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**A Pilot Study of the critical cultural features of the Swedish
Businessman in the eyes of a Dane**

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Abstract

Swedish and Danish business people have according to research and corporate facts difficulties working together due to cultural differences.

This pilot study seeks to outline the most critical cultural differences between Danes and Swedes. The study performs a literature analysis to identify the cultural features of the Danish and Swedish businessman and discusses research by Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars (1993), Hofstede (1997), Hofstede (2001), Hall (2005), Lewis (2008), and Weiss (2009). The literature analysis identifies the Danish businessman as an individualist with short-term orientation, who is goal-oriented and has a qualitative relationship to time. The Swedish businessman is identified as individualist with focus on egalitarianism, consensus, and long-term orientation. These features make him appear collectivistic in the eyes of the Danes. Also, the Swede is process-oriented with a qualitative relationship to time. The study supports the discussion with an interview analysis. The interview analysis based on two semi-structured interviews with two Danish businessmen having done business with Swedes once or several times.

The discussion reveals that individualistic vs. collectivistic features are the main critical cultural features, like suggested by Hall (2005). Secondly, the process- vs. goal orientation and the qualitative vs. quantitative relationship to time are critical cultural features in the Danish – Swedish context. Other cultural differences are Danish expressiveness vs. Swedish non-expressiveness, choice of negotiation style, etiquette, appearance and protocol, and Swedish risk-avoidance vs. Danish risk-taking, the relationship to work place, and Swedish social activities at work, Swedish sanctions against individualism, and the Swedish lecturing of the “Swedish way”.

These differences also outline the critical features of the Swedish businessman in the eyes of a Dane.

Finally the pilot study gives advice on cultural behavior for Swedish businessmen engaging in business relationships with Danes.

INTRODUCTION	1
PROBLEM STATEMENT AND PURPOSE	1
CULTURE AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO COMMUNICATION	3
METHODOLOGY	3
The Study Setting	4
Method for Literature Analysis	4
Method for Qualitative Interview Analysis	5
The Participants	5
Limitations of the chosen method	7
LITERATURE STUDY: FEATURES OF SWEDISH AND DANISH BUSINESS CULTURE.	8
Geert Hofstede – Five Dimensions Theory	8
Individualism vs. collectivism	8
Small vs. Large Power Distance	9
Short Term vs. Long Term Orientation	9
Limitations of Hofstede’s Five Dimensions	9
Hall’s View on Intercultural Conflicts	10
Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars	10
Criticism to Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars	12
Swedish and Danish Cultures in Richard D. Lewis’s Research	12
Swedish business culture	12
Danish business culture	13
Kirsten Weiss	13
Cultural Differences	14
Swedes and Danes in Business Meetings	15
Some Traits of Danish and Swedish Leadership Style	16
Danish and Swedish Negotiation Styles	17
Decision-making and Work Processes	17
The work place and authority	18
Danish and Swedish stereotypes	18
Criticism of Weiss	20
Discussion of the theories	20

Individualistic vs. collectivistic features	20
Power distance in Swedish and Danish culture	23
Short vs. long term orientation	23
Contradicting Research Results about Swedes and Danes	24
A Summary of Cultural Features from Literature Analysis	25
INTERVIEW ANALYSIS	26
Interview with Christian Hansen of SEB, Denmark	26
Interview with Arne Pedersen	31
DISCUSSION	31
CONCLUSION	45
REFLECTION	47
PERSPECTIVE AND LAST COMMENTS BY THE AUTHOR	47
BIBLIOGRAPHY	48

1. Introduction

The two Scandinavian countries, Denmark and Sweden, have through history shared quite similar cultural influences and values within religion, language and politics. That fact, however, does not mean that the cultures are alike in terms of business culture. Danes and Swedes experience several cultural differences and problems related to cultural differences, when they engage in business activities with each other. The manifested reason behind the problems is for the most part, that the two nations neglect to recognize the cultural differences, resulting in large corporations having to put fusions on hold or end business relations due to the disadvantageous circumstances. From a financial aspect, the cultural differences, moreover, have a huge price tag on them due to a high level of inefficiency and the abortion of project prospect, when viewed in retrospect (Weiss, 2009).

Those facts conclusively suggest the importance of establishing a general understanding of Swedish-Danish intercultural business aspects, when you as a Swedish company want to engage in business activities with Danes.

2. Problem Statement and Purpose

This pilot study is performed to outline the critical business related cultural differences between Danes and Swedes. With focused attention to Swedish collectivistic features, it will discuss the consequences, when Swedish business culture meets Danish business culture. Prolonging the discussion, the study will suggest best practice for Swedes to achieve the best possible business relations in terms of organizational and financial results.

The purpose is to provide Swedish businesses entering the Danish market with knowledge, which can lead to a better cultural awareness and intercultural communication competence. Furthermore, the study aims to create self-awareness to the Swedish reader, providing a tool for managing image, personal frustration and conflicts.

This pilot study is to be seen as a research framework for potential training material for Swedish business people on executive and operational level.

3. Culture and its relationship to communication

Culture is communication (Hall & Hall, 1990). Like a complex computer software program, culture dictates your actions and responses. Culture has increased relevance in terms of communications, since it is much more complex than written and oral communication. In relation to efficiency, cross cultural communication practice is about providing the right responses rather than sending the right messages. Also, communication, without cultural aspects, is impossible (Weiss, 2009).

4. Methodology

The study performs comparative literature analysis and interview analysis to identify the cultural features of Danish and Swedish businessmen and emphasize the critical aspects.

The literature analysis and interview analysis will set the foundation for the discussion, where the critical cultural differences between Danes and Swedes will be discussed. In this respect the author will use advice by Weiss (2009) to suggest how Swedish businessmen manage a good image towards Danish businessmen. Finally the study will find its conclusion on the literature analysis, the interview analysis, and the discussion.

4.1. The Study Setting

The study environment is to be viewed in relation to business activities. This means that the choice of theories and empirical data will have a business context. However, the application area of the study is not directly connected to any specific industry.

4.2. Method for Literature Analysis

The comparative literature analysis discusses (Hofstede, 1997) and his five dimensions with emphasizes on the individualism vs. collectivism. According to (Hall, 2005), the aspect of individualism vs. collectivism is the main factor of intercultural misunderstandings. The five dimensions by Hofstede (1997) are also used to establish understanding of the Danish and Swedish cultural features. The dimension of masculinity vs. femininity is not included, since it according to the author relies on personality and would interfere with credibility. The dimension of uncertainty avoidance is not applied due to limited relevance for the study. In order to further discuss individualism vs. collectivism in Swedish business culture, the analysis includes Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars (1993) to emphasize consensus and the uniqueness of Swedish individualism. To furthermore analyze the features of Danish and Swedish culture, especially the factor of individualism vs. collectivism and consensus, the analysis includes Lewis (2008). To review the cultural features in an intercultural context and support the identification of the cultural features, the analysis includes Weiss (2009). Through the comparable literature analysis the study will identify the Danish and Swedish cultural features.

4.3. Method for Qualitative Interview Analysis

The qualitative interview analysis will support the literature analysis in identifying the Swedish cultural features, however, with emphasizes on the intercultural context. The interview analysis is performed with the convincing that in order to identify the critical cultural features of the Swedish businessman, from a Danish perspective, the rational procedure is to ask Danes about how they experience Swedes. Content analysis of interviews is used.

The interviews are based on the experiences of two Danish businessmen having done business with Swedes once or several times. The interviews were performed over the telephone. The participants were asked one open-ended question: “How do you experience Swedes? ”. The author of the study took notes during the interviews. The decision, behind “only” asking one open question in the semi-structured interviews, was based on the notion that the participants themselves would emphasize the most important critical aspects fueled by personal emotions. Since the study covers the critical aspects, the interviews were also conducted according to the belief that a structured interview would disconnect the participants from their emotions.

4.4. The Participants

The participants were offered anonymity, but remained neutral to the question. In order to protect the participants, the author has changed their names and places of work. However, the branch and occupational title has not been changed in the study.

The demographics of the interviewed people, in terms of age and corporate position, are deliberately not identical. This is strengthen the identification of the cultural features, believing that

the relevant cultural features will shine through, when focusing only on the demographic of nationality. The gender of the interviewed subjects is not taken into consideration due to the fact that gender is a vague cultural indicator, according to the author.

The first interview participant is 33-year-old Christian Hansen, strategic buyer at SEB Nordic Team. Christian is a native Dane and has through his employment at SEB in Copenhagen, Denmark had sporadic contact with Swedish colleagues, before working on a project in Stockholm from October 2009 – April 2010.

The interview with Christian is reviewed as a good source of empirical data, since he gained his experiences about Swedish people in a very sudden and intensive manner. This means that he has not had time to adapt and has suggestively paid increased attention to intercultural differences. Furthermore, Christian works in the same organization, which according to Hofstede (McSweeney, 2002) only leaves room to intercultural differences. That fact has though heavily been debated (McSweeney, 2002).

The second participant is Arne Pedersen, who was asked the same questions as Christian Hansen. Arne is a 62 years old male presently working as the CEO of Danmark Golf & Country Club. He has over the last 30 years worked on executive level with Swedes sporadically and daily through various jobs within the field of tourism.

Arne has in comparison to Christian long time experience in working with Swedes and works in a higher position, which makes his experiences a good contrast to Christian's. He is, due to experience, expected to describe Swedish business culture from a more colored perspective than Christian, and from another organization level. According to (Weiss, 2009) the cultural differences are less visible on executive level.

The analysis of the interviews will be related to Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars (1993), Hofstede (1997), Hofstede (2001), Hall (2005), Lewis (2008) and Weiss (2009). The interview analysis will highlight Danish individualism and describe Swedish culture as collectivistic. The interview analysis will also exemplify intercultural conflicts, mainly based on the statement that individualism vs. collectivism is the main contributor to intercultural misunderstandings (Hall, 2005).

4.5. Limitations of the chosen method

The study is a generalized identification of cultural features and does not take into account personality. This fact somewhat makes any conclusion and best practice advice invalid. However, the study bases the analysis of theoretical and empirical data on many sources, and in this respect, the author finds the conclusions to be as valid as possible. In retrospect to the above mentioned point of view, the study does not review the possibility of variations in results due to personalities of the participants in the interviews and theoretical data. However, the generalized cultural identification is derived from several independent sources making it valid.

The few participants are a limitation to the accuracy of the study. The study is to be regarded as a pilot study.

The author of the thesis being Danish might color the findings in the research, however, the author will try to remain unbiased and always support conclusions with facts, whenever possible.

Regarding nationality of the author with attention to the choice of words etc., one can assume that the intercultural relationship between the author and reader, can give variations of perception and focus. However, the thesis is structured with great attention to avoid any not de facto perceptions.

5. Literature study: Features of Swedish and Danish Business Culture.

5.1. Geert Hofstede – Five Dimensions Theory

Geert Hofstede's theories revolve around his "*five dimensions*", which is set as a framework to identify the cornerstones of intercultural business aspects. In addition, he has through research studies ranked cultures worldwide on a score index using his "*five dimensions*".

The five cultural dimensions are: "power distance", "collectivism vs. individualism", "masculinity vs. femininity", "uncertainty avoidance", and "long term vs. short term orientation" (Hofstede, 1997). Like mentioned in the methodology, the literature analysis will not touch upon masculinity and uncertainty avoidance.

5.1.1. Individualism vs. collectivism

Individualism vs. Collectivism speaks of the level an individual is integrated into a group formation.

People in Individualistic cultures are expected to look after themselves and near family and friends and otherwise the level of group engagement is based on circumstances. In collectivist cultures the individual is expected to integrate oneself and be loyal to the group formation. Sweden reaches 71 points on Hofstede's index, identifying Swedish people as an individualistic culture. Danes reaches 74 points also classifying as an individualistic culture (Hofstede, 1997).

5.1.2.Small vs. Large Power Distance

Power distance means an individual's willingness to accept inequality in an organization or society. The Nordic countries overall have low power distance, but in specific, Sweden has 31 points and Denmark 18. This suggests that Sweden has more power distance than Denmark (Hofstede, 1997).

5.1.3.Short Term vs. Long Term Orientation

Long-term: cultures focus on relationships, relationships ordered by status, personal adaptability, and playing it safe.

Short-term: cultures emphasize quick results, personal determination, protecting ones face, the bottom-line is most important, and status is relatively irrelevant (Hofstede, 2001).

The Five Dimensions index only provides info on Sweden, which ranks as a relatively short-term oriented culture (Hofstede, 1997).

5.1.4.Limitations of Hofstede's Five Dimensions

Hofstede's theories and index has been heavily criticized by several sources. Researchers have pointed to the fact that the evidence for Hofstede's findings was based on an internal study from the 80's within computer manufacturer IBM, and thereby not suitable for his study. Hofstede has counter-argued that the IBM survey proved that since all participants in the study belonged to the same corporate culture, their national culture would be evident in the cultural differences between the people questioned when asked the same questions. Further criticism to Hofstede's procedure,

index results is that the IBM data is old and furthermore, the questionnaires were sometimes answered in groups and for another purpose, which can have affected the level of honesty in the answers (McSweeney, 2002).

The author of this pilot study argues that Hofstede relies too much on simplifications and generalizations in his five dimensions theory. Furthermore in the score index, he compares all cultures in the world to each other by using a score point system, which makes the results out of context, since one will use his theories in intercultural analysis, which normally is an analysis of a few numbers of cultures. Hofstede's mentions nothing about the relationship between the results and the cultures in between in his research, and how this relationship influences the results on the score index. To make every case specific and to ensure accuracy he should compare e.g. English culture to all other cultures etc.

5.2. Hall's View on Intercultural Conflicts

Individualism vs. collectivism is the generator behind intercultural misunderstandings. What differentiates the two classifications of cultures is their focus. Individualistic cultures focus on the factors that differentiating them from others, whereas collectivistic cultures tend to focus on relationship with others and unison (Hall, 2005).

5.3. Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars

Sweden is an individualistic culture, containing other qualities. Swedes are e.g. more emotionally neutral.

The primary quality that differentiates Sweden from other individualistic cultures is egalitarianism.

Egalitarianism is regarded as a product of the cold climate, where the individualistic Swedes had to unify in order to survive.

To Swedes work is highly affiliated with emotional rewards from the co-workers. It is concluded that Swedes actually are individualists adoring their integrity, uniqueness, freedom, values, and needs, however, these are fulfilled through the assisting others with their work efforts or energy. However, compared to collectivists such as Japanese, Swedes are born into freedom and choose by themselves who they wish to associate and work with, and how they want to do it, and are not forced to follow parents or family etc.

Swedes want to be accepted for who they are, defined by their work, and secondly establish friendships. That is highlighted in the fact that Swedes are not afraid of going against their managers or employer, if they believe he/she is wrong. If terms of conflict there is no group think.

In decision-making, Swedes regard it as important to make sure that everyone gets their say, since, it will improve work processes. Without open lines of communication and understanding, Swedes will not give their say. Equality is important and pulling rank does not work.

Swedish management style makes it hard for foreigners to see if a decision was made. Decision-making is made on good relations and it is the companionship that creates the good decision.

Another fact, highlighting Swedish individualism, is the fact that they expect the work place to fit their needs to the individual employee's personal desires.

Also in terms of leadership, Swedish leaders delegate power and believe that affiliated with trust it gives the widest variety of ideas in return. Sweden is the highest ranked of countries willing to delegate power and authority. Swedes rank 72.69 points on the index, whereas Denmark ranks 64.65 points.

In terms of long term orientation view, Swedes ranks nr 3 with a score of 76.73, whereas Denmark gets 53.49. Swedish industry is long term oriented (Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars, 1993).

Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars (1993) does not provide any detailed information about Danish culture.

5.3.1.Criticism to Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars

The findings in Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars (1993) should be seen in the light of economic cycles, meaning that in periods of high unemployment rates, employees might slack a little on the demands and focus more on adapting to the workplace. The author assumes this would increase the collectivistic and individualistic features in behavior.

5.4. Swedish and Danish Cultures in Richard D. Lewis's Research

5.4.1.Swedish business culture

Swedish businessmen act according to the Swedish way with focus on proper code of behavior, when attending a business meeting. Swedes believe in consensus and reach joint decisions based on group discussions. This procedure to decision-making demands several meetings.

In discussion, Swedes focus on facts, delivery dates and technical details and they need a relatively long period of time to absorb the shared information. Since consensus is a high priority, the Swedes also tend to be nervous about what others might think during discussions, and they have a great need to seek advice from other co-workers.

The Swedish leader is the least dominant one in the world, in terms of leadership, and he always consults all staff members on executive level before presenting a decision. It is implied that Swedish leaders impose power by appearing non-powerful. However, their style of speech reflects the fact that everybody is on the same level.

5.4.2. Danish business culture

The Danish decision making process is democratic involving executive level leaders and middle range leaders. It can often be hard for foreigners to distinguish between them. The style of the decision making process is described as a mingling atmosphere. However, The Danish leader can use pressure to force through decisions, although Danes are good at maintaining a friendly atmosphere.

In negotiation, Danes give the notion that they agree on all proposals, however, they tend to re-pack already made decisions. In general, Danes do not like to be roped in, since they always have an eye to the future. They are known for making counter proposals during negotiations and they offer immediate feedback. In communication they are known for appearing tolerant and smiling with a bit of cynicism. They prefer a low key laid back approach and create ideas while listening.

Communication is horizontal and is described as calm and serious with sequences of humor (Lewis, 2008).

The comparable differences between Swedish and Danish culture is consensus vs. democratic decision-making, power distance, etiquette and protocol, and speed in terms of dealing with shared information.

5.5. Kirsten Weiss

Kirsten Weiss is a Danish journalist, who has worked in communication departments in Swedish and Danish companies. Her work 'Når Vikinger Slås' is a journalistic analysis of the factual consequences of intercultural business differences between Danes and Swedes, and through

interviews it outlines the experiences of several Danish and Swedish leaders and businesses (Weiss, 2009).

5.5.1.Cultural Differences

Intercultural awareness is a necessity, if you desire fruitful collaborations and wish to penetrate and experience full advantage of the Scandinavian market. However, Danish and Swedish businessmen refuse to discuss cultural differences. Danes and Swedes share many of the same cultural societal values such as faith in honesty, peace, importance of education, and a general view “the good life”. The cultural differences take form in business life, more specifically, in terms of communication style, negotiation and decision making, leadership style, and the style of work related processes and activities such as planning and execution.

A lot of the explanations to the intercultural differences can be found in development of Danish and Swedish business culture. Sweden has always dominated export and heavy industry, growing from accessibility to raw materials and the formation of collective work traditions. Due to industry processes, Swedes emphasize careful and calculated planning, and seek a high level of consensus in order to move forward as one team or group in order to ensure most efficient working processes and productivity results. In other words, Swedish industry thinks and acts according to a heavy industrial mindset.

Denmark, which is derived from a sand dune and has no natural resources, has entirely survived on the tertiary sector, focusing entirely on service and sales. For that reason, Danes have a tendency to be impatient due to a high level opportunism and a consistent eye on the future.

This means that Danes and Swedes think nationally when they establish the foundation for collaborations. In other words, Danes focus on economy and results, whereas Swedes prioritize the

process. The intercultural differences, however, tend to be less visible at executive level (Weiss, 2009).

5.5.2.Swedes and Danes in Business Meetings

At meetings, Danes often joke at the negotiation table and even make fun of the counterpart. That is common in Denmark, whereas, to a Swede it is unprofessional. Danes regard Swedes as stiff and formal with an obsessive relation to protocol and procedure. Danes prefer to show up, give their say and focus on the results. The details will be fixed later. Danes have a "manana manana" attitude towards details. Swedes on the other hand prefer having several prep meetings and focus on details. This is frustrating to the rather impatient Danes.

Swedes are more tolerant than Danes. In Sweden discussions are open and everybody gets a chance to have their say. In meetings between Danes and Swedes, Danes normally take the lead and show much more initiative and drive, trying to affect the others, whereas the Swedes remain correct and distanced. In terms of Danes losing face, they tend to turn problems into an almost impossible situation and usually blame everybody else. Emotionally, Danes are very expressive, whereas the Swedes prefer to remain silent. Danes are extroverts and Swedes are introverts. Danes are in communication direct and informal with a tendency to exaggerate and give orders. Danes expect people to imply disagreement and do not expect to be asked. For that reason Swedes can feel bullied and mistreated. However, the Swedish way of remaining silent, when not asked, is very confusing to Danes. If you feel stepped on in Denmark you say it out straight. For that reason, the Swedish silence is not interpreted in Denmark they way Swedes expect. Danes also tend to show aggression when discussing with a lot of "finger pointing" with the intention that conflict leads to breaking of barriers and boundaries. In Denmark you can fight during a meeting, but you are easily

good friends afterwards. That is a chock to Swedes, who are used to consensus. In respect of the consensus and collectivistic features, Swedes use a lot of time being social, however Danes regard it as unnecessary use of time, unless you have important matter to discuss.

In general about Danes, they go to meetings with personal points of view and the purpose of convincing. They are very direct, make swift conclusions and appeal to decisions. That can make a Swede nervous who is used to a slow start and long meetings, starting with a social conversation. Overall, Swedish come to the table to create something together. Danes come to convince.

Furthermore, Danish leaders can force through opinions without listening which is unheard of in Sweden.

In general, Danes show a lot of emotion during all extern and intern meetings in contrast to Swedes. This also means that Swedes should not interpret communication style as a reflection of relation, although Danish words can be harsh when expressing emotions (Weiss, 2009).

5.5.3. Some Traits of Danish and Swedish Leadership Style

Danish leaders give orders and emphasize results. The leader will openly give criticism with a touch of sarcasm and irony. Finger pointing is not uncommon when criticizing. Appreciation is often highly connected to context and to some extent rather vague.

The Swedish leader makes sure everyone is in on the process and wants everybody to participate in the process. Criticism is given and expressed carefully and appreciation is given to the group and not individuals.

Keywords for Danish culture, in terms of decision making, are individual opinions and speed, whereas Swedes favor comprehensiveness and collaboration. Danes are often worried about doing business with Swedes due to the possibility of not being able to move fast enough (Weiss, 2009).

5.5.4. Danish and Swedish Negotiation Styles

In terms of negotiation style, one can find several cultural differences in approach. The Swedish approach is: “if you take this. I will take that”. The Danish approach is: “I will take it all”. Swedes often feel cheated after negotiating with Danes. Danish and Swedish negotiation approaches are different and cause problems. An example is the starting approach. A Swedish consensus seeking approach is a 70% for me and 30% for you, based on the wish to meet halfway, landing on 50-50. In general, Swedes have great confidence in the fairness of the counterpart. The Danish approach is: I want 100%. Danes are always afraid of being fooled, and for that reason, they do not understand the idea behind the offering of the 30%. They get worried, so the offering of the 30% ends up actually backfiring on the Swedes. The Swedish approach, if I show you trust, you will trust me, though, creates a positive mood in the meeting room. Swedes are very open about information, whereas Danes, who are afraid of being fooled, keep all info to themselves (Weiss, 2009).

5.5.5. Decision-making and Work Processes

Danes experience difficulties with Swedes, because they do not understand the decision-making process. The number of meeting, consensus and the great number of involved people confuses Danish businessmen and they get worried about the aspect of time. Swedes are also significantly careful and risk-oriented.

Work processes differ between Danish and Swedish cultures. Danes prefer trial and error, and time is a matter of quantity, meaning how much did we do in the given amount of time.

The Swedes are careful planners and do not act till the plan is bullet proof. To them time is a matter of quality. Swedes prefer to learn and then execute (Weiss, 2009).

5.5.6.The work place and authority

The relationship to work is different in Denmark and Sweden due to cultural aspects. Swedes have due to great power of labor unions and regulations a very secure position in a company. Danes have very little workplace security, which has made them used to insecurity.

In general, Swedes go to work to realize themselves and have a good time with colleagues. For that reason, Swedes live at work and make everything homelike and attend a lot of social activities.

Danes go to work to realize themselves. They do not emphasize social life, since the workplace could be a new one tomorrow. A Dane is likely to skip social activities in favor of work, which is regarded as professional. In Sweden it is regarded as a disrespecting the collective unity. For those reasons, Danes have discomfort when Swedes “fika” and regard it as a sign of laziness and inefficiency.

The relationship to authority also differs. Danes do not respect authority the same way as Swedes. Rules are made to be broken, and in Denmark law is advice. In Sweden advice is law (Weiss, 2009).

5.5.7.Danish and Swedish stereotypes

The Swedish businessman is compared to a Dane and due to industrial background a collectivist pledged to consensus. In Sweden you should not show any individual initiative and in any way try

to be better than anyone else. The Swede is team oriented and it keeps being supported by the socialist government.

In Sweden order, systems and good planning is highly valued. You act according to the collective and you are obliged to be a part of the collective at work. To be different than the group or have different opinions or show aggression is a one way ticket out of the collective.

Meeting other cultures, Swedes are described as a shy people who do not think they have anything new to bring to the table. When meeting and judging people, they look for similarities, so that it will be easy for them unite and achieve consensus. Swedes become insecure around people who do not reflect themselves. That is why Swedish people often achieve employment by recommendations and friends. This is also why Danes regard Swedes as reserved.

The Swede is a collectivistic who is good at mass production. His decision making is based on involving everybody with attention to consensus and careful planning. The Swede is not very time efficient. Furthermore, the Swede has a fear of conflicts and one is not allowed to show aggression. Swedes tend to think that they are always morally right, which can become a bit “besserwisser” to other cultures. The role of the leader is to inform others and ask them for advice, not direct them. Furthermore, he needs to make sure that all people go in the same direction.

Danes belong to an ambivalent culture that favors individualism and embraces unity, and meeting agendas are openly debated using direct criticism and with no attention to consensus.

Danes are described as good sales people, designers, and individualists who are not afraid of following their own spontaneous feelings. It is fully accepted and often rewarded if you are pushy and taking risks. Quick decisions are a key element and Danes have a lot of drive due to labor market and hierarchical management. The leader gives order and is supposed to ensure results.

In terms of etiquette and social activities, Danes prefer an organic social pattern where you dress casually and act according to a very few set of rules. In Sweden you are expected to dress up and act polite. Etiquette is a matter of showing respect, however, but Danes interpret it as Swedes being stiff (Weiss, 2009).

5.5.8.Criticism of Weiss

The data presented in Weiss (2009) is a look into the experiences of people having working with issues related the Swedish Danish intercultural differences. This gives a biased conclusion and not scientific conclusions, however, supported by scientific research by (Lewis, 2008), (Hall, 2009) and (Hamden-Turner and Trompenaars 1993) it gains credibility. Also, the biased data provides a quality and reliable picture of the Danish perceptions of Swedes, however, the limited quantity of data makes a generalization difficult. Furthermore, the comments made by professional consultants provide reliability to the intercultural perceptions of both Swedes and Danes.

5.6. Discussion of the theories

5.6.1.Individualistic vs. collectivistic features

This first question important to the discussion of intercultural difficulties is whether or not Swedes are collectivists in a work/business context. Most intercultural conflicts are due to individualism vs. collectivism (Hall, 2005). Prolonging, Danes and Swedes are having major troubles working together (Weiss, 2009), which suggests that the Danish and Swedish business cultures are not alike in terms of individualism vs. collectivism. Since the research studies presented does not imply that Danes have significant collectivistic features, it is suggested that it is Sweden that represents the

collectivistic features. Individualistic cultures often review themselves in the light of what differentiates them from others (Hall, 2005) and Danes are known for having the saying, “we are not like the others” (Weiss 2009), emphasizing the individualistic cultural features. Also, Danes interviewed by Kirsten Weiss used terms as collectivistic in their description of Swedish culture (Weiss, 2009). Although, Sweden is ranked as a highly individualistic culture on Hofstede’s index (Hofstede, 1997), the author this study, finds the need for consensus in Swedish culture (Lewis, 2008; Weiss 2009), to be an indicator of collectivistic features. When reviewing the theories (Hofstede 1997; Lewis, 2008, Weiss 2009), the author of this study is convinced that the theories together create the foundation of a valid assumption that collectivistic features and consensus dictates cultural behavior of Swedes.

Contradicting the just-given conclusion, Swedes are individualistic in terms of integrity, uniqueness, freedom, values, and needs (Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars, 1993). However, these traits are manifested through contributions to the group (Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars, 1993), which displays collectivistic features to a bystander. Also their focus on egalitarianism (Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars, 1993) makes them appear collectivistic. A part of the egalitarianism is the decision-making process based on consensus. What makes Swedes differ from collectivistic cultures such as e.g. the Japanese, is the fact that Swedes individually decides with whom and why the associate, and moreover how the associate. Swedes are not expected to follow a specific group like collectivistic cultures (Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars, 1993). This speaks of Swedes being individualists (Hofstede, 1997), however, their group dynamics and mentality share many of the same features as a collectivistic culture. This is assumingly why the Danes, who are ranked closely to Sweden on Hofstede’s index (Hofstede, 1997), according to experience Swedes as collectivistic (Weiss, 2009). Reviewing theories and previously done studies it is apparent that Swedes act upon individualistic motivation, however, the groups’ work style has features comparable to collectivism.

This also makes them appear collectivistic to other individualistic cultures that do not have the uniqueness of egalitarianism embedded in their individualistic culture. With this said, Swedes displays a lot of collectivistic features e.g. the “hunt” for people who reflect themselves, the desire to include everybody in the processes and group activities (Hampden-Turner, 1993; Lewis, 2008; Weiss, 2009). However the collectivistic features can be seen in the light of Swedes emphasizing good relationships to colleagues and community through work and the historical need for unison in order to survive. Sweden is a unique case. Swedes are driven by individualistic personal needs and motivations, but achieve them through actions influenced by collectivistic features (Hampden-Turner, 1993). The question is then which features are the most evident ones in an intercultural engagement or relationship, Individualistic or collectivistic? Individualism vs. collectivism is the main contributor to conflicts between cultures (Hall, 1990). Danes, who are individualistic in both individual and group activities, are often conflicting with Swedes (Weiss, 2009), suggests that Swedes resembles collectivistic features or have a collectivistic business style, when attending business activities with other cultures. The study concludes based on theoretical review that Swedes are individualists, however, to other individual cultures they appear collectivistic due to their egalitarian values.

Consensus is by the author regarded as a egalitarian value. Consensus is a key feature of Swedish business culture (Lewis, 2008; Kirsten Weiss, 2009; Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars, 1993). Its relevance to Swedish culture is found to be reliable and the author found no contradicting theories in the literature research.

5.6.2. Power distance in Swedish and Danish culture

Danes rank lower than Swedes in terms of power distance (Hofstede, 1997). However, that statement is not reliable. Swedish managers are the ones with least authority in the world (Lewis, 2008). Also Swedish leaders rely on the achievement of consensus, whereas Danish leaders are described as being overruling decisions when they feel like it (Weiss, 2009). Moreover, Swedish employees are not afraid of confronting their manager (Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars, 1993). That fact speaks of low power distance. Moreover, Swedish leaders are the ones most ready to delegate power and authority (Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars, 1993). This goes against Hofstede's index results (Hofstede, 1997). Furthermore, the role of consensus (Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars, 1993; Lewis, 2005) does not speak of Sweden having a higher power distance than Denmark. However, it is suggested that Swedish leaders exercise power by appearing non-powerful (Lewis, 2008). This study therefore emphasizes that focus needs to be on how power distance is accepted and how power is manifested and exercised, in terms of power distance. After reviewing the theories, the author of the study finds it most likely that Swedish culture has the lowest power distance, mainly due to consensus.

5.6.3. Short vs. long term orientation

In terms of long term vs. short time orientation, Hofstede's index only offers info on Sweden and not Denmark (Hofstede, 1997). Swedish culture is a relatively long-term oriented culture (Hofstede, 1997). Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars (1993) also describes Sweden as long term-oriented. In terms of Sweden vs. Denmark, Danes are according to Weiss more short-term oriented than Swedes (Weiss, 2009). That fact is supported by industrial historical facts (Weiss, 2009). Danes are also by

(Weiss, 2009) described as having problems with losing face, which according to (Hofstede, 2001) is a feature of a short-term oriented culture. Swedes, on the other hand, are by (Weiss, 2009) mentioned as risk-oriented and by (Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars, 1993) described as focused on relationships, which emphasizes Sweden as long-term oriented on the short-term vs. long term orientation index (Hofstede, 1997), since risk-orientation and emphasizes on relationships is an indicator of long-term oriented cultural features (Hofstede, 2001).

5.6.4. Contradicting Research Results about Swedes and Danes

Some findings in the research are contradictory. Lewis describes Danes as tolerant (Lewis, 2008), however, Weiss describes them as intolerant (Weiss, 2009). This might be because of the Danish – Swedish intercultural context, since Danes and Swedes, according to Weiss (2009) tend to adapt less, when acting in the Nordic social activity environment.

Swedes are described as not being afraid of saying their opinion (Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars, 1993). This does not match the theories of Richard D. Lewis, who describes Swedes as nervous about saying their opinion (Lewis, 2008). In this case (Lewis, 2008) is supported by (Weiss, 2009) in the story about a businessman who attends a meeting in Denmark, and returns to Sweden feeling stepped on because he has not asked about his opinion (Weiss, 2009).

There seems to be minor differences in the descriptions of Swedish and Danish culture between the theories (Hofstede, 1997; Lewis, 2008; Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars, 1993; Weiss, 2009). In terms of providing a valid and conclusive analysis, the study will pay increased attention to the variation of facts in the theories to ensure quality.

Reasons for the differences in facts between (Lewis, 2008) and (Weiss, 2009) can rely on study procedure. (Lewis, 2008) is based on analytical generalizations, whereas the facts in (Weiss, 2009) are derived from a relatively small numbers of cases. Another factor is the research environment. Like previously mentioned, Danes and Swedes seem to have increased problems when meeting in their own territory (Weiss, 2009). Furthermore, the intercultural approach to research subjects might have been different between theories by Lewis (2008), Hampden-Turner (1993) Weiss (2009), and Hofstede (1997), making the approach by Weiss (2009) more valid due to the Danish - Swedish context.

5.6.5.A Summary of Cultural Features from Literature Analysis

It is concluded that the Swedish businessman is an individualistically motivated entity focused on consensus, who displays collectivistic cultural features in group constellations. The combination of consensus and collectivistic cultural features creates low power distance. Swedish industrial cultural features, moreover, creates a relatively long term orientation.

The Dane is an individualist driven by short term personal goals. Danes do not emphasize consensus or share any of the Swedish collectivistic features, mainly due to individualistic motives and industrial circumstances.

According to literature study and Hall (2005) it is the Danish individualistic- vs. the Swedish collectivistic cultural features in business activities that are the main reasons for intercultural conflicts between Danes and Swedes. Thereby, it can also be concluded that it is the collectivistic features that creates the negative image of the Swedish businessman in the eyes of a Dane.

6. Interview Analysis

6.1. Interview with Christian Hansen of SEB, Denmark

In the interview Christian explains that prior to working on the project in Stockholm, he had only noticed small intercultural differences between himself and his Swedish “co-workers”, and mostly in form of visual appearance, etiquette, and of course the language. The Swedes in this context are mentioned as “co-workers” in citation, since Christian and the Swedish employees worked in the same company, but in different countries.

Christian is told to describe his experiences with Swedes during his stay in Stockholm and replies that upon arrival in Sweden, he was surprised by his new colleagues being so welcoming and friendly in comparison to his Danish co-workers. They not only integrated him into work activities, but also made him heavily active in spare time activities and he did not become as isolated and left alone as he had expected. This welcoming and integration fits the description of the cultural features of collectivism that Hall (2005) speaks of, but also what Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars (1993) explains by Swedish self-realization through contributing to other people’s energy. Also is displays the feature of relationship in a long-term oriented culture (Hofstede, 2001).

After a while, however, Christian began to notice how important it was for the Swedes to participate in group activities. He recalls one time, when he due to a work overload did not participate in “fika” and was corrected and “told off” for being too hardworking. That came as a surprise and was something he did not really grasp. To him it was common sense, that when you have important work to do, you do not sit down and drink coffee. This situation describes the Danish employment culture that Weiss (2009) presents and the conflict of short-term vs. long term oriented cultural features (Hofstede, 2001). However, after turning down his colleagues and continuing to work on

his tasks, he sensed a discontentment from his co-workers and for the first time he felt like an alien. This could be seen in relation to Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars (1993), that Swedes emphasize relations at work, and suggestively his individualistic actions were misinterpreted. In that case, it proves (Hall, 2005), that individualism vs. collectivism is the main factor of intercultural misunderstandings. Christian also states that he later started viewing Swedes as being somewhat lazy and less goal orientation. This shows the goal-orientation of a short-term oriented culture (Hofstede, 2001) and fits the description of Danes in Weiss (2009). In addition, he mentions that he likes social activities, he just felt uncomfortable being obliged to drink coffee when facing great work loads, supporting the above-given statement about Weiss (2009).

Another experience of Christian's is that Swedes pay, in his opinion, increased attention to appearance and etiquette. He describes an incident when going to a sports arena with some colleagues to play badminton. Being a Dane, in Christian's own words, he carried his gym clothes in a regular grocery shopping bag, however, his Swedish colleagues kept commenting on it as being inappropriate and advised him to buy decent bags like they had. This situation emphasizes the matter of etiquette put forward in Weiss (2009) and the demand for personal adaptability in a long-term oriented culture (Hofstede, 2001). Also it represents collectivistic features, since Christian is expected to integrate himself into the group, like mentioned in the definition of collectivism by Hofstede (1997) supported by Weiss (2009), that Swedes feel comfortable with people resembling themselves. Also, it describes the cultural features of collectivism presented by Hall (2005).

Christian suggestively displays short-term oriented cultural features, since he puts no efforts into adapting. Hofstede (2001) mentions personal adaptability as a long-term oriented cultural feature.

At meetings Christian, furthermore, noticed that Swedes have a tendency to mingle before meetings and the subjects among guys seem to be very sexually oriented. This could suggestively be an

indicator of focus on status, in a long-term oriented culture as mentioned by Hofstede (2001). He reviewed it a source of leaders to impress and gain influence among people attending the meeting. As a Dane, he states that he found it inappropriate and unprofessional, since it covers a spectrum that Danes speak of only in private life. At least never among people you are poorly acquainted with through work. This situation describes the cultural traits Weiss (2009) emphasizes, that Swedes have a homelike relationship to work. Furthermore, he mentions that his colleagues in Copenhagen, after having video conferences, often felt impatient and bothered by all these “social fake acts of kindness and interest”, the Swedes always had to bring forward in the beginning of a meeting. This emphasizes the conflict of collectivism and individualism, presented by Hall (2005). It also supports Weiss (2009) in the statement that Danes are impatient and have a quantitative relationship to time.

At first meetings, and in relation to appearance, Christian has noticed that Swedes tend to inflate themselves according to what he describes as being snobbish. More detailed, he describes Swedish as paying a lot of attention to visual appearance and social class. In the light of this, he heard many comments related to social class, which he found inappropriate and a lousy portraying of human values. He found many Swedish leaders to be snobbish and somewhat implicitly condescending with attention to social class and without any attention to facts, when criticizing a character or appearing powerful. Furthermore, he noticed his Swedish colleagues respecting this kind of power demonstrations, which surprised him, since he was used to criticism being delivered based on facts and power games only can be won through knowledge and reasoning. This fact contradicts the statement presented by Hampen-Turner & Trompenaars (1993) about the value of egalitarianism. It also gives the notion of high power distance in Sweden, which contradicts Lewis (2008), however, like mentioned previously by the author, power distance should be analyzed in terms of how it is exercised. This is to be seen in the light of Lewis (2008), who argues that Swedish leaders exercise

power by not appearing powerful. It could be argued that by emphasizing class inequality, the Swedish leaders in this case, exercise power. Since it specifically deals with social class, which resembles status, the emphasis on social class indicates that the Swedes acted according to the features of a long-term oriented culture. This is to be viewed in the light of Hofstede (2001).

Christian also tells a story about a power game incident he had with a superior manager about a booking of a sports arena. Christian, wanting to do activities with his new colleagues, decided at one time to book SEB's sports arena using the company's intranet. Days after making the booking he received an email from a superior manager telling him to cancel his booking immediately.

Christian, having done the booking according to rules, replied the mail asking for the reason that he should give up his booking. He got a mail in return saying that he should stop asking questions and just cancel his booking. Christian, however, continued to demand a reason. He experienced at this point that his colleagues who had been on his side, suddenly started to call him a troublemaker and distanced themselves from him. Christian, being a Dane, as he puts it, kept demanding a reason, but after receiving a mail from a top leader in the organization saying that he could not book it when he did not reside in Sweden, he sent a mail to the manager initially demanding the removal of the booking stating that "as one Nordic Team" (the HR slogan), he was convinced that they could find a compromise. A compromise was settled, however, Christian felt betrayed by his colleagues and was annoyed by being viewed as a troublemaker for standing up for his and their rights. Christian's fight to not lose face and personal persistence describes him as belonging to a short-term oriented culture, based the definition in Hofstede (2001). Christian said that he from that day felt disconnected to his Swedish colleagues, who met him with a more distanced rules of engagement. He also felt exposed to character assassination, since he was now regarded as a troublemaker. He states that he started noticing several traits of fear of conflicts among Swedes in combination with a tendency of pleasing top management. Something he resented as a Dane and found to be spineless

and hypocrisy since he often heard complaints about management behind closed doors. These observations made him trust his Swedish colleagues less and noticed that the ever positive attitudes among his co-workers had levels of hypocrisy with a goal oriented ulterior motive. This incident speaks against and for the fear of conflicts presented in Weiss (2005). The manager does not seem afraid of conflicts, whereas Christian's colleagues seemed to be. This could be explained in the light of long-term oriented cultural features, since the manager is aware of his status. Status is a feature of a long-term oriented culture according to Hofstede (2001). The fight to make a Swede say his honest opinion, he also found to be annoying and a generator of distrust. When pushing for opinions, he hated being labeled as impolite and a wrongdoer according to protocol, when opposing suggestions and criticizing. This is an indicator of Swedish consensus as mentioned by Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars (1993), Lewis (2008), and Weiss (2009).

In Sweden meetings and negotiations take a lot longer than in Denmark, Christian states. There is an extreme amount of talk that can make any person fall asleep and lose focus. In Sweden, the decision-making is a long process, which Christian finds very inefficient and too much time is spent on debating and analyzing risks. He noticed that most time is spent convincing each other why not to do things instead of reviewing opportunities. According to Christian Swedes are extremely focused on risk assessment and somewhat conservative. This is a cultural feature of long-term orientation, according to Hofstede (2001). Christian describes Swedish philosophy as being, "better safe than sorry even though being safe means being sorry". That attitude can be frustrating and time inefficient to a level where one loses all energy and perspective. These descriptive facts highlight a major issue in Lewis (2008) and Weiss (2009), that Swedes favor process and that it can conflict with other cultures' motivations. It also emphasizes the impatient Danes presented by Weiss (2009). It also describes Christian as belonging to a short-term culture according to Hofstede (2001)

6.2. Interview with Arne Pedersen

According to Arne, he remembers his view of Swedes as being very formal and less relaxed than Danes, which supports the facts of Hampden-Tuner & Trompenaars (1993), Lewis (2008), and Weiss (2009). Furthermore, it elaborates on Christian's statement that Swedes are different in terms of appearance and etiquette. However, Arne feels that it has changed tremendously over the last thirty years and he describes the modern Swede as being more continental. It can be concluded from those facts, that Swedes are more relaxed today than thirty years ago, however, not as relaxed as Danes.

Besides from that Arne sees no remarkable intercultural differences between Danes and Swedes, and had no further comments to cultural differences.

The important aspect is here, that like previously mentioned, that cultural differences are most evident below executive level (Weiss 2009). This can be the reason to why Arne does not notice any intercultural differences. Otherwise, he has worked with Swedes for such a long time, that he no longer notices any differences and is fully integrated into a full blown mix of Danish Swedish culture. Furthermore, the interview supports the similarities between Danes and Swedes according to Hofstede's five dimensions index (1997).

7. Discussion

The following analysis is to be viewed from a business perspective based on the convincing that business is a matter of generating financial profits. The author wishes to introduce the old saying "time is money" and this analogy is to be viewed in context to the need for making collaborative business processes run as smoothly as possible, and that consequences and conflicts based on

intercultural differences are the major time bandits in regard to the previously mentioned convincing. Best advice to make all business processes as efficient as possible. According to Hall (1990) effective communication is about the right responses rather than the messages. This implies, according to the author, the relevance of establishing self-awareness and cultural understanding.

According to the theory analysis and interview analysis on Danish - Swedish intercultural business relations, two major differences are clearly indentified. Swedes are due to industrial history collectivistic-oriented with focused attention to egalitarianism and consensus, meaning everyone in the organization should behave alike and agree on the same terms, and furthermore have the opportunity to share their opinions. When a decision is made on the base of consensus and one is not allowed to divert from the once made decision in any way.

The Swedish consensus is reached upon numerous meetings and according to strict protocol, and it takes a relatively long time to reach the ever wanted consensus (Lewis, 2008). The consensus is also to be seen in the light of careful planning, which also demands time resources (Lewis, 2008), (Weiss, 2009).

Swedes believe in the Swedish way, and tend to lecture other culture on the righteousness of proceeding according to Swedish etiquette (Lewis, 2008). The etiquette includes careful planning and attention to process, consensus, no showing of aggression, negative criticism being delivered with a high level of discretion, positive criticism being aimed at the whole group, focus on reaching unified attitudes and points of view (Weiss, 2009). When a Swede meets with other entities with the intend to collaborate, respect for the collectivistic framework and goal is shown through relatively extreme politeness and visually identification with the counterpart, allowing the counterpart to identify with the Swede, and according to Swedish mindset of fishing for similarities, allowing the

counterpart identify the similarities that will ease the foundation of the base for group identification and consensus prospect.

In retrospect to those conclusions, the role of the Swedish leader is to unite the group and make sure that all people are involved and share the same attitudes, visions and goals (Lewis, 2008) and Weiss (2009).

The Swedish way and the mindset of believing that there is only one way (Lewis, 2008), proves to a great extent Swedish collectivistic features. The Swedish way is a set of rules for the individual to integrate oneself into the group. From this the author concludes that Swedish are long-term oriented according to the features presented by Hofstede (2001). Once in the group you have to follow social modes and codes such as the ones previously mentioned, the most important one being to strive for consensus and identifying with the group, the author concludes. The etiquette of the Swedish way is a spin-off of collectivism and the striving for consensus and seeks to protect and serve the collectivistic values allowing the group to act as a motivated agent. For that reason, means such as social group activities and the fear conflict is serving as a regulator/controller preserving the consensus made decisions and collectivistic activities. In other words the process and the control of the groups' entities ensure the reaching of the goal.

Furthermore, the questioning of the Swedish way will go against Swedish consensus, since the Swedish way was established by consensus, according to the author.

To the author, consensus also proves why Swedes by other cultures are regarded as conflict avoiding, since conflict threatens consensus and initiating conflict risk your image as a team player and a person eligible for integration in the group formation.

In context to Christian Bernhard's experiences, one can see that the co-workers agreed, based on consensus and in agreement with Christian's values, that since the sports arena was available upon booking, they should have it. They unified opinions according to the Swedish way with attention on the process that they should answer the email. However, as the conflict grew and the colleagues saw their role in the big picture, SEB as a whole, they suddenly regarded themselves as a threat to consensus and chose conflict avoidance to unify with SEB as a group. Christian, who solely continued to involve himself in the conflict, thereby broke the codes and modes of the Swedish way and was no longer expressing collectivistic values, isolating him instead integrating him. This exemplifies the Swedish focus on relations at work put forward by Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars (1993) and the conflict of individualism vs. collectivism and its misunderstandings presented by Hall (2005). Furthermore, it exemplifies the differences between Danish and Swedish individualism. Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars (1993) argues that Swedes are individualists, but with other values such as egalitarianism. In this case, there is a demand for no one acting differently, which can suggest egalitarianism, and the fact that SEB is seen as a whole. The author argues that this is a collectivistic feature, according to Hall (2005), collectivistic cultures focus on unison. However, it is also described in Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars (1993), that Swedish individualism is unique and focuses on relations and consensus. Finally, it describes the individualistic vs. collectivistic features and Swedish group-think causing the conflicts mentioned in Weiss (2009). Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars (1993) mention Swedes as deserting all group-think in conflicts, however, this is not the case in the above mentioned scenario, relating to the author's notion of a higher power distance in Swedish SEB, based on the interview analysis, than presented by Lewis (2005). However, it supports Hofstede's ranking on Sweden as having more power distance than Denmark (Hofstede, 1997). In this case the author would like to take into consideration, that emphasis must be on how power is exercised and demonstrated. The author

argues that power can be exercised in various ways e.g. by personal appearance and status. Lewis (2008) argues that Swedish leaders demonstrate power by not actively executing power.

Other experiences describing Swedish collectivistic features, from the interview with Christian, is him not participating in “fika pauser”, in order to decrease his workload, which is an individualistic feature, which is sanctioned by a mix of uncertainty and discontent from the Swedish co-workers, since he did not put all effort into collectivistic values and consensus, creating an insecure atmosphere.

To the individualistic Danes liking unity, but favoring an oppose to authority, rules, and regulations, and at the same time cheering flexibility and discomfort of feeling boxed in and always like to leave a door open as mentioned by Lewis (2005) and Weiss (2009), the packing of the unity in the Swedish way, can therefore, before realizing the foundation and the consequences of joining a group can, be very flattering, since one is treated with such high level of attention, which the collectivistic values and consensus offers. From this perspective when realizing the codes and demands from the collectivistic group, the individualistic Dane will oppose the authority of the group and openly criticize these ways of commitment. Danes are by Weiss (2009) described as having a drive to oppose authority. A Dane will probably understand the following analogy from the title of the movie "blood in blood out", referring that once you get in, there are consequences to opposing the group rules. This attitude is of course a chock to the Swedish consensus seeking collectivistic oriented person, who due to fear, will sanction by imposing the rules and punishments of the collectivistic and consensus system. This will of course develop into an establishment of poles and a "them and us". This establishment of “them and us” is critical for collaborations, according to Weiss (2009). In this case it is recommended that the Swedish counterpart understands the differences and the consequences, and imposes consensus through a slacking on the rules and

codes of conduct in terms of collectivistic values and let the Danes freely integrate themselves by being given opportunities and no sanctions for misbehavior. Furthermore, the Swede should control the discomfort by not acting according to consensus and collectivistic values and not see it is a threat to the project and relationship. Danes just favor flexibility and opportunities to as an individualist act as a motivated agent, like mentioned by Lewis (2008) and Weiss (2009). The Dane does probably not understand that he/she disrespects the rules of collectivism and consensus, by not participating.

The same goes for the establishment of a group by indentifying visually with the counterpart mentioned by Weiss (2009). Danes are used to individualism and differences (Weiss, 2009). The author suggests that the Swede should try to keep an open mind to the person he/she meets without attention to visual identification and explore the individual, in order to be provoked, like Weiss (2009) mentions, is beneficial for creativity.

Weiss (2009) explains that a Swede comes to a meeting to go over the main outline and secure the details. Danes are just interested in the outline, and treat the need for details with a "manana manana" attitude. To avoid frustration for the Danish counterpart who is chronically impatient and time oriented, as mentioned by Weiss (2009) and at the same ensuring the details that you as a Swede have a need for, according to Lewis (2008), it is recommended to be direct and open about why you need these details. This will possibly create a positive environment of honesty, which is a positive trait Danes favor in Swedes Weiss (2009). In this case like many others it is advised to slack on consensus and demand the details using a Danish leadership style by giving orders, like described by Lewis (2008) and Weiss (2009). This will emphasize the importance of the details and make good combination with the explanatory approach first tried.

In terms of decision making, consensus and the collectivistic or egalitarian approach is crucial to Swedes (Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars, 1993), (Lewis, 2008), (Weiss, 2009). Danes spend meetings questioning approaches (Lewis, 2008) and convincing the counterpart about their way being the best (Weiss, 2009). A Swede expecting and acting according to consensus will in this case not be able to present their opinions and Danes will regard Swedes as passive and without an opinion. It will for a Dane be like playing "boll plank" with a swimming pool. Furthermore, the Danish leader will always have the last say. The inability to identify the Swedish leader, like mentioned by Lewis (2008) and Weiss (2009) will also make the Swedish leader seem like a vague character, who does not dare to step into character, which will create an uneven relation of personal perceptions, which will make to Swedish business image seem less attractive. In this case, it would be advised to slack on the consensus, however, since consensus is the core of Swedish decision-making as mentioned by Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars, (1993), Lewis (2008), and Weiss (2009) and in order to ensure good and advantageous decisions, it is advised to inform the Danish counterpart, that this is how we make decisions in Sweden. Also, it is suggested to state, we Swedes respect the Danish relation to time, mentioned by Weiss (2009), however, we will try to internally speed up the process and be factually as prepared for every meeting and to the extent possible make swift decisions. Another approach would be to include less people in the decision making process.

In terms of negotiating, the generous approach from a Swede creates a negative and a positive effect. Distrust, because the Danes want 100% and misinterprets the generosity of the Swedes, which also is a sign of a stretched hand welcoming consensus, and positive because of the kindness of the Swedes. For that reason it is advised to explain that Swedes believe in consensus and are long term-oriented and for that reason they find the specific per cent sharing reasonable. This will show awareness and to some extent put forward the positive climate and a focus on the common value of honesty. Honesty is a shared value between Danes and Swedes according to Weiss (2009). The

author also suggest, that awareness will give respect since, awareness opposite to the consensus need, is a sign of independence and individualism in which Danes will identify and tone down any sales techniques initiated by the identification of the underlying traits of the consensus need.

Swedish process orientation vs. Danish purpose orientation also shows signs of collectivism vs. individualism. Swedes from an industrial background focus on the task of moving the group resource making the best process possible. Without a good process the goal is not reachable. The goal oriented Danes, have a hard time understanding why process is important without knowing the goal. The process is easy since a leader will handle the tasks by giving orders. Again a typical case of consensus vs. non consensus, where the counterparts probably are just as confused about the orientation, but since the view of the thesis is to advice Swedes who meet Danes, it is advised to identify the goal with the Danes taking the lead and then slacking on the need for consensus and put forward ones expertise in processes and take charge of that discussion, since Danes will find it relatively easy since the leader will lead and the workers will take orders. It is in this situation it is also crucial to explain that in Sweden, leadership and process is different from Danish codes of conduct and has to be taken into account.

In terms of the extensive aftermath collaborations and the employees of the now intercultural different companies wanting to integrate codes of conduct, it is recommended to inform the Danes that you would like them to inform their staff members on intercultural differences in order to create the best possible workflow and also educate your own staff on the intercultural differences and create self-awareness.

This procedure seems to be one point that the author assumes will favor Swedish consensus, and serves a purpose and has process orientation at the same time. According to the author this is a true meeting half way in a win-win situation.

Swedes are due to their way of showing respect and inviting into the "group" making a very stiff and visually focused appearance, with the intention of making other qualified group wanting to integrate with them. However, the relaxed and individualistic Dane regards the Swede as stiff and boring, since they do not share the same values. Swedes look for traits presented in their own appearance and behavior, when they want to join a group (Weiss 2009). The Danes being individualists look for character and individualistic traits, and seek unison in terms of humor, and for that reason they provoke, joke and can to a Swede seem unserious. Justice is a value in both cultures (Weiss, 2009), however, Danes will likely feel mistreated when visually judged, just like Christian and the gym bag incident, since character and the possibility of being accepted for who you are is not respected.

According to the author, any negative comments on visual appearance will be regarded as snobbish and disrespectful to the favoring of the braveness incorporated in individualism and one could assumingly be classified for being incompetent and not able to go beyond the surface in the hunt for opportunities.

So when dealing with Danes, the author suggests, that you should not be afraid to express yourself as an individual through humor or show character not associated with group-orientation.

The Danish individualists respect risk taking (Weiss, 2009). The opposite of that is formality and playing it safe by social codes of conduct or consensus. With this said, Danes are known for favoring "the golden middle way" (Weiss, 2009), which according to the author is the Danish equivalent of the Swedish term "lagom".

In communication Swedes have a tendency to pack criticism in "padding" (Weiss, 2009). Danes are used directing critic and are used to taking criticism (Weiss, 2009). So not being direct, would

probably seem immature to a Dane and furthermore sinister. So by not being direct, the Swedish image could be damaged.

Danes suggestively find the Swedish scare of conflicts, a spin-off of consensus and collectivism, to be dishonest and immature, and also disrespectful, since Danish codes of conduct are to speak your mind and show emotions. The Swedes not showing emotions are risking being regarded as immature people being dependent on behavioral codes and regarded as cold dishonest people. Best advice is to show who you are and view conflict as a way to identify differences and overcome them, and at the same time get to know each other. Danes forget conflicts after the meeting and have no problem having a drink with you later (Weiss 2009). Conflicts identify the outline of character and it creates an environment of creativity. Weiss (2009) emphasizes provocation as a generator of creativity.

Referring to Christian's conflict with a senior manager, it is unprofessional in Denmark to use power not backed by facts in Denmark. When in a conflict, back your arguments by facts and reasoning and not power associated attitudes, it will just ignite the individualistic Dane with the need to fight authority. Weiss (2009) describes Danes as a people with a tendency to oppose authority.

Danes emphasize goals (money) and Swedes the process (Weiss, 2009). So advice to Swedes in sales situations is to make economy the main focus and use cost reduction and best price as a selling point.

Use native languages when talking to Danes, and be not afraid to say that you do not understand. Danes like directness according to Weiss (2009) and at the same time it by (Weiss, 2009) argued that speaking native languages is best procedure.

In terms of time orientation, a Swede should be aware that the Dane prefers to spend time in the field trying to create results (Weiss, 2009). They do not put as much emphasis on planning (Weiss, 2009). Swedes who spend time on planning are probably regarded as slow movers, even though Danes favor the thoroughness, as stated in Weiss (2009), as long as it does not affect their opportunities of taking advantage of quickly presented opportunities. In this case it is recommended to put emphasis on the reason for good planning, however leave room for moving away from the consensus oriented decision of not doing anything without careful planning. That way the Danes will feel that they get the best of both worlds; Swedish thorough planning and the Danish possibility of moving fast on opportunities.

Social events is another Swedish trait of consensus and collectivism, which in the eyes of the individualist Dane who is used to a dynamic job market, is totally unnecessary and a waste of time and focus. The same goes for collectivistic "fika pauser", which creates discomfort for the driven, result-oriented Dane.

Like Christian put it, 'Swedes and Danes probably spend the same amount of time around the coffee machine, however, only Swedes made the mistake of creating a word for it'. When there is a job to do, it is not accepted to be drinking coffee and socializing. It is regarded as unprofessional by the result oriented Danes. When dealing with Danes, associate "fika pauser" with meetings and celebration of results.

Also in Denmark, work life is not associated with private life (Weiss, 2009). Christian was very surprised with the family feeling and mixture of private life with work life in Sweden. He felt welcomed, however, he felt it could borderline to unprofessionalism. He enjoyed it in Sweden, but was unsure that it would be accepted in Denmark.

Swedes have in the eyes of the Dane, a lot of respect for authority, which can suggestively be regarded by the Dane, who has less respect of authority as “sitting on ones hands” in respect to exploring opportunities and taking full advantage. This is suggestively also why Swedes sometimes receive contracts from Danes that look a little different from what was agreed on. (Lewis, 2008) describes Danes as being experts in re-packing already made agreements.

Swedes have a tendency to think that they do not have anything new to add to the agenda and is a kind of shy (Weiss, 2009). Suggestively, the expressive opportunity-oriented Dane, will in this respect view the Swede as a slow, inefficient individual with no business skills. This will damage the Swede’s image, so it is recommended to show initiative and step into character to win the Danes confidence over, although it might not comply with consensus and the collectivistic mindset.

Furthermore, Danes favor drive and initiative (Weiss, 2009), so the passive Swede will suggestively, not be seen as a good partner and might be left out of the good deals.

Reviewing all the facts, the author of the study agrees with Hall (2005), that individualism vs. collectivism is the main reason for cultural conflicts based on the literature analysis and the interview analysis. The author argues that Swedish business people are individualistically motivated agents, however, due to egalitarianism and consensus, Swedish culture displays a significant amount of collectivistic cultural features, classifying them as collectivists in terms of group behavior, in relation to other individualistic cultures. It is, according to the author, the individual motivation behind group engagement, like mentioned by Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars (1993), that differentiates Swedish culture from collectivistic cultures, however, the group orientation is similar to that of collectivistic cultures described by Hofstede (1997) and Hall (2005). The author also argues that the Swedish long-term orientation cultural features, mentioned by Hofstede (2001), support the collectivistic behavior. In the light of the industrial historical facts and the process

orientation of Swedish industry mentioned by Weiss (2009), and the egalitarian focus mentioned by Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars (1993), the author finds Swedish culture to be reliant of collectivistic features in order to perform as a group. The need for consensus, which by the author is seen as a subcategory of egalitarianism, furthermore argues that Swedish egalitarianism is the key factor behind collectivistic cultural features, leading to collectivistic group behavior.

The author agrees with the identified individualistic features of the Danish business culture presented by the literature analysis and interview analysis.

The author concludes that the main reason for Danish – Swedish intercultural conflicts in business situations is the aspect of individualistic vs. collectivistic features, like mentioned by Hall (2005).

Secondly, the process- versus goal-orientation mentioned by Lewis (2008) and Weiss (2009) contributes to a polarization of motivations, leading to misunderstandings and conflicts. Like mentioned by Weiss (2009) and based on the interview analysis, the Danes experience Swedes as slow and too focused on process. At the same time it is also mentioned that Danes prefer trial and error as a code of conduct, Weiss (2009).

Process- versus goal-orientation shaped by industrial factors can be related to Hofstede's dimension of short-term vs. long-term orientation, Hofstede (2001). Danes have due to focus on sales and service, like mentioned by Weiss (2009,) short-term orientation, whereas Swedes are long-term oriented due heavy industrial background. Weiss (2009) describes Sweden as having a heavy industry mindset.

According to the author, short-term orientation vs. long-term orientation is related to the possible area of conflicts in relation to individualistic- vs. collectivistic motivations.

The goal-orientation of the Danes, the Danish work environment and Swedish relationship to work breaks, described by Weiss (2009) and mentioned in the interview analysis, highlights a possible area of conflict, since the Swedes are in the risk of being regarded as ineffective.

Based on the above-mentioned reasons, the critical cultural features of the Swedish businessman in the eyes of a Dane are the Swedish collectivistic features rooted in egalitarianism and consensus.

Secondly, the process-orientation creates a negative image.

Advice by the author to Swedish businessmen engaging in business relations with Danes is to avoid the negative effects of cultural differences. For that reason the author suggests this advice:

- 1) Be self-aware.
- 2) Explain your cultural features and values to the Danes.
- 3) Decrease collectivistic features.
- 4) Prioritize goals instead of process.
- 5) Be direct in communication and be not afraid to express yourself.
- 6) Do not use status and authority to exercise power.
- 7) Regard the work place as a place of work.

8. Conclusion

Based on the comparative literature analysis, the interview analysis and the discussion, the study identified the Danish businessman as an individualist with short term-orientation. The Swedish businessman was concluded to be an individualist with a strong belief in egalitarianism and consensus. The Swedish businessman is, furthermore, long term oriented. The literature study also argued that the combination of egalitarianism, long-term orientation, and consensus makes the Swedish businessman appear collectivistic.

Based on the statement by Hall (2005) that cultural misunderstandings mostly are based on the aspect of individualism vs. collectivism, the study concludes that the main critical aspect of cultural differences between Danish and Swedish businessmen, are Danish individualistic features versus Swedish collectivistic features.

Secondly, the study concludes that the Swedish process-orientation and qualitative relationship to time and the Danish goal-orientation and quantitative relationship is a critical cultural aspect.

The Swedish risk-avoidance and the Danish risk-taking is a critical aspect of cultural differences.

Swedish generosity in negotiations is a critical aspect, since the Danes misinterprets the gesture as sinister.

Based on the interview analysis, the Swedish fear of conflict is regarded as a critical cultural feature. From the interview analysis, it is concluded that Swedish sanctions towards people not following the collective was a critical aspect. Also the Swedish use of status and authority as a power exercise is a critical aspect.

Secondary cultural critical aspects were the Danish directness and emotional expressiveness in communication versus the “Swedish way”, in terms of etiquette, codes of conduct, stiffness, and non-expressiveness. The Swedish focus on visual appearance was identified as a critical cultural feature.

Other critical aspects were Swedish collective social activities at the work place. These activities were less accepted in Denmark.

Finally, Swedish lecturing about the “Swedish way” is a minor critical aspect.

It is concluded that the critical cultural differences are the critical features of the Swedish businessman in the eyes of a Dane.

Advice by the author to Swedish businessmen engaging in business relations with Danes is to avoid the negative effects of cultural differences. For that reason the author suggests this advice:

- 1) Be self-aware.
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- 7) Regard the work place as a place of work.

9. Reflection

The author of this pilot study emphasizes the relevance of including more empirical data collected from interviews with Danes having done business with Swedes. In this case, the author also finds it relevant to emphasize individualistic vs. collectivistic features in the interview question, in order to manifest the collectivist vs. individualistic features as being the cornerstones of intercultural misunderstandings, like mentioned by Hall (2005). This means that the interviewed businessmen should not only be asked about the critical aspects of the Swedish businessman, but also asked interview questions to reveal intercultural differences in terms of Individualistic vs. collectivistic features.

10. Perspective and last comments by the author

Based on the conclusions, it would be interesting to elaborate on the best practice advice through a secondary study. Furthermore, it is of value to best practice advice to perform a similar study with focus on the Danish stereotype in the eyes of a Swede. The perspective that the author finds most interesting is to study how you create the most efficient win-win scenarios by managing cultural aspects in a Danish Swedish relationship.

To people offended by any of the content of the study, the thesis is done in a business context related to business practices, and the conclusions presented do not necessarily apply to a private life context.

Kindest Regards

Bo Holm-Christiansen

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