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Cross-cultural Influences on Linguistic Gender Stereotypes and their Effects on Perception



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1. Project Contexts





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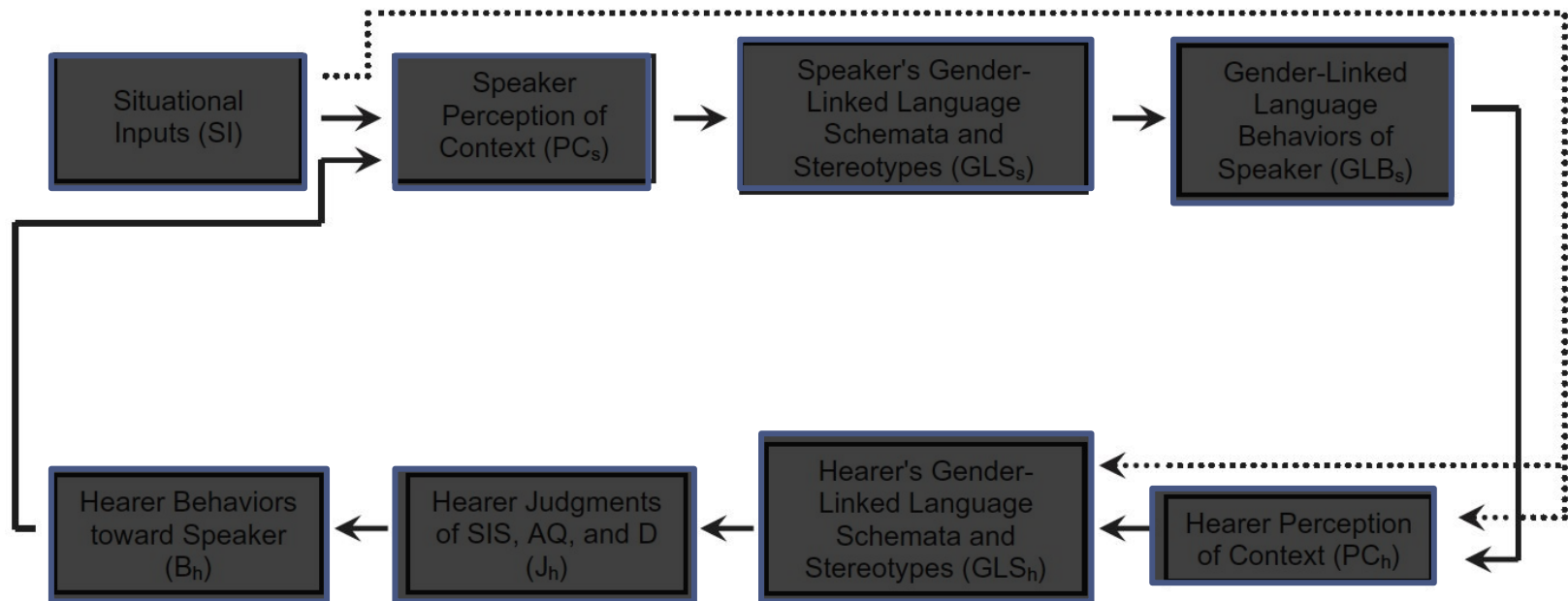
2. Basic concepts & theories



Stereotyping

- Stereotyping is a **reductive** cognitive phenomenon in the categorization of groups of people. A **quick** and **efficient** shorthand, but which ignores individuality and variation.
- Language is a key element in this process. According to Collins & Clement (2012: 377), “language can be conceptualized as **“a lens that directs and distorts cognition”**”.
- Not only does stereotyping, based on various social categories such as gender, age, social class, ethnicity, sexuality or regional affiliation, serve to simplify how people perceive and process information about individuals (Talbot, 2003: 468), it also builds up expectations on how they are supposed to act. **“People can choose to ignore such expectations, but they still have to relate to them in their interactions with others”** (Talbot, 2003: 472).

A cognitive model: gender linked language effects (Mulac et al, 2013)



SIS = Socio-Intellectual Status; AQ = Aesthetic Quality; D = Dynamism

Fig. 1. The general process model for the gender-linked language effect.

Dangers and Dilemmas

- **Stereotypes have a tendency to become true...**
- Talking about and researching structural injustice indirectly involves invoking stereotypes
 - the study of 'male' and 'female' discursive styles have strongly contributed the “normative and unmarked gender identity” expectations of white middle-class men and women (Holmes, 2006)
- And by doing so (i.e. dividing groups into distinct identity categories) we are simplifying (stereotyping?) identity and....
- **Stereotypes have a tendency to become true...**



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3. Two cultures



Seychelles & Sweden

- Stereotypes and prejudices are **culturally bound**. What is considered a "good or bad" characteristic in one culture is not necessarily deemed the same in another. In order to understand our own patterns of behaviour and view others with more open eyes, cross-cultural and intercultural perspectives are needed.
- Seychelles - multi-ethnic, and **by many described as 'matriarchal'**, African state Seychelles.
 - Women have achieved almost full practical empowerment in the public sphere
 - 57% of households headed by women (2007)
 - Women make up 62% of the Civil Service, [43.8 % of Members of Parliament, and 41% of the ministerial posts]
 - Significant difference in life expectancy for women (79.6 years) and men (70.4 years)

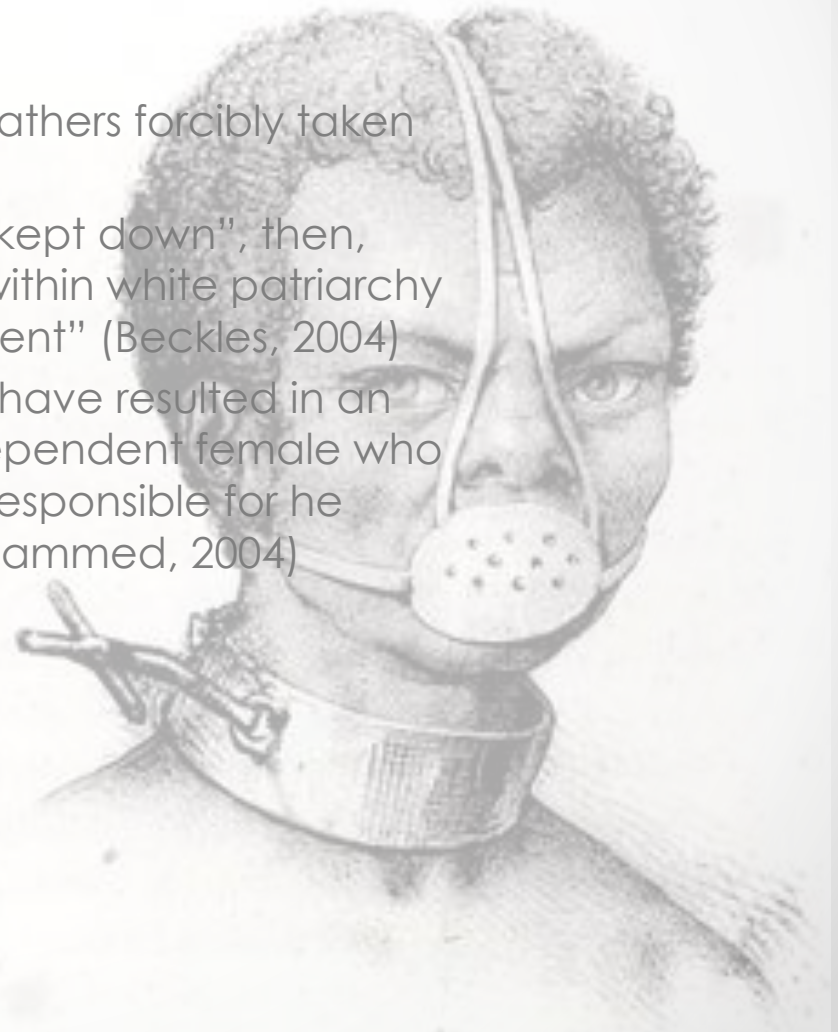
Cont.

- Stereotypic views of masculinity in the Seychelles
 - **Irresponsible** - “In many households, the father remains on the periphery and leaves the mother to carry the full responsibility of bringing up the children. He sees nothing wrong in having other partners and children”. (Chan-Him, 2002: 48)
 - **Lazy** - Girls were the preferred gender at school and teachers held high expectations for them, while boys were labeled as lazy, irresponsible, and lacking in motivation. (Geisler & Pardiwalla, 2010: 66)
 - **Unmotivated** - mothers and teachers alike. They bring negative notions of masculinity to bear on their and other women’s sons: boys, like men, are considered difficult, irresponsible, unmotivated, and inadequate. (Geisler & Pardiwalla, 2010: 81)

Where do these constructions originate

from? Historical explanations.

- Men had their role of husbands and fathers forcibly taken away from them (Chang-Him, 2002).
- “The condition of being “kept” and “kept down”, then, located enslaved black masculinity within white patriarchy as a subform starved of role nourishment” (Beckles, 2004)
- The brutal system of slavery seems to have resulted in an emasculated male and a strong independent female who single-handedly was deemed to be responsible for the well-being of the family (Patricia Mohammed, 2004)





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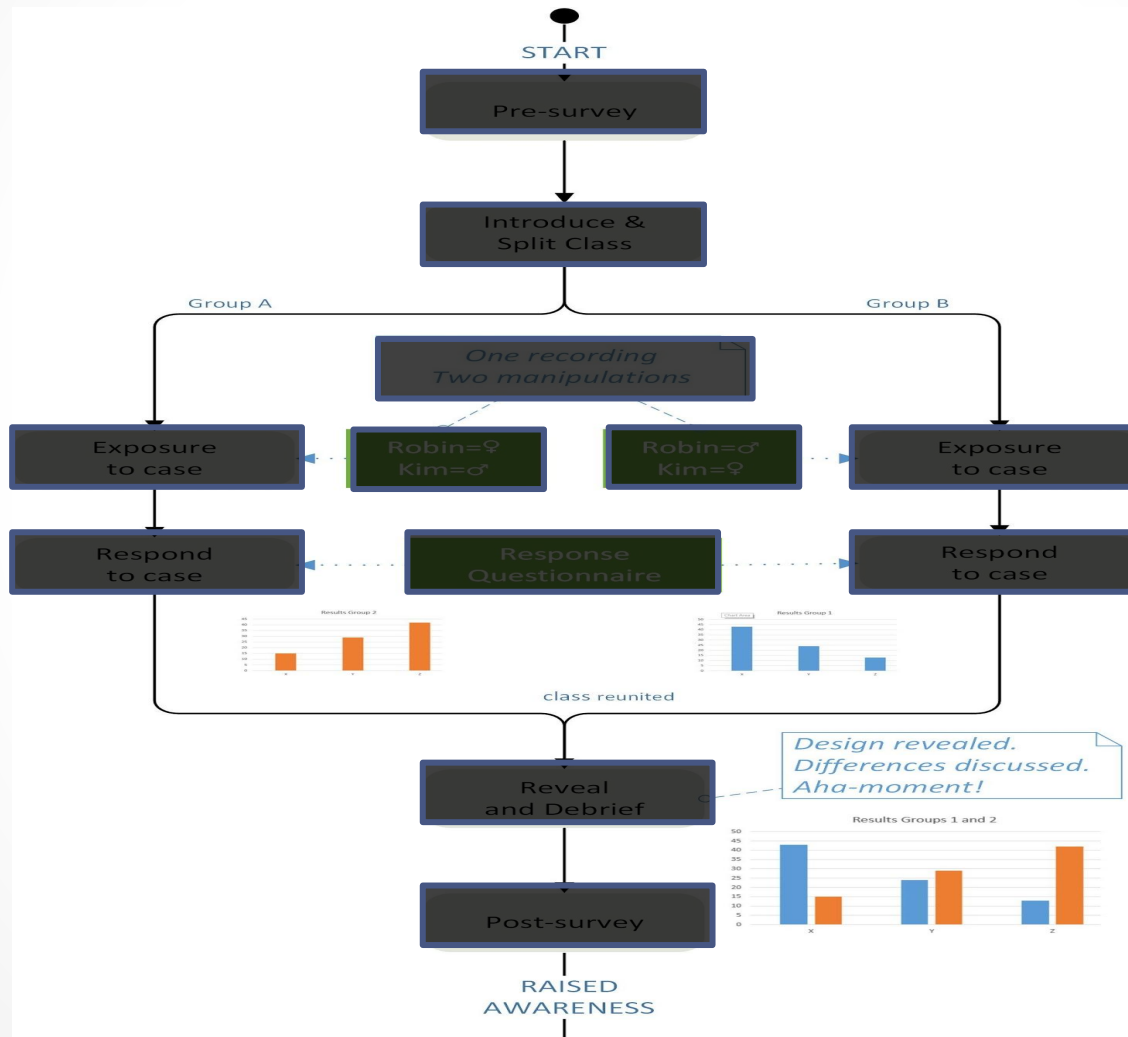


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4. Methods



RAVE – central method



Phases in the process

- Pre-Test Phase
 - Establishment of anonymous identities
 - Pre-test Stereotyping influence awareness measure.
- Exposure and Response Phase
 - Listening to case dialogue (two versions)
 - Response to dialogue
- De-Briefing Phase
 - Design is revealed and results are shown to group as a whole
 - Discussions about stereotyping based on the results
- Post-Test Phase
 - Post-test Stereotyping awareness measure
 - Qualitative evaluations.
 - Base-line measures (Swedish Sexism Scale/Swedish Racism Scale/Linguistic Stereotyping)
 - Consent

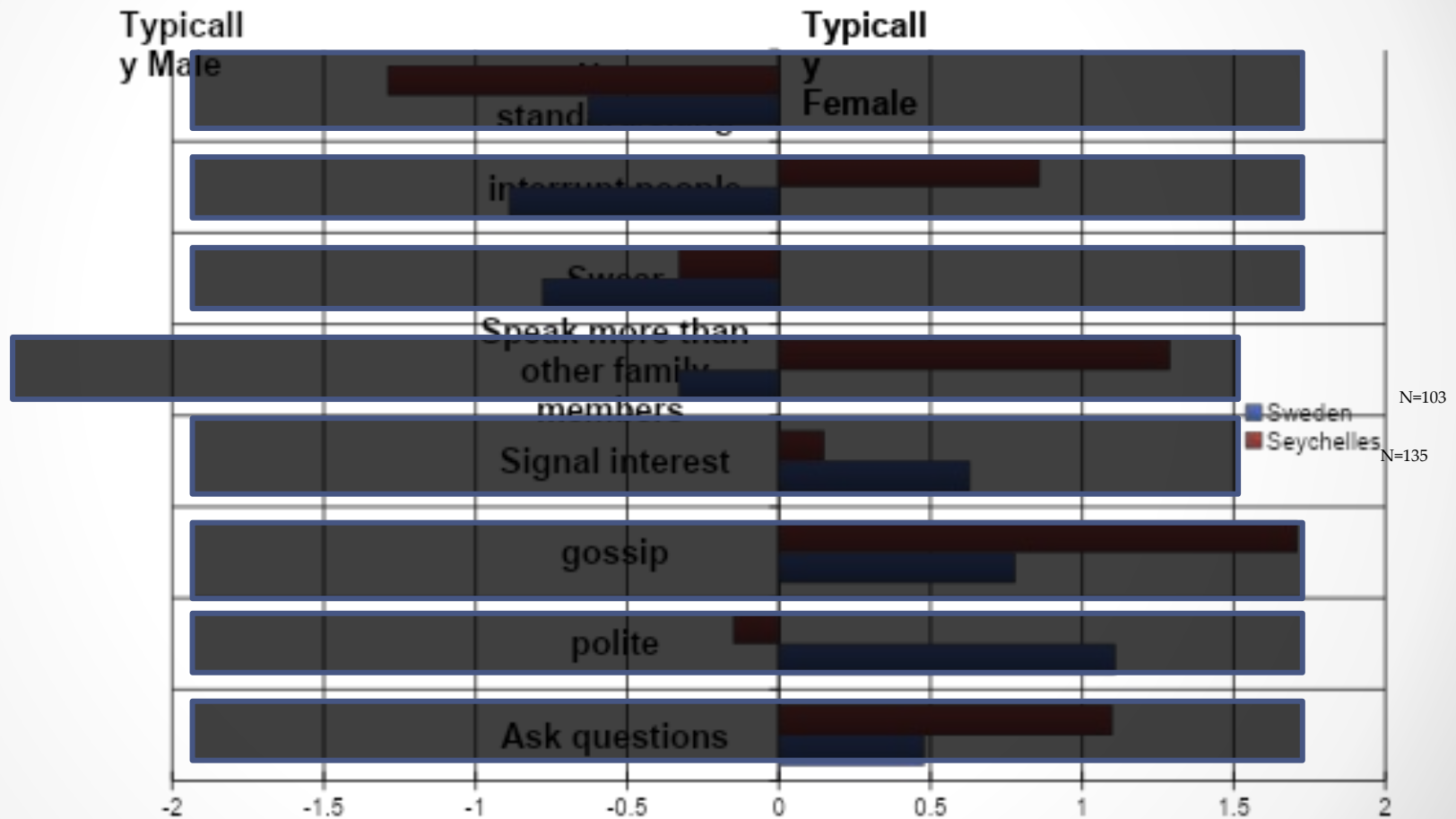
Quick example of the recording

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zCSRPOiQAz0&feature=emb_logo Female
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WTVIWSCeoss&feature=emb_logo Male

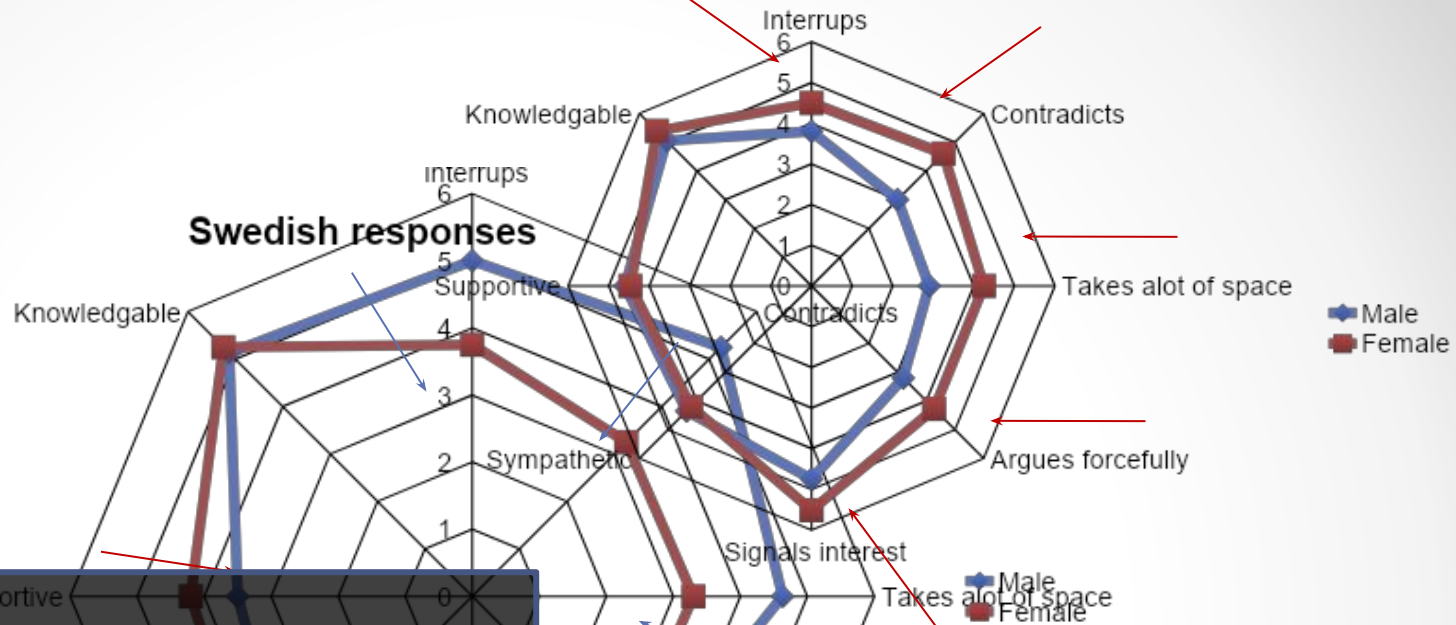
The current data

- Material identical and Methods similar.
- Sweden n= 135 (87 F, 48 M). Teacher trainees
- Seychelles n= 103 (85 F, 18 M). Teacher trainees
 - Similar set-ups, except that Seychelles students did not attend a course in sociolinguistics at the time.
- Tests were carried in phases in Sweden but all in one day in the Seychelles

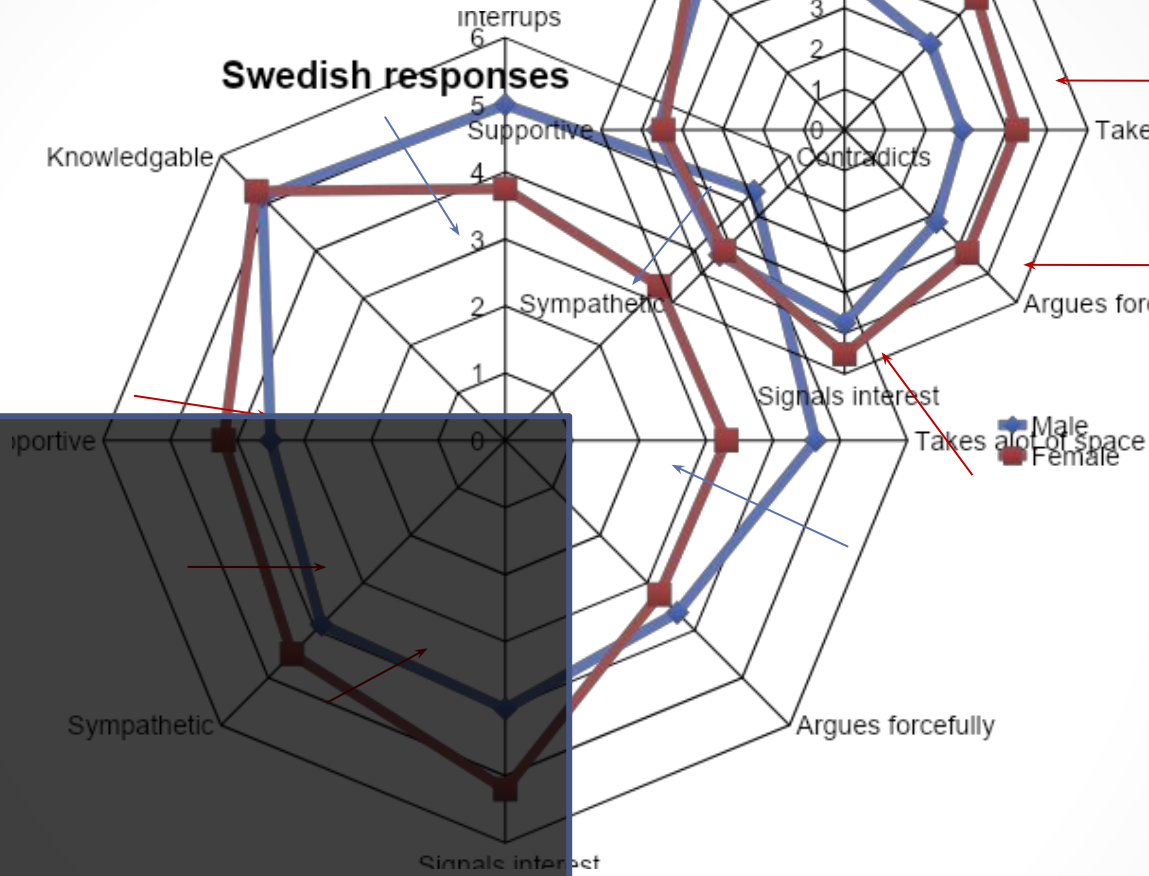
Linguistic Stereotyping Index



Seychelles responses



Swedish responses





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5. Dilemmas



Technical issues

- It's been more difficult than we initially thought to create believable 'morphs'.
- We often have to camouflage sound (lowering quality, adding background noise etc.)
- Add images to strengthen illusion
- Thoughts?



The 'culture' factor

- These are nations, not cultures (and what is a 'culture' anyway?)
- Are we contributing to false national stereotypes by doing so?

