and avoidance-focused. All the individuals were using coping strategies within two or more of the coping strategy dimensions. Twenty three individual coping strategies were identified and slightly more than half of these fell within the problem-focused dimension. The table below summaries the findings from the interviews comparing the groups found with the three dimensions used by Pulla (2012), and within the first two dimensions using the subcategories from Lazarus et al. (1984a; 1984b).

Coping strategy dimension	Findings in each dimensions
Problem-focused	
Taking control	Systematic working / Flexible working hours
Information seeking	Communication with supervisor/colleagues
Evaluating the pros and cons	Proactive approach
Emotion-focused	
Disclaiming	
Escape avoidance	Just accept culture differences
Accepting responsibility of blame	
Exercising self-control	Experience
Positive reappraisal	Seeking social support
Adaptive or appraisal coping	
	Create space
	Activities after work

Figure 6.2 Findings versus coping strategy dimension

6.3 Presentation of the findings

6.3.1 Problem-focused dimension

Within the problem-focused dimension the aim is to reduce or to eliminate stressors (Weiten et al., 2008). This may be achieved through *determining effective strategies for reducing strain levels, establishing specific behavioural targets, and engaging in the behavioura that will help solve problems* (Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2009). Based on the approach mentioned above, four groups were found within the problem-focused dimension: *Systematic working*, *Flexible working hours*, *Communication with supervisor/colleagues*, and *Proactive approach*.

<u>Systematic working</u>

The majority of the interviewees described coping strategies within this group, one example is a combination of focus and target setting at work. One interviewee described that when the workload was high, the focus was on completing one thing at the time in order to avoid stress. Other respondents set milestones, for instance what should be done prior to lunch. A third respondent said "*..I try to work with one thing until I'm finished and not to work with several things at the same time*". These examples illustrate a systematic mind-set and concentration, which shows behaviour that aims directly to change the stressor in line with Lazarus et al. (1984b). An approach of a more proactive and defensive character concerning avoiding more blame from the supervisor is the experience from this respondent: "*To avoid being blamed for something I have not done, I try to answer all incoming and outgoing mail, since it is very much mail of a "He said," "She said" type".*"

While the respondent above had a working day with low degree of control, another had more freedom: "*I have a large degree of freedom in my job so that I can choose consciously what I will do*". Irrespective of such freedom a systematic approach was used by the respondent in order to cope with stress; "*I work very systematically, I have plans, updated calendars and various systems that help me.*"

Problem focused coping is aimed at the stressor itself; taking steps to remove it or to avoid it, or to reduce the impact if it cannot be avoided (Carver et al., 2010). One of the best ways to do exactly that is to *take control*, that is one of the three subdimensions under the problem-focused dimension (Lazarus et al. 1984a; 1984b). The findings seem to indicate that the respondents through systematic working took control over their work situation.

<u>Flexible working hours</u>

Flexible working hours typically mean that an employee can have some flexibility when the work starts and/or stops, as long as the employee is at work between the hours 0900 and 1500. Some of the respondents had even more flexibility as long as the work was done. More than half of the respondents described coping strategies within this group, exemplified with the following interviewee: "*... I can work 14 hours per day, or 6 hours if it is less busy.*"

There are many possibilities within a flexible working hour scheme, one may, as mentioned by the respondent below, work in the weekends to cope with the workload: "*My solution when I get*

stressed due to work or time constraints is to work more. In periods I have worked Saturdays and Sundays to finish things that were urgent!"

The possibility within the flexible working hour scheme gave both these respondents the chance to *take control* by working more over a certain period. Strutton et al. (1993) refers to this dimension as one of the key elements of the problem-focused dimension. The findings show that for the respondents, *taking control* in combination with their flexible working hour scheme seems to make it possible and allow them to remove the sources of stress.

Communication with supervisor/colleagues

Support, for instance from supervisor or colleagues, is one of the key moderators for stress in Karasek's JDCS model (Sargent et al., 2000; Pinto et al., 2014). Such support is most often gained through interaction and communication. The respondent below has described how she experiences stress if her supervisor, or colleagues, does not understand the input she tries to give. The coping strategy for her is to change from verbally to written communication: "*.. I write a long factual mail and copy the project and the discipline leader".* She does this "*…because I communicate better in writing than verbally.*"

The next respondent gets stressed if a part of a process she is responsible for stops due to lack of input and/or signature. She first tries to have a dialogue with the supervisor, or the colleagues, in order to find out what is not understood. If this does not succeed, she tries to explain the consequences of not proceeding with a certain task, almost like a "threat", as a coping strategy: "*…It happens that I have to tell the managers what happens if we do nothing."*

Lazarus et al. (1984a; 1984b) states that *information seeking* is one of the three problem-focused coping strategies. A similarity between the strategies used by the respondents above is *information seeking* or *information sharing*. The cause of stress for the first respondent above seems to be that she does not feel that her input is listened to by her main supervisor. Is it a coincidence that it is a "she"? Is this a result of culture differences and that the supervisor or colleague have a different view on women? Even if the female respondent had a Ph.D within her discipline, or could it be exactly therefore.

Although Lazarus et al. (1984a; 1984b) mentiones only *information seeking*, it could be argued that *information sharing* should have the same status as long as both of these are used with the aim to solve a problem. The individual strategies used by both of the respondent above are therefore argued to fall within the problem-focused dimension.

Proactive approach

A few of the respondents described coping strategies within this group. The respondent below seems to be using a coping strategy of a more proactive type. As he said: "*… Since I need to have an agreement in place to proceed with my part"*, he feels that he needs to convince the supervisor that the idea came from him: "*… I try to make it so he feels that it is something he has done or proposed, and then it is easier to make things happen."*

The same approach seems to be the case also for the respondent below. She describes an example where she takes a more proactive approach. This is done, mainly to assure issues do not escalate and create more stress for the individual: *"If there is a request from the headquarter, I answer right away, even if it is 7 o'clock on a Thursday or Friday night, because it becomes exponentially worse, if I wait a day, or after the weekend."* In addition to this proactive approach mentioned above, the respondent also uses the same approach to ensure that colleagues work toward the same target: "*…I spend a lot of time during the day not to discuss cases in detail, but to ensure that colleagues have the same vie of reality as me, so that we are working towards the same goal"*.

Skynner et al. (1994) mentions that anticipating a situation and a possible challenge can make you prepared and hence help to reduces stress. Such proactive coping has also been called positive coping (Brannon et al., 2000). *Evaluating the pros and cons* is a problem-focused coping strategy (Lazarus et al. 1984a; 1984b). From the three strategies mentioned above by the respondents, it seems like it is such *evaluation of the pros and cons* that takes place in certain situations at work. These proactive approaches were helpful, according to the respondents to mitigate potential stressful situations.

6.3.2 Emotion-focused coping

Coping strategies within the emotion-focused dimension involves *direct efforts to reduce one's strain level without affecting the actual presence of stressors* (Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2009). This involves *activities like reappraising the situation, receiving reassurance from friends and focusing on one's strengths* (ibid). As mentioned in section 6.1, where appropriate, individual coping strategies were grouped together and the findings gave rise to three such groups within an emotion-focused dimension: *Seeking social support*, *Experience*, and *Just accept culture differences*.

<u>Seeking social support</u>

Several of the respondents described coping strategies within this group. "*Those of us that have been here for a while, help each other* ", said one respondent. He also mentioned that such interaction with colleagues, both as a social and a professional support, helps to reduce stress.

One of the interviewees actively uses colleagues both within and outside the company: "*I seek contact with colleagues here and in other companies in order to talk about something other than work.*" These could of any nationality he said. "*We have not necessarily agreed to meet, I just go and talk with a colleague for companionship and support because I would like to speak to someone who "sees me" and I try to give back".*

This very active social support strategy across several internal departments, other companies and across many different nationalities was possible since the interviewee seems to have a quite large network within different companies in the petroleum sector. He mentioned such network is partly due to having changed jobs between companies, as well as having a job with many external contacts.

Seeking social support, or social coping as it is also called, is a positive coping strategy (Brannon et al., 2000). The respondent above stated: "*I use social relationships in order to counterbalance stress.*" These individual strategies mentioned by the respondents seem to fall into the category of *positive reappraisal* that is an emotional-focused coping dimension (Lazarus et al., 1984a; 1984b). What can be a better statement about *positive reappraisal* than part of the quote above: "*I would like to speak to someone who "sees me" and I try to give back"".*

<u>Just accept culture differences</u>

Working in a multicultural work environment in a non-Norwegian MNC may expose you to for instance an organizational culture and culture difference that you are not used to."*You can't avoid it! You just have to accept it!*" was this respondent's view. He describes that working in this environment is like being in a "*minefield*", but "*I do not lose sleep at night because of this!*"

Lazarus (1993) states that a threat we successfully avoid thinking about, even temporarily, does not bother us. The respondent in this case seems to describe an *escape-avoidance* coping strategy. He seemingly creates distance from a discomfortable work zone by mentally avoiding thinking about the situation.

It can be argued that an individual with increased work experience will gradually develop situation-based, advanced and maybe customized coping strategies. This seems to be confirmed by the respondents who highlighted the use of experience as a coping strategy, as illustrated by one of the statements: "*You discover that you become much more rounded around the edges, and much more adaptable. When you've been here a few years and you can really work anywhere.*"

Having experience and being comfortable in the work role also gives the respondent an upper hand: "*When I'm laid-back and calm that frustrates the supervisor from the dominant culture* ". Lazarus et al. (1984a; 1984b) states that utilizing one's experience, is an *exercising self-control* coping strategy within the emotional-focused dimension.

6.3.3 Adaptive or appraisal coping

Coping strategies within the this dimension *consist of not thinking about the problem, distracting oneself, drinking or using drugs, or remove oneself from situations that instigates the stress process* (Kammeyer-Mueller et al, 2009). Such coping strategies may be split in positive and negative coping strategies, drinking or using drugs clearly falls within the latter group. Two groups of coping strategies, both positive, were identified within the adaptive or appraisal coping dimension: *Create distance* and *Activities after work*.

Create distance

One of the respondents seemingly faced situations that could be characterized by *hopelessness* or *helplessnes*s, although she did not use those words herself. Ursin et al. (2004) ask the question in relation to *helplessnes*s: What happens when coping is impossible? The respondent states: "*I close the door and I do what is needed to be done! I protect myself and try to cover my back so I don't get blamed for something I have not done!* Her response to the situation is to create a distance from a stressful situation, but she would like to show that she is not afraid: "*It happens that I take a break to clear my head. I am not bothered if a non-Norwegian supervisor reacts if we are sitting on a sofa at work. This is my way to show that I am not afraid!*"

Another respondent creates distance by leaving stressful situations at work: "*If I get stressed I take the opportunity to leave work.*" She either uses the flexible hour scheme or: "*…if something is urgent I work from home.*"

Both of the respondents seemingly came up into situations that are intolerable at work and ordinary coping seems impossible, to use the words of Ursin et al. (2004). The difference

between these two respondents seems to be that the latter has the opportunity to leave work, signalling greater flexibility at work than what seems to be the case for the first respondent.

Activities after work

Activities after work were described as important by the respondent below in order to force the thoughts over to other than job related issues: "... *for example practical work or training (....) then you can have a good life.*"

Within the literature it seems like the attention to possible conflict between the *work role* and the *family role* has taken two directions; the work role can interfere with the *family role*, or the *family role* can interfere with the *work role* (Frone, 2003). For the respondent there is seemingly no such conflict. He points to positive aspects of activities after work and that a proper balance between work and private life is important, for instance using the body though physical work or in exercise to reduce stress.

6.4 Summary and discussion of the main coping strategies

Strutton et al. (1993) states that an individual may be using more than one coping strategy, the findings seem to show the same. In general, coping can be considered situation specific and comes into use in certain situations (Latack et al., 1992). Given the multitude of work situations in a work environment in general, and a multicultural work environment in a MNC in particular, it should be expected that the employees will need a diverse set of coping responses for different situations at work (Strutton et al., 1993).

Cox et al. (1991) suggests that all coping strategies serve one overall aim: dealing with the emotional consequences of stressful events and creating a sense of control. A key question is why the problem-focused dimension is the most commonly used among the respondents? Taylor et al. (2006) claims that this coping strategy dimension *will adjust better to life*. Further, such a coping strategy allows a person greater perceived control over the stress situation.

The concept of core self-evaluation (CSE), a score that combines an individual's score of self-esteem, locus of control, and emotional stability (Judge et al., 2002: Judge et al., 1997), may influence the choice of coping strategy taken by individuals (Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2009). Individuals with a higher CSE will engage more adaptive coping strategies, also termed the differential choice hypothesis (Chang, 1998: Chang et al., 1995), and select more of problem-solving coping and less of avoidance coping (Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2009).

One key element of CSE is self-esteem, and several studies have shown a higher correlation between a high self-esteem and academic performance, than between self-esteem and measured intelligence (Clifford, 1964). That most of the respondents had fulfilled a higher education could reflect that the CSE was more in the high end, but is this enough to explain the findings? Given the interviews and the questions asked, it may be difficult to assess this. It could also be argued that experience, education and gender may play a role.

In a MNC, the employees have a certain job description and some responsibilities. This job description may be a bit unpredictable, but in the end each individual's responsibilities "must" be done on a daily basis. No one sees this responsibility better than the individuals who are faced with them. The only way to get control, seemingly for some of the respondents, is to get the work done, which is a problem-focused coping strategy.

The findings also showed that the respondents used complementary coping strategies since they had coping strategies within two or three of the coping strategy dimensions. A weakness of the questions related to coping could be that most of the respondents understood that when asked about coping strategies it was only meant what they did in the work situation. As an example, a possible consequence of this could be that individual coping strategies that are used after work are underrepresented, and hence the average use of coping strategy dimensions would somewhat increase.

Although we have discussed the coping strategy dimensions as separate, Lazarus (2006) has stated that at least the problem-focused and the emotional-focused dimensions should be viewed as complementary coping functions rather than as two fully distinct and independent coping categories. This interrelatedness pointed out by Lazarus (ibid) could also lead to the question if individuals "always" use both the problem-focused and the emotional-focused coping strategy dimensions. The use of the coping strategies for an individual could depend on the workplace situations, and also on personal traits.

7 Summary and reflections of the empirical findings

The main threads from the discussions in the last two chapters will be pulled together here with the aim to summarize the findings related to the four sub research questions.

As mentioned in chapter 4.7.2, when data from a qualitative approach is evaluated and summarized there are disadvantages in terms of the type of conclusions that can be drawn: at best trends can be discovered. In addition it is important to remember that in the current qualitative study six Norwegian respondents employed in four non-Norwegian MNCs in the Norwegian petroleum sector were interviewed. Further, those MNCs were selected from a certain group of countries that had a large distance from Norway in relation to Hofstede.com-2 (2015) power-dimension among the available group of possible respondents. In other words all the respondents were selected from a narrower group than all employees of this sector: Norwegian subordinate, non-Norwegian MNCs, and MNC from countries with a high Hofstede's power distance compared to Norway.

It may be argued that these choices resulted in a more homogenous group of respondents compared to randomly selecting six respondents from this sector. Further, that this could directionally strengthen any "conclusions" that could be drawn from the observed trends.

The study has tried to reveal and use the respondents' subjective perceptions, experiences, and thoughts in relation to the research question. All of these are then interpreted by the researcher with the aim to understand, interpret and represent the findings as correct as possible.

In this regards it is appropriate to have in mind that the respondents' perceptions, experiences, and thoughts may be different depending on gender, education, experience, and the company where they work. In addition, if another perspective had been taken, referring to Figure 1.1, and other nationalities and/or another level in the organization had been interviewed the empirical data would most likely have been different. Irrespective, given the perspective taken, it is important through the data analysis to extract as much information as possible with the aim to find the common denominator(s) in order to be able to draw some conclusions.

Having the above in mind, it may be convenient to start with what may be drawn as main findings from the sub research questions before summarizing the conclusions on the research question. Figure 7.1 illustrated what the various sub research questions aimed to address.
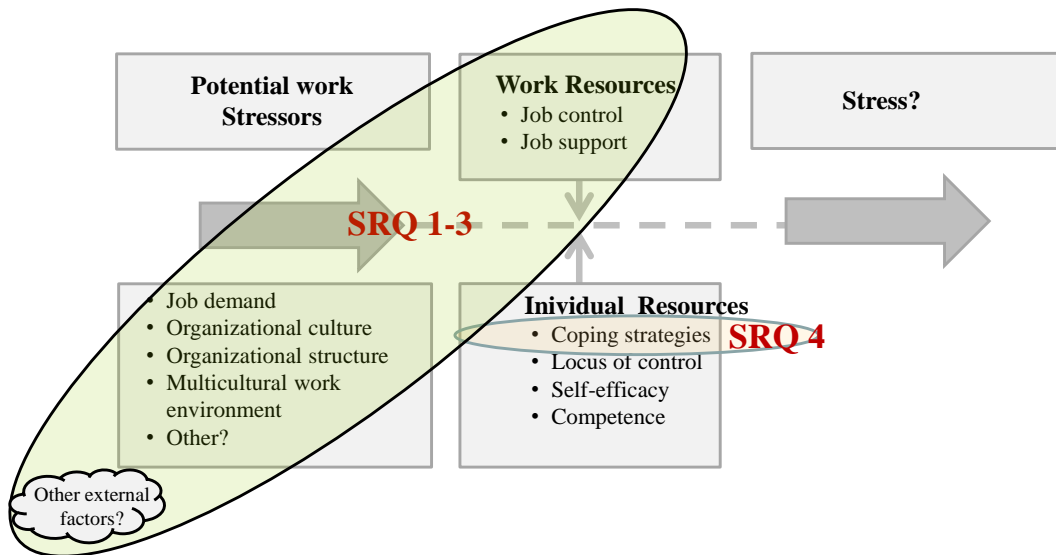
Figure 7.1 What did the sub research questions address?

What are the main factors causing stress for Norwegian subordinates working in non-Norwegian MNCs in the "white collar" part of the Norwegian petroleum sector?

As discussed in chapter 3.1, it was decided to base the theory on the <u>four</u> possible <u>internal</u> causes of stress for the Norwegian subordinates: the job situation, organizational culture, organizational structure and the multicultural work environment. The job situation was assessed through looking at job demand, job support and job control. These latter three terms are used as they are understood in relation to the Karasek JCDS model (Sargent et al., 2000; Pinto et al., 2014). In addition there could be other <u>internal</u> or <u>external</u> factors causing stress. This is illustrated in Figure 7.1 above.

There where two main conclusions on the first of the sub research questions. The first conclusion is that various factors causing stress for the respondents came up related to all four of the possible <u>internal</u> causes of stress that were mentioned above: the job situation, organizational culture, organizational structure and the multicultural work environment. More details on these are provided under SRQ 2 and SRQ 3 below.

The second conclusion is that no other <u>internal</u> or <u>external</u> factors causing stress were mentioned by the respondents. This was to some extend surprising, and will be discussed further in chapter 8 as part of the overall conclusion on the research problem.

Irrespective of the outcome on SRQ 1, the aim of SRQ 2, that was addressed with question 2 and 3 (Appendix A), was to ask the respondents questions directly related organizational culture, organizational structure and the multicultural work environment.

SRQ 2: *Are there factors related to the organizational culture, the organizational structure and the multicultural working environment that cause stress for Norwegian subordinates working in non-Norwegian MNCs in the "white collar" part of the Norwegian petroleum sector?*

The two questions that were asked addressed three potential elements within the respective MNCs. The findings related to the first of these, organizational culture, revealed that a consistently factor causing stress for the most of the interviewees was related to the *dominant culture* in the MNC. The respondents described how they perceived two different cultures in the organization, the *dominant culture* and the Norwegian culture. The *dominant culture* was typically referred to as the "official culture" in the organization, and reflected the culture from the MNCs headquarter and the country where the headquarter is located.

The finding related to culture, where the majority of the respondents claimed a lack of interest and willingness to learn more about the Norwegian culture from the employees that belonged to the *dominant culture*, was in contrast to the claims from most of the interviewees that they had an interest to understand more of the *dominant culture*. This lack of interest from "the other side" seemingly stopped several of the interviewees from pursuing their interest in the *dominant culture.*

In addition to the lack of interest from the *dominant culture*, many other sub factors came up that are linked to the culture factor, at least it was the view of most of the interviewees. Examples are an autocratic leadership style, lack of respect for Norwegian laws and regulations, sexual harassment, gender discrimination and a perception of unequal treatment in the MNCs of Norwegian employees and expatriates. The interviewees gave several examples of mild to somewhat extreme variants of these factors and also how these perceptions affected them personally**.**

In relatation to the second element, the findings seemed to confirm that the organizational structure, especially the hierarchy structure, and an autocratic leadership style were factors causing stress for many of the interviewees. Such hierarchical structure and leadership behaviour

is often preferred by MNC`s from countries with high score on power distance, and was highlighted by many of the respondents to provoke negative emotions and causing stress.

The findings seem to indicate that supervisors' behaviours are totally different from what is considered as acceptable within the national culture of the MNC`s. The manager's behavior can be determinited by many different factors, for example traits and skills, power and authority, organizations rules and policies, the organization climate, but not the least the national culture he/she grew up in (House et al, 1997; Yukl, 2013). It may be appropriate to ask if this might explain, but not defend, such observed behavior, as seen by the respondents.

Yukl (2013) has shown how particular learning organizations have experimented with different types of organization structure, such as flat structure as well as project and matrix structures, and Gundersen et al. (2001) have stated that these types of experiments are lagging a bit behind, especially in Norway. The organizational structure of the MNC in question seemed to have rather traditional hierarchical structure, with root in the dominant culture. Gundersen et al. (2001) has asked the question: Are the traditionally hierarchical organizations fit for purpose? Based on the findings of the study it may be argued that the four MNCs have a way to go. It is the apparent collision of cultures that lay beneath many of the descriptions from the participants in the interviews.

Hoftstede`s (1998) description of what characterizes an organizational culture is that the culture can give the individuals a feeling of being part of a *"collective programming of the mind that distinguish the members of one organization from others"*. A shared view among most of the respondents showed that the *collective programming of the mind* seemingly was a bit different between those of the *dominant culture* and the Norwegian culture in all four of the MNCs.

These culture norms, that function as social laws specifying what acceptable form of behavior and leadership is, seemingly existed in all of the respondents' workplaces. If the two largest culture groups, the *national culture* and the *dominant cult*ure, have challenges in the communication and cooperation, it can be argued that this may affect the business negatively and possibly also be a challenge for the performance of the MNC. The presence of several subcultures, also national subcultures, in the respective companies was described by the respondents. It may be argued that the various culture norms that are represented in the various national subcultures also pose challenges in relation to communication and cooperation. Such challenges should be taken seriously by the management in the respective companies.

The third element, the multicultural work environment, seemed to pose challenges and partly stress for the respondents. Here the appropriate question was asked: What causes most stress for the Norwegian subordinates, the organizational culture or the presence of multinational and multicultural groups in the MNCs. The answers from the respondents varied the whole spectrum: from only the organizational culture, to only the presence of the many nationalities, and a combination of these two.

Culture differences were mentioned as factor causing stress for some of the respondents. Partly due to the sheer number of nationalities and that each had to be approached differently, but some also mentioned tensions between different nationalities within the MNCs. For others this was not perceived as a challenge or a factor causing stress, especially since their daily work concerned technical work tasks. Here it was felt that cultural differences meant nothing.

The interviewees presented several examples how the same information is perceived differently due seemingly to a combination of cultural heritage, intercultural communication skills as well as using English as a common language. Several of the respondents came with statements like: "...all speak English, but no one really speaks English except the native English and Americans." In this regard the findings seemed to confirm Hall`s (1981) and Harzing et al (2008) statements that show how communication and English as a common language can pose challenges.

SRQ 3 had the aim to identify possible psychological strain in the workplace and also to identify other aspects of the work environment, which may increase or reduce strain related to demand.

SRQ 3: *Are there factors related to the three dimensions in Karasek's JDCS model (job demand, job control and job support) that cause stress for Norwegian subordinates working in non-Norwegian MNCs in the "white collar" part of the Norwegian petroleum sector??*

Karasek (1999) mentioned two commonly used moderators that can affect the well-being of the individual, better known as control and support. The findings seem to show that the possibility of having a predictable work situation with respect to job demand is not present for the interviewees. The lack of such possibility may be seen as a source of stress.

Several of the respondents describe lack of support in various forms as a source of stress in the work situation. In particular lack of support from the supervisor and the supervisor's seemingly lack of knowledge were mentioned specifically. The supervisors were partly Norwegian and partly from the *dominant culture*. Beneath the lack of support from the supervisors, there seems

to be a variety of explanations: a hierarchical organization structure, culture differences and an autocratic leadership style. The findings highlighted how the subordinates felt that their supervisor did not have adequate knowledge. Advancement of personnel from the dominant culture without proper knowledge and education were mentioned as a possible cause of strain by several interviewees.

The possibility the employees have to use the flexible working hour system in Norway seemed to provide opportunity to control the working situation and hence in some respect could reduce stress. Irrespective of this, the degree of control varied considerably among the interviewees and seemingly depended on job tasks.

Coping strategies are the individual's resources alongside for instance locus of control, self-efficacy and competence that can *bolster the individual's health and wellbeing* (Sonnentag, 2002). SRQ 4 had the aim to identify the coping strategies that were used by the Norwegian subordinates.

SRQ 4: *What are the main coping strategies used by Norwegians subordinates working in non-Norwegian MNCs in the "white collar" part of the Norwegian petroleum sector?*

All of the interviewees seemed to have individual coping strategies within two or three of the coping strategies dimensions, and it seemed that the problem-focused dimension was most commonly used. Interestingly, frequent use of problem-focused coping has been claimed to reduce long-term stress levels (Folkman, 1984; Higgins et al., 1995). The findings suggest that situation dependent strategies were initiated by the respondents in order to reduce stress and to help tackle the work situation, which is in line with Strutton et al. (1993).

As mentioned by Kramer (2010), coping is a conscious mechanism that is used in certain situations. Unpredictable demand was mentioned by the majority of the interviewees, and the findings suggest that when these situations occurred a problem-focused approach was used as coping strategy. The individual strategies that are initiated trigger certain behaviour in the situation which in turn helped to "solve" the problem at hand. This seemingly gave the respondents a feeling of control over the work situation, for instance through systematic working and use of the flexible working hour scheme. It seems to be consistent with Strutton et al. (1993) that state to *take control* is one of the key elements of the problem-focused dimension.

The findings suggest that lack of support from the supervisor was common for most of the respondents. Further, the dominant culture, the hierarchical structure and the multicultural work

environment were factors that caused stress. It seems like emotional strategies were most commonly used to deal with situations at work where the above factors were present. Experience and social support played a major role here as well.

Stress can create different reactions for individuals in the workplace, and one way to deal with situations at work, as mentioned by Kammyer-Muller (2005), is to *remove oneself from situations* that create stress. Such a strategy was also used by some of the respondents where distance was created either in the form of leaving work and possibly working from home, or seeking refuge in one's own office. Having activities after work was also mentioned as a strategy to tackle work related stress.

The summary of the findings above gives a good basis to conclude on the overall research question.

8 Conclusion and recommendations for further work

8.1 Conclusion

The conditions at work are the product of the interaction between the job with its tasks and targets, the work environment, the company with its structure, culture and subcultures, and the individual. This is the context for psychosocial risk factors in the workplace. Depending on how the work is designed, organised and managed, as well as on the economic and social context of work, the work can result in increased level of stress and can lead to serious deterioration of mental and physical health (osha.europa.eu, 2015).

Stress in the workplace has a high cost and it is important to prevent work-related stress in order to reduce the consequences for the employees, the companies and also the society as a whole (nlia.no, 2015). This is mainly why stress has been, and most likely will be, high on the agenda also in Norway. Stress is also a theme for research within many different disciplines, examples are medicine, psychology, psychiatry, sociology, and from a management and organizational perspective.

My aim with this study has been to investigate what factors that may trigger stress for Norwegian subordinates working within the white collar part of the petroleum sector in Norway and in non-Norwegian MNCs. Further to gain insight into which coping strategies they use.

Often assessment of stress at work is done using Karasek's stress model in some form, and the dimensions of this model were used in this study here as well. The Norwegian subordinates worked in a non-Norwegian MNC, which could mean that the organizational culture and organizational structure could be a possible casue of stress. Lastly the work environment in the petroleum sector is characterized by the presence of many different nationalities and cultures. Would this possibly be a cause of stress?

All of the above possible causes of stress may be characterized as <u>internal</u> causes, but there could also be other <u>internal</u> or <u>external</u> causes of stress for the Norwegian subordinates.

Comparing the situation in the petroleum sector in Norway mid 2014 with the situation today reveals dramatic changes. The oil price has fallen and as consequences of this, most companies within this sector has reduced activity and there are far between the positive news in the media. The focus seems increasingly on cost cuttings, reduced manning and rising unemployment rate within this sector. Would this be a possible external cause of stress for some of the Norwegian subordinates?

In order to gain a deeper insight of the research question, a qualitative approach was taken with semi-structured interviews of six Norwegian subordinates working in four non-Norwegian MNCs. The six respondents were selected from a larger group of respondents based upon three simple criteria: that the MNC where they were employed had a headquarter in a country that scored higher than Norway on Hofstede's power dimension, four MNCs should be represented and at least one should be from Europe and at least one should be from outside Europe.

The study had as aim through four sub research questions to address and arrive at a conclusion for the main research question:

> *What are the main factors causing stress and what are the coping strategies for Norwegian subordinates working in non-Norwegian MNCs in the "white collar" part of the Norwegian petroleum sector?*

A working assumption was developed in order to guide the preparation of the interview questions and to find relevant theory. This working assumption was based on an expectation that the stress for the respondents would be linked to their job situation and the internal work environment within the MNCs: organizational culture, organizational structure and the multicultural working environment. It seems like the main conclusion from the study very much confirm such working assumption, it was however unexpected that the current situation in this sector was not mentioned by any of the respondents. There could also be other factors, like the balance between home and work that could possibly be worse in the current situation. This was not the case, and it may be convenient to ask why the respondents seemingly were unaffected by fear of unemployement in the current situation.

One way to address this question is to try to see it as the respondent's perveive it themselves, and may be the starting point is their "individual resources": coping strategies, locus of control, self-efficacy, and competence. Can it be argued that the higher an individual perceive their own resources, the less frightening and threatning any situation will occur to them? On the first of these "individual resources", coping strategies, the findings seem to indicate that the respondents have a good arsenal of individual coping strategies that made them able to address difficult situations at work.

Another way to look at the same would be through the concept of CSE that combines: self-esteem, locus of control, and emotional stability (Judge et al., 2002; Judge et al., 1997). Several studies have shown that there is a higher correlation between a high self-esteem and academic

performance, than between self-esteem and measured intelligence (Clifford, 1964). The elements of CSE can also be viewed as "individual resources". The lack of influence of the current situation in the petroleum sector on the respondents may indicate that the respondents perceive their "individual resources" as high.

According to Skog (2013) systematic errors may occur if respondents consistently answer in a way to portray a different picture of them. A recent article mentions that employees from the petroleum sector that had lost their jobs hesitated to seek social support (sysla.no, 2015). This may indicate that employees in this sector have a pride and do not easily admit failure, as a loss of job would be for some. Was this maybe also the case with the respondents, such that they did not want to portray fear of unemployment? It might be "allowed" to talk about stress due to *dominant culture* and use of English as a common language, as the respondents did, but discussing stress due to fear of unemployement was possibly too personal.

Although the findings seems to be in line with the working assumption it may be convient to elaborate further in more detail on these factors, that may be split in four parts. Both the organizational culture and organizational structure, and more specifically the *dominant culture* and the hierarchical structure in the MNCs, were mentioned. Thirdly, related to the multicultural work environment both the culture differences and the use of English as a common language were mentioned as factors causing stress. Lastly in relation to the three dimensions of Karasek's JDCS-model, two main factors were mentioned: the unpredictability in demand, lack of support from the supervisor and lack of knowledge of the supervisor. Lack of control was a factor causing stress only to a minority of the respondents. All the individuals were using coping strategies within two or more coping strategy dimensions, but the coping strategies within the problem-focus dimension were most common.

The various factors causing stress are mentioned above. May further insight be gained by seeing the various factors up against each other? This will be elaborated upon below.

Let us start with the conclusion about factors causing stress, what kind of reflections may be made when seeing these in combination? Firstly Karasek's JDCS-model has as an underlying assumption that both control and support at work may be buffers or moderators of stress. It may then be convenient to ask if there is a link between the lack of support from the supervisor and the stress related to unpredictability on the job demand side. Are these two not two different factors but linked together as illustrated below?
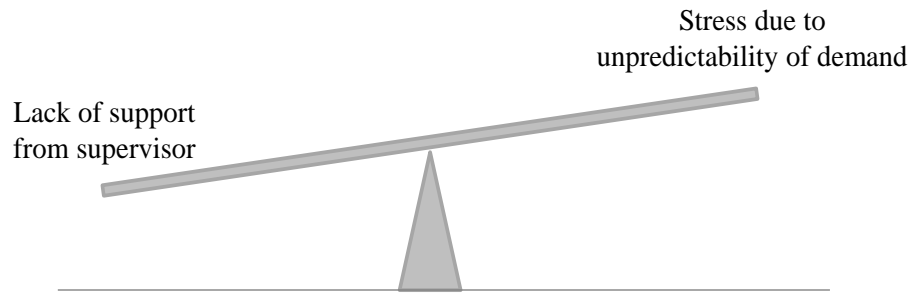
Figure 8.1 Job demand versus job support – a simplified illustration

Many of the respondents complained that when such situations of unpredictability occurred the supervisor could not, or would not, give support. None of the interviewees described a supervisor that would proactively support the subordinate. It seems that the supervisor either lacks the appropriate knowledge, or that the supervisor was the cause of such unpredictable demand, or the supervisor choose to ignore that the unpredictable demand was possible to solve. It is not possible to conclude on this, but the mental model of a supervisor that supports the subordinates, is seemingly not what the subordinates experience.

Half of the respondents mentioned that their supervisor lacks knowledge within their area. Can this be a reason for not providing support? *S*everal of the respondents mentioned that they did not expect their supervisor to necessarily help, but they would like the support. The impression seems to be that it was more the social support than the knowledge they would like to have. Or can it be that when not having the knowledge or being insecure the supervisors hide behind the hierarchical system in the various MNCs? It does not help that information or messages from the management or the supervisor are understood differently by subordinates from different cultures, as was another conclusion from the study.

In this sense it seems like almost all the seemingly different conclusions on the main factors causing stress are linked together. Only a further study may go into more depth on these reflections. The only conclusion that seems to be totally independent is that there are many different nationalities and cultures in the respective MNCs and that this was a factor causing stress for many of the respondents.

In relation to the coping strategies it seems like most of the interviewees had a good arsenal of individual strategies that helped them in the workplace. The dominant use of the problem-focused coping dimension and the use of complementary coping strategies strengthen that observation. On the other hand coping strategies belong to the individual resources and these

should be continuously improved to the benefit of both the individual and the company they work for. An alternative, in addition to "on the job development", for improving individual coping skills could be internal or external courses.

Assuming that the conclusions from the current study are correct, should there be implemented some changes in the respective MNCs, or also in other companies within the petroleum sector in Norway? First of all it would depend on the attitude of the companies and their willingness and interest to do something. Is it possible to mention stress, in particular at present time with fear of unemployment within this sector? Further, what is the attitude of the employee unions? The way forward, still assuming that the conclusions are true, are most likely to make all employees in the companies aware of these issues and have a dialogue. However, even if this would be the case, changing the attitude would most likely take time.

8.2 Recommendations for further work

The research question that was addressed in this study took the perspective from Norwegian subordinates in a non-Norwegian MNC (labeled 8 in the figure below). Maintaining this perspective for the time being, there are several further studies that could be of interest to pursue.

Since the conclusions from a qualitative study may only give indications about a phenomenon, it would be interesting to perform a similar qualitative study with other respondents from the same companies with the aim to possibly verify the conclusions from this study. In the current study the MNCs were selected from countries having a higher score than Norway on Hofstede's power

Within local Norwegian company or Norwegian MNC's, Main factors causing stress and coping strategies for:		
Place in the organization	Employee nationality	
	Norwegian	Other nationalities
Supervisors/managers	1	2
Subordinates	3	4

Within non-Norwegian MNC's, main factors causing stress and coping strategies for:			
Place in the organization	Employee nationality		
	Norwegian	Country of MNC head quarter	Other nationalities
Supervisors/managers	5	6	7
Subordinates	8	9	10

Figure 8.2 Simplified illustrations of ten different viewpoints for perceived stress

dimension (Hofstede et al. 2010). A possible extension of this current study could be to select MNC that were from countries closer to Norway on the same power dimension, in order to see if the conclusions to the research question would change compared with the present study.

If such studies should be initiated it is very important that the participants in new interviews have the required trust in order get good and reliable data. It is foreseen that arranging such interviews in cooperation with a company as the respondents might fear that the company could trace back for instance quotations to individuals, and therefore the respondents would not answer open and honestly. Such concerns were raised by a few of the respondents in the current study after the interviews were over.

Another interesting extension of the current study could be to address gender differences related to the current research question. Other parameters that also could be of interest to address differences in the types of work the respondents perform in the organization, education, length of experience, and the nationality of the subordinate's supervisor.

The above research could be done both in a qualitative as well as a quantitative study, and not only from perspective 8, referring to Figure 8.2, but also from the nine other perspectives. Of particular interest would be perspectives 6 and 9, the view from subordinates and supervisors/managers from the *dominant culture*.

An individual's perception of stress in the workplace depends on for instance the available resources at work as well as the individual resources, such as coping strategies, locus of control, self-efficacy, and competence. Such individual resources vary from one individual to another, and hence the tolerance for strains in the workplace varies between individuals. This makes it difficult to assess and conclude when addressing the research question in different settings, being a qualitative or a quantitative study.

Lastly, particular in the present situation in the petroleum sector in Norway it could be of interest to explore possible stress due to fear of unemployment. In view of the discussion in chapter 8.1, possibly a quantitative anonymous study would be best to get reliable data.

9 Reflections

In the process of finalizing the study the conclusions were discussed with several people of different nationalities and from various companies in the petroleum sector in Norway. These discussions made me to reflect, and the conclusions from the study were put in another perspective. Out of many questions asked I would like to highlight two:

1. *Would the conclusions related to factors causing stress be different if the study was done in five or ten years from now?*
2. *Would the conclusions related to factors causing stress be similar if the same study had been done at present, for example in the petroleum sector in the UK?*

The figure below aims to summaries my elaborating on the first question in light of the conclusions in chapter 8.1 and the discussions with several colleagues within the petroleum sector here in Norway. The elaboration is most conveniently split in three parts: Job demand/support/control, Organizational culture/structure and Multicultural work environment.

On the first of these, my assessment is that a similar study with similar respondents and from the same companies would give roughly the same conclusions in five or ten years, or possibly a slight increase. This is illustrated by the left side of the figure below. Possible factors for stress here are very much governed by the subordinates work tasks and the relationship between the subordinate and his/her supervisor and colleagues, as well as the support and control. Since I do not see much change here the next ten years, my assessment is that no much change will occur. On the other hand I foresee that fear of unemployment will come up as possible stronger factor causing stress. Formally fear of unemployment, or job insecurity, is part of the job demand dimension (Karasek, 1979).
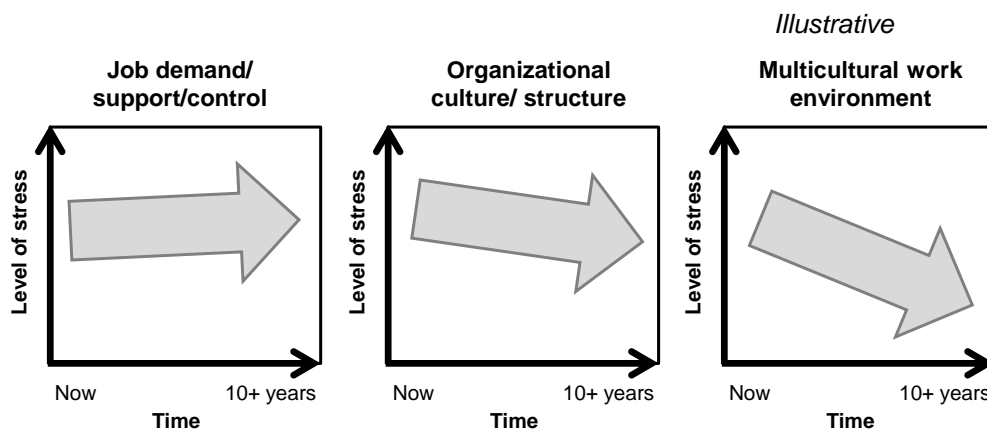
Figure 9.1 Reflections on stress over time related to the research question

Over time the organizational culture in an affiliate of a MNC in Norway will most likely change so that the *national culture* within the MNC will gradually strengthen its position versus the *dominant culture*. A consequence of this would for instance be a reduction of potential stress factor due to the *dominant culture* and hierarchy, as illustrated in the figure above.

The largest change is likely to be related to the multicultural work environment. Over time it will be considered as the "normal situation" for Norwegian employees, as for most other European nationalities, and my hypothesis for the future is that this likely would diminish over time as a factor causing stress, as illustrated in the figure above.

The answer to the second question above is most likely yes; experience of stress and use of coping strategies would be different between subordinates in Norway and for instance UK. One of most likely many reasons for this is that there is a cultural dimension to the experience of stress (Aldwin, 2007). Lazarus (1999) mentions that a person's cultural background is important for how social environments are handled and reconciles them with the person's own goals and beliefs, and hence affects directly coping behaviors and coping strategies. Shek et al. (1990) also mentions that there is a culture dimension to coping strategies.

The second question above was included to illustrate this point rather than trying to answer and elaborate on possible differences.

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10 Notes

1. It could be argued for the section under Migration and expatriation should have been placed under Theory due to the extensive use of references. Since the section is used to provide background for the research question and is not used as theory to help addressing the research question, it was placed under Context rather than Theory.

2. This is a short summary of what was mentioned from two of the respondents. Independently, almost the same was mentioned during one of the test interview, see section 4.7.1. Further, checking with a person that previously had been working as expatriate, revealed similar information.

3. In 2012 Norway had 2.1% of the oil production in the world ranging as the 10th largest oil exporter in the world, and 3.4% of the world gas production and was the 3rd largest gas exporter (snl.no-2, 2015).

4. In 2012 there were 81 921 employees in the petroleum sector (petroleum and petroleum-related industries combined). Of these, 76 631 were settled in Norway, while 5 290 were settled in other countries. The latter where in only in Norway as part of their work assignment. Since a characteristic of offshore work is shift rotation with long periods on leave, working offshore is suitable for long commutes (SSB, 2015).

   In the media there are often used numbers for the petroleum industry that are considerable above those used by SSB (see above). In this case companies are included that are a bit more peripheral from the core petroleum sector. For instance that these companies provide various services only partly to the petroleum sector and also companies that concentrate more on the export market. As an example of such number for the petroleum industry is a source that states that there was 330 000 employed in the extended petroleum sector in 2014 (iris.no, 2015).

5. Statistical data was purchased from SSB for a publication (Potoku et al., 2013) and these data showed 148 different nationalities in the petroleum sector for 2011.

6. Only the Norwegian branch of the relevant companies and organizations were considered.

7. The following anecdote provided by Rosch (1986) show that Selye's use of the term stress was due to lack of knowledge in the English language: *In 1676, Hooke's Law described the effect of external stresses, or loads that produced various degrees of "strain", or distortion, on different materials. Selye once complained to me that had his knowledge of English been more precise, he might have labelled his hypothesis the strain concept, and he did encounter all sorts of problems when his research had to be translated. (Rosch, 1986)*

8. The English Edward Burnett Tylor is considered by many to be the founding father of the cultural anthropology (Bohannan, 1969).

9. "The Law of Jante" is an English translation of "Janteloven". The origin of the term "Janteloven" is the Norwegian- born Danish author Aksel Sandemose that in the novel "En Flyktning Krysser Sitt Spor" (A fugitive crosses his tracks) list 10 rules or commandments ("Janteloven"), and later in the book comes with a 11th rule, that govern the social norms in the fictions town, although Sandemose stated later that he was seeking to formulate and describe attitudes that had already been part of the Scandinavian psyche for centuries.

   1. You're not to think you are anything special.
   2. You're not to think you are as good as us.

3. You're not to think you are smarter than us.
4. You're not to convince yourself that you are better than us.
5. You're not to think you know more than us.
6. You're not to think you are more important than us.
7. You're not to think you are good at anything.
8. You're not to laugh at us.
9. You're not to think anyone cares about you
10. You're not to think you can teach us anything.

11. Perhaps you don't think I know a few things about you?

10. An example in the media (tu.no, 2015) was that while Statoil employees had to buy notebooks themselves at Claes Ohlson, Statoil held a tennis party in London with Elton John.

11 Literature

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Appendices

Appendix A: Interview questions

1. What are the main factors that cause stress for you in the company where you work?

2. You are working in a "French" multinational company. Are there factors or issues related to the organizational culture or the organizational structure that affect your experience of stress?

3. It is a multicultural work environment in the company where you work. Are there factors or issues related to the multicultural work environment that affect your experience of stress?

4. Are there factors or issues related to job demand in you current position that causes stress for you?

5. Are there factors or issues related to job support in you current position that causes stress for you?

6. Are there factors or issues related to job control in you current position that causes stress for you?

7. Could you share what kind of methods or coping strategies you use in order to avoid or reduce stress at work?

Appendix B: Interview guide

Introduction to the interview setting given to the respondent:

First of all I would like to thank you for being willing to participate in this interview. The interview is expected to take approximately one hour. It is very important for me that you feel comfortable in this setting and that you trust that you will reamin anonymous.

Information provided and sharing of your personal experiences and feeling related to the seven questions may be used as part of my master thesis at the University of Stavanger. Full confidentiality will be secured: no names, age or company affiliation will be mentioned and quotes from the interviews that will be used in the master thesis may be altered, if necessary to secure your anonymity. I would also like to mention that the master thesis will be written in English, something that may further mask the quotations I will use.

I plan to use an audio recorder during the interview if you accept that. If you do not accept this, this is no problem for me. After the interview has been transcribed the recording will be deleted. Do you accept that an audio recorder will be used in this interview?

In line with the research guidelines, you can stop at any time during the interview or you may elect not to answer questions that I ask without having to give a reason for it. If you stop the interview, the audio recorder is switched off and the interview is over. If this happened the interview will not be used and the recordings will be deleted at once.

As mentioned, seven questions will be asked and these will address factors causing stress for you in the work situation, and what type of coping strategies you have at work. It is not planned to submit a copy or a summary of the transcribed interview to you unless you would like to have it. Do you want to have a copy or a summary of the transcribed interview?

Do you have any questions before the interview starts?

Before the audio recording is turned on, could you tell me a bit about what you do in the company?

Introduction to the first question given to the respondent:

In the first question I would like to get an overview of the main factor that cause challenges or strain for you in the work situation. This and several of the following questions contain the word stress. There is no definition of stress that is used here, you decide yourself what stress is.

1. What are the main factors that cause stress for you in the company where you work?

Notes to myself:

- This is the question aimed to get an overview of the main factors casuing stress.

- It is important to understand what the respondent answer and the meaning of it, so ask follow-up questions if required.

- If the respondent hesitate or have problems to answer, <u>do not</u> ask specifically about certain factor and if these are a cause of stress. Do not put the word into the respondent's mouth! Instead ask the respondents more generally what he/she consider working in a multinational company, and also ask if he/she was worked elsewere before and see if this might help. Alternativly ask more general questions – see below.

- Note that the respondent may come with information here to a question that has not been asked yet. If this is the case do not be afraid to pursue this before going back to the original question.

- If the respondent comes with more general answers on factors causing stress, ask for examples where this occurred.

- Possible follow-up questions:

  o Could you please, tell me a bit more about …..
  o You mentioned ….., can you give some examples?

  o How do you feel working in the multinational company?
  o Have you worked elsewhere before joining this company?
  o In general do you feel any stress at work, and if so in which situatuions does this typically occur?

Introduction to the second question given to the respondent:

In the second question I would like to ask if there are factor or issues related the organizational culture and organizational structure of the company you work for that is important for you in possible experience related to strain at work.

2. You are working in a "French" multinational company. Are there factors or issues related to the organizational culture or the organizational structure that affect your experience of stress?

Notes to myself:

- This is the only direct question related to the organizational culture and the organizational structure..

- It is important to understand what the respondent answer and the meaning of it, so ask follow-up questions if required.

- If the respondent hesitates or has problems to answer, <u>do not</u> ask specifically if certain aspects of the organizational culture or structure pose any challenges or are perceived as stressful. Do not put the word into the respondent's mouth! Instead ask the respondents more generally what he/she consider working in the multinational company and see if this might help. Alternativly ask more general questions – see below.

- Note that the respondent may come with information related to a question asked previously or that has not been asked yet. If this is the case do not be afraid to pursue this before going back to the original question.

- If the respondent comes with more general answers on factors causing stress, ask for <u>examples</u> where this occurred.

- Possible follow-up questions:

  o Could you please, tell me a bit more about …..
  o You mentioned ….., can you give some examples?

  o How do you feel working in the multinational company?

Introduction to the third question given to the respondent:

You work in a company with many nationalities and cultures, and in the third question I would like to ask if there are factor or issues related to this that is important for you in relation to your possible experiences of strain or challenges at work.

3. **It is a multicultural work environment in the company where you work. Are there factors or issues related to the multicultural work environment that affect your experience of stress?**

Notes to myself:

- This is the only direct question related to the multicultural work environment. .

- It is important to understand what the respondent answer and the meaning of it, so ask follow-up questions if required.

- If the respondent hesitate or have problems to answer, <u>do not</u> ask specifically if certain sitiations related to the multicultural work environment or if such situations are stressful. Do not put the word into the respondent's mouth! Instead ask the respondents more generally what he/she consider working in such a work environment and see if this might help. Alternativly ask more general questions – see below.

- Note that the respondent may come with information related to a question asked previously or that has not been asked yet. If this is the case do not be afraid to pursue this before going back to the original question.

- If the respondent comes with more general answers on factors causing stress, ask for examples where this occurred.

- Possible follow-up questions:

  o Could you please, tell me a bit more about …..
  o You mentioned ….., can you give some examples?

  o How do you feel working in the multicultural work environment in your company?

Introduction to the fourth question given to the respondent:

The following three questions are related specifically to your job situation. In the first of these I address if you feel challenges or strain related to "job demand". Think of it as the task and targets you have at work irrespective if it is reflected in your job description.

4. Are there factors or issues related to job demand in you current position that causes stress for you?

Notes to myself:

- This is the first question in relation to the three dimensions of Karasek's JDCS- model.

- It is important to understand what the respondent answer and the meaning of it, so ask follow-up questions if required.

- If the respondent hesitate or have problems to answer, <u>do not</u> ask specifically if certain sitiations with lack of support occur or if such situations are stressful. Do not put the word into the respondent's mouth! Instead ask the respondents what he/she considers to be "job demandt" and see if this might help. Alternativly ask more general questions – see below.

- Note that the respondent may come with information related to a question asked previously or that has not been asked yet. If this is the case do not be afraid to pursue this before going back to the original question.

- If the respondent comes with more general answers on factors causing stress, ask for examples where this occurred.

- Possible follow-up questions:

    o Could you please, tell me a bit more about …..
    o You mentioned ….., can you give some examples?

    o What do you consider to be the "job demand" in your current position?
    o Is your task and targets set in a job description or are there also ad-hoc tasks?
    o Do you experience that your supervisor modifies or changes the demands and expectation to you?

Introduction to the fifth question given to the respondent:

The next question addresss "job support". Think of support as generally as you can, either from your supervisor or colleagues, as internal or external cources, as software or having a new laptop.

5. Are there factors or issues related to job support in you current position that causes stress for you?

Notes to myself:

- This is the second question in relation to the three dimensions of Karasek's JDCS- model.

- It is important to understand what the respondent answer and the meaning of it, so ask follow-up questions if required.

- If the respondent hesitate or have problems to answer, <u>do not</u> ask specifically if certain sitiations with lack of support occur or if such situations are stressful. Do not put the word into the respondent's mouth! Instead ask the respondents what he/she considers to be "job support" and see if this might help. Alternativly, ask if the respondent in general feel that he/she has the support required in the work situation, and if this might vary from day to day.

- Note that the respondent may come with information related to a question asked previously or that has not been asked yet. If this is the case do not be afraid to pursue this before going back to the original question.

- If the respondent comes with more general answers on factors causing stress, ask for examples where this occurred.

- Possible follow-up questions:

    o Could you please, tell me a bit more about …..
    o You mentioned ….., can you give some examples?

    o What do you consider to be the required "job support" for the normal/ and/or ad-hoc tasks you have in your current position?
    o Do you feel in general that you have required support at work with regards to the task and targets you are responsible for?
    o In your view does this vary from one day to the next?

Introduction to the sixth question given to the respondent:

The last question addressed "job control". Think of control as generally as you can, for example the decisions you may take with regard to your own job, for instance when, in which order and, to the extent relevant, how to do these.

6. Are there factors or issues related to job control in you current position that causes stress for you?

Notes to myself:

- This is the third question in relation to the three dimensions of Karasek's JDCS- model.

- Important to understand what the respondent answer and the meaning of it, so ask follow-up questions if required.

- If the respondent hesitate or have problems to answer, <u>do not</u> ask specifically if certain sitiations occur or if such situations are stressful. Do not put the word into the respondent's mouth! Instead ask the respondents what he/she considers to be "job control" as see if this might help. Alternativly ask if the respondent feels that he/she has control in the work situation, and if this might vary from day to day.

- Note that the respondent may come with information related to a question that has been asked previously. If this is the case do not be afraid to pursue this before going back to the original question.

- If the respondent comes with more general answers on factors causing stress, ask for examples where this occurred.

- Possible follow-up questions:

    o Could you please, tell me a bit more about …..
    o You mentioned ….., can you give some examples?

    o What do you consider to be "job control" in your current position?
    o Do you feel that you have control at work with regards to the task and targets you are responsible for?
    o In your view does this vary from one day to the next?

Introduction to the question given to the respondent:

Coping related to a work situation is considered an individual resource that is consciously used in order manage a potential, or an existing, stressful work situation.

7. Could you share what kind of methods or coping strategies you use in order to avoid or reduce stress at work?

Notes to myself:

- Remember that this is the only question in relation to the second part of the research question, coping strategies, so it is important to ask follow-up questions to get as much information from the respondents as possible!

- Important to understand what the respondent answer and the meaning of it, therefore ask follow-up questions if required.

- If the respondent hesitate or have problems to answer, try to ask specifically about stressful sitiations mentioned prior during the interview and ask what type of coping methods he/she typically would use in such situations.

- Try to find out which coping methods the respondent use in different work situations, if possible.

- Possible follow-up questions:

  o Could you please, tell me a bit more about …..
  o You mentioned ….., can you give some examples?

  o What situations at work do you use such coping strategy?
  o Do you have coping strategies that you use in specific situations like:
    - High workload or time squeeze
    - Lack of support from supervisor or colleagues
    - (select others based upon the interview so far)

End of interview statement given to the respondent:

I have now gone through all questions. Are there anything you would like to mentions related to stress and/or coping that you feel have not been addressed as part of these questions?

Thank you very much for you participation in this interview.

Appendix C: Oil companies in Norway

The aim was to find the nationalities of the oil companies in Norway. Examples are: Statoil counted as from Norway and Repsol from Spain. Some oil companies are affiliated company of a MNC that has background from more than one country, example here are Norske Shell and GdF Suez. In this case the nationality is for simplifity shared between two countries; Norske Shell: 0.5 UK and 0.5 The Netherlands, and GdF Suez: 0.5 France and 0.5 Belgium.

The table below was prepared based input from NPD regarding the list of pre-qualified companies (npd.no-1, 2015), and going through the list of existing operators on the Norwegian Continental shelf (npd.no-2, 2015). Thereafter an attempt was taken to take into account that a few of the companies that had been prequalified by the NPD later was taken over by another company. The list below should the situation as of spring 2015. The nationality of the respective companies was found going into the homepage of the respective companies, and in some instances via other sources.

Oil Companies in Norway	Norway	Sweden	Denmark	Finland	The Netherl.	UK	Tyskland	Italia	US	France	Spain	Canada	Russia	Poland	Austria	Japan	Belgium	Kuwait	Unknown
A/S Norske Shell					0,5	0,5													
Atlantic Petroleum Norge AS			1																
Bayerngas Norge AS							1												
BG Norge AS						1													
BP Norge AS						1													
Capricorn Norge AS						1													
Centrica Resources (Norge) AS						1													
Chevron Norge AS									1										
Concedo ASA	1																		
ConocoPhillips Skandinavia AS									1										
Core Energy AS	1																		
Dana Petroleum Norway AS						1													
Det norske oljeselskap ASA	1																		
DONG E&P Norge AS			1																
E.ON E&P Norge AS							1												
Edison International Norway Branch								1											
Eni Norge AS								1											
EnQuest Norge AS						1													
Explora Petroleum AS	1																		
ExxonMobil Exploration & Production Norway AS									1										
Faroe Petroleum Norge AS			1																
Fortis Petroleum Norway AS	1																		
GDF SUEZ E&P Norge AS										0,5							0,5		
Hess Norge AS									1										
Idemitsu Petroleum Norge AS																1			
Ithaca Petroleum Norge AS						1													
Kufpec Norway AS																		1	
Lime Petroleum Norway AS																			1
Lotos Exploration and Production Norge AS														1					
LUKOIL Overseas North Shelf AS													1						
Lundin Norway AS		1																	
Maersk Oil Norway AS			1																
Moeco Oil & Gas Norge AS																1			
Noreco Norway AS	1																		
North Energy ASA	1																		
OMV (Norge) AS															1				
Petoro AS	1																		
Petrolia Norway AS	1																		
PGNiG Upstream International AS														1					
Premier Oil Norge AS						1													
Repsol Exploration Norge AS											1								
RN Nordic Oil AS													1						
Rocksource Exploration Norway AS	1																		
RWE Dea Norge AS							1												
Skagen44 AS	1																		
Skeie Energy AS	1																		
Spike Exploration Holding AS	1																		
Statoil Petroleum AS	1																		
Suncor Energy Norge AS												1							
Svenska Petroleum Exploration AS		1																	
Total E&P Norge AS										1									
Tullow Oil (Bream) Norge AS						1													
Tullow Oil Norge AS						1													
VNG Norge AS							1												
Wintershall Norge AS							1												

Appendix D: Hofstede's national culture dimensions (based on hofstede.com-1, 2015)

Power Distance Index

This dimension expresses the degree to which the less powerful members of a society accept and expect that power is distributed unequally. The fundamental issue here is how a society handles inequalities among people. People in societies exhibiting a large degree of Power Distance accept a hierarchical order in which everybody has a place and which needs no further justification. In societies with low Power Distance, people strive to equalise the distribution of power and demand justification for inequalities of power.

Individualism versus Collectivism

The high side of this dimension, called individualism, can be defined as a preference for a loosely-knit social framework in which individuals are expected to take care of only themselves and their immediate families. Its opposite, collectivism, represents a preference for a tightly-knit framework in society in which individuals can expect their relatives or members of a particular in-group to look after them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty. A society's position on this dimension is reflected in whether people's self-image is defined in terms of "I" or "we."

Masculinity versus Femininity

The Masculinity side of this dimension represents a preference in society for achievement, heroism, assertiveness and material rewards for success. Society at large is more competitive. Its opposite, femininity, stands for a preference for cooperation, modesty, caring for the weak and quality of life. Society at large is more consensus-oriented. In the business context Masculinity versus Femininity is sometimes also related to as "tough versus gender" cultures.

Uncertainty Avoidance Index

The Uncertainty Avoidance dimension expresses the degree to which the members of a society feel uncomfortable with uncertainty and ambiguity. The fundamental issue here is how a society deals with the fact that the future can never be known: should we try to control the future or just let it happen? Countries exhibiting strong Uncertainty Avoidance Index maintain rigid codes of belief and behaviour and are intolerant of unorthodox behaviour and ideas. Weak Uncertainty Avoidance Index societies maintain a more relaxed attitude in which practice counts more than principles.

Long Term Orientation versus Short Term Normative Orientation

Every society has to maintain some links with its own past while dealing with the challenges of the present and the future. Societies prioritize these two existential goals differently. Societies who score low on this dimension, for example, prefer to maintain time-honoured traditions and norms while viewing societal change with suspicion. Those with a culture which scores high, on the other hand, take a more pragmatic approach: they encourage thrift and efforts in modern education as a way to prepare for the future. In the business context this dimension is related to as "(short term) normative versus (long term) pragmatic". In the academic environment the terminology Monumentalism versus Flexhumility is sometimes also used.

Indulgence versus Restraint

Indulgence stands for a society that allows relatively free gratification of basic and natural human drives related to enjoying life and having fun. Restraint stands for a society that suppresses gratification of needs and regulates it by means of strict social norms.

Appendix E: Anglo-Continental European Translation Guide

The "Anglo-Continental European Translation Guide" was provided by one of the respondents as an example of misunderstandings between native English speaking and Continental Europeans that have English as a second or third language. According to the respondent this had been used in an internally teambuilding in the MNC where he worked, where the theme had been crosscultural awareness.

ANGLO- CONTINENTAL EUROPEAN TRANSLATION GUIDE		
What the English & Americans say	**What the English & Americans mean**	**What continental Europeans understands**
I hear what you say…	I disagree and do not want to discuss it any more	He accepts my point of view
With the greatest respect…	I think you are wrong (or a fool)…	He is listening to me
I'll bear it in mind…	I will do nothing about it…	He will probably do it…
Very interesting…	I don't agree / I don't believe you…	He is impressed…
I'm sure it's my fault…	It is your fault…	It was his fault…
That is an original point of view…	You must be cracy…	He like my ideas…
You must come for dinner sometime…	Not an invitation, just being polite…	I will get an invitation soon…
I almost agree…	I don't agree at all…	He is not far from agreement…