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How culture affects the motivation of employees

A study in differences in motivation between Swedish and Chinese employees

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Abstract

For a long time, the research on motivation for employees was focused on companies in the US or Europe. When China opened up for foreign investors, much was unknown about what motivated Chinese workers, but in the 90s the interest to research this area began to rise.

The reason for writing this thesis is to find out what motives employees in Sweden and China have regarding work and if cultural differences between these two countries play an important role. This is very up-to-date in today's global world with companies entering new markets in the world and especially Chinese companies that are constantly growing. To find out this we choose to interview ten people in total. Half of them are Swedes and the other half are Chinese. Semi-structured interviews will be conducted in order to find out the answer about the differences in motivation of Swedish and Chinese employees and the importance of culture.

Our findings indicate that there are big differences in what motivates employees. Chinese employees tend to get motivated by so called basic needs such as working conditions and high salary while Swedish employees strive to feel that they are dedicated to their work and appreciated by their managers for the effort they put in. Some of the findings can be explained by the difference in the economic situation in both countries, but some are not related to wealth or the lack of it, but rather the differences in culture and way of thinking.

By writing this thesis we have the intention to contribute to this research area and to try to facilitate the organization of intercultural companies and corporations. The objective is to clarify and explain what managers should do to give their employees the best conditions so that they can do their best at work and feel that they are appreciated for their efforts.

Key words: *Culture, Motivation - & hygiene factors, Hierarchy, Guanxi, Mianzi, HRM*

Preface

Both writers of this thesis have personal experience from China. One of them has lived and studied in Dalian, Shanghai and Hangzhou. This writer has also traveled extensively in the eastern parts of the country and is fluent in Mandarin Chinese. The other writer has also visited the country, but only as a tourist visiting both Beijing and Shanghai. Both writers are fascinated by the country and the way of living and doing business in this important economic region, with many new rich people and increasing inequalities in the society, which is exactly the opposite of how the Chinese should live according to the communist and Confucian ideologies point of view. Our personal experiences of the country and the focus on how China affects the economy on the global scale has been an essential part of the education at Handelshögskolan in Gothenburg are the primary reasons to why we have chosen to compare China and Sweden, their cultures and the way employees are motivated in these two countries.

The official name of China is People's Republic of China but henceforward we will refer to the country as China.

Acknowledgement

We would like to thank all the interviewees for being a part of our research and for all useful answers that we got from them. The experience that these people have from their work life and sharing it with us has been really helpful. Without their participation it would be impossible to finish the study.

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The inspiration that we got from our trips to China has been a true inspiration and one of the most important reasons for writing about this subject, therefore we also show our gratitude to all people that we met there and that have made our trips remarkable and memorable.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

In this chapter the topic of this report is presented as well as the purpose of it, the research question, problem discussion and finally a delimitation of this study.

1.1 Background

The world has turned from being divided into various nations with their markets and businesses separated from the rest of the world into one global market place with goods and services, capital, companies and people moving from one country to another in order to benefit from economic advantages. Many Swedish companies have for example established their organization or parts of it in China because of the lower labor costs and other economic facilitations to be able to increase their profit margins (Trading economics, 2015). When China was starting to open up for foreign investment and foreign companies they began to invest and make a big shift moving a lot of in firsthand the manufacturing industry to China (Douw & Huang, 2013). Nowadays more companies within the high technology industry have also started to produce there.

Apart from all economic benefits that companies gain from by establishing in China there are also big differences in doing business that the companies have to deal with. In China there is a completely different culture, language, values, norms, business compared to Sweden. There are also a significant number of Chinese investors who find Sweden and the West an attractive region to invest into, because of the innovative people and the “know-how” (Backaler, 2014).

China is one of the largest countries in the world with large differences within the country in economic development and culture and therefore the focus will be on the developed parts of China located mainly in the East (DN, 2007). As the significance and the dependency of the Chinese economy rises in the world, so does also the importance of learning what motivates Chinese and Swedish employees and to understand how culture affects the choices regarding work.

It is not unreasonable to think that in a couple of years China might become the strongest economy in the world and then the adaptation to the Chinese way of work and live will be as strong as the Western way of living is today and it is important to learn all of that however Sweden and many other countries in the West still have an advantage regarding Innovation and Chinese companies desire to benefit from it (The telegraph, 2014).

1.2 Problem discussion

The market has for long been seen as a unit that is tighten to the own nation. Business was limited to the country in which the company started in and the limited population in the specific country made that organizations could not grow more than to a definite level. Due to innovations such as telecommunications, new transport systems for both goods and people and internet the world has become globalized which has made it possible for companies to expand their business from the own country to other parts of the world (Hill, 2014).

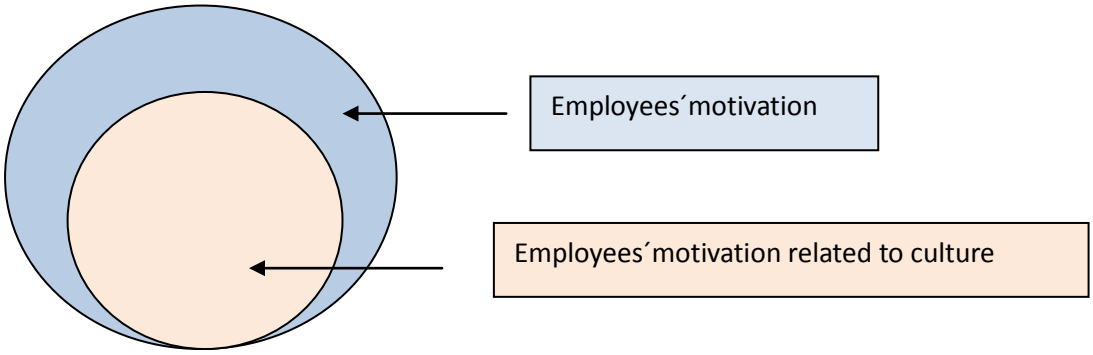
In 2001 China joined the World Trade organization and this has had a positive outcome for Chinese business and companies who has been able to co-operate with companies and organizations from all around the world since then (OECD, 2015). These kind of co operations that many western countries have with Chinese companies also brings new challenges in various aspects such as the difference in doing business, the way the organization looks and is structured and also cultural differences that one must be aware of while dealing with companies and people from another part of the world and with a different background than yours.

Earlier studies for example the one made by Fisher and Yuan (1998) show that there were big differences between motivational factors amongst Chinese and Western workers. A lot of research in this area has already been done but primary based on the views of US workers, for example by Jurgensen (1978) and Kovach (1994, 1995). We have noticed that there is a lack of research on motivational and cultural differences between China and Sweden. Sweden is one of the member countries of OECD who has had and still has a lot of cooperation with China and there are today more than 500 Swedish companies established in the country and about 10 000 Swedish companies having regular trade with China. For that reason is has become frequent that Swedes and Chinese work together in different organizations (Embassy of Sweden, 2015).

To be able to work effectively in the future both Swedes and Chinese need to understand each other's culture and respect the way companies work.

It is also of high importance that companies are able to adapt to other working conditions that the ones that they are used to in order to be effective and make successful cooperation. The question regarding motivation is sensitive for both Sweden and China since reward systems and other motivational factors has not been a natural part of the Chinese organization and

society and this in one aspect that one must bear in mind and adjust to fit the specific organization.



This figure is our way to visualize and more precisely point out our research area. The blue circle represents the area of motivation more generally while the pink circle is the part of motivation and differences in motivation between China and Sweden that can be explained by culture in these two countries. In our study we try categorize the differences in motivation between the two countries and explain to what extent motivational factors can be placed in the pink area. Furthermore the figure is made by us in order to visualize our study.

1.3 Research question

The aim for this study is to answer this research question regarding motivation and culture:

How does motivation differ between Swedish and Chinese employees and how much of this can be explained by cultural differences?

The intention that we have is to explore on what scale the culture in China and Sweden affects their way of motivating employees in these two countries. By making interviews with regular workers in the lower levels in both Chinese and Swedish organizations we strive to understand the way of motivating people and understand the cultural differences
The answers of the interviewees will be analyzed to be able to answer that.

1.4 Purpose

This thesis is about to distinguish the differences in way of motivating workers in Swedish and Chinese companies focusing on cultural differences. We will also investigate whether hierarchy, human resource management and networking increase the employees ‘motivation. The goal is to contribute to the understanding of what challenges Swedish companies trying to make business with or in China are facing, and vice versa. The goal is also to ease the

cooperation in companies where people from both Sweden and China are working so that they are able to work together more effectively.

We also want to investigate if the economic rise of China during the last couple of decades has led to a change in opinions and priorities regarding work among Chinese employees and if their motivational factors have become more similar to the Western ones, or if they have kept their traditional and cultural values.

We aim to further the understanding of these differences and hopefully get some answers that can be applicable not only to these two countries, but to what they actually represent, namely the West and the East.

1.5 Delimitation

We have decided to only focus on the subject motivation in lower hierarchical levels since it probably varies in different levels. There are many aspects to cover in order to get the whole picture about how people are motivated in Sweden and China. There are many cultural differences between these two countries but we have just selected the theories and key concepts that we think will enhance the understanding of this research area. China has developed into a nation where living standards vary vastly in different parts of the country. Therefore we decided to only focus on the more developed Eastern parts of China and exclude the rest of the country in this study in order to make our research more trustworthy.

In our research we will take in regard both national culture and corporate culture since we believe that both will have an impact on the motivation of employees.

Chapter 2 Key concepts

An explanation of some essential concepts will be made due to the fact that these words are understood differently among people. Many researchers have made their own definition of these words that are important to understand for this report. *Culture* and *Hierarchy* are some of the concepts that will be explained and so are *Guanxi* and *Mianzi*. All of these are explained in order to be able to answer the research question.

2.1 Culture

The word culture is a complex and a hard word to definite since it consists of various cornerstones that together explain the meaning of the word. Culture is defined by components such as religion, language, social habits, lifestyle and cuisine. It can also be divided into sub-categories such as national and corporate culture. It originally derives from Latin and means tend to the earth and grow (Zimmermann, 2015). Many people has during the years tried to define the actual meaning of this word and what importance culture has on different countries, the society and the people living in it. Edward Tylor, a famous anthropologist from Great Britain defines what culture is in his book *Primitive culture* with the following words:
"that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society." (Tylor. B. Edward, 187,1 p. 1 chapter. 1)
Tylor really pushes hard on the importance of belonging in a society and that every society has its own kind of culture. He also mentions that the language in a society, cuisine and other man- made things are only the result of a culture and not the culture itself. (Tylor. B. Edward, 1871)

Hofstede explained the definition of culture even one step further with these words:
"culture is the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others"(Hofstede, 2011, p.3)
There are three important features in this definition of culture. The first one is that culture cannot be created by actions of one person. It has to be created by the activities of a whole group. The second one is that culture is a product created by humans. The last one is that the culture is something that distinguishes one group of people from other and makes every group unique (Hofstede, 2011).

Culture can be seen as a system of norms and values that are shared among a group of people

and that creates a way of living. A norm is a term for specific social rules that everyone in the group is aware of and these social rules is a guideline for how to behave in different situations in the daily life. Value on the other hand is something even more abstract and refers to ideas that individuals within group things are good and right. These individuals in the group share the same idea of how things should be and what the society for example should look like. The expression society is a word describing that there is a group of people that shares common values and norms (Hill, 2014).

The culture in society is also divided in subcultures. This is especially visible in countries with many different ethnic groups (O´Neil, 2006). In China there are many different types of religions such as Buddhism, Islam and Christianity although China is generally considered as secular (Bhattacharji, 2008). One must also not forget that culture is not fixed. Culture is a constantly changing phenomenon and understood in many various ways by people from different parts of the world and with different backgrounds. Therefore, to understand a society and its culture it is important to always stay updated (Zimmermann, 2015).

2.2 Hierarchy

The word *hierarchy* comes from the greek words hieros (sacred) and archein (rule, command) (New Advent, 2012). Its general meaning is that there is a ranking in various factors. It is used in a number of different areas, such as biology, chemistry, physics and sociology. In sociology it is used to describe social ranking in different groups. (Andersen, Brante and Korsnes, 2001). The origin of hierarchy is debated. Some believe that it arose in ancient Egypt, where agriculture began to replace gathering and hunting as the primary method for obtaining food. Researchers believe that agriculture made it possible for people to hoard resources and food, which made them able to induce others to follow them. (Pappas, 2014).

Social scientist Herbert A. Simon (1969) said that the basic structure of matter is hierarchic, in the sense that molecules are made of atoms, which in turn are made of elementary particles. He claimed that hierarchy can be seen everywhere; books are divided into chapters which are made up of sections, paragraphs, phrases and words. The same phenomenon can be seen in societies; individuals make up a family, families make up tribes, tribes make up nations and so on. Simon argued that hierarchy is something natural, that almost unavoidable emerges through evolutionary processes, since hierarchical structures are steady.

In modern organizations, the word *hierarchy* often bears negative connotations. Many believe that hierarchical organizations tend to slow down decision making, add unnecessary processes

and undermine innovative people. This is of course not the objective of hierarchy in organizations. In contrary, it is usually there to get the best out of workers and to ensure that there is someone empowered to help them if needed and to look at problems differently. (Moghe, 2009). Anders Johnson writes that hierarchies can be useful in organizations for creating an equal playing field for all involved and to allocate scarce resources. He suggests using a hierarchical organization in the following situations: (Johnson, 1995)

- Predictability is high and consistency is valued
- People feel insecure and want solid guidance
- You want to manifest strength, power, stability and order
- It is desired to treat people as equal object for rules, benefits and duties

The organizational hierarchy structure is a sort of blue print of the organization's employees and the job titles. Hierarchy is often illustrated as a pyramid, where the height of the pyramid shows power, authority and responsibility, whereas the width of the pyramid shows how many people there are on each level. (Persson, 2003). Organizational hierarchy structures are often also depicted with boxes, horizontal lines and vertical lines. The boxes represent employees, the horizontal lines between boxes represent employees with similar titles, and employees who fall vertically beneath a certain employee have lower ranks.

2.3 Chinese cultural concepts

2.3.1 Guanxi

Guanxi 关系 is often translated as “connections”,”relations” or”networking”. The term was unknown to most non-Chinese speakers in the last century, but today it is used not only by speakers of Chinese (Gold, Guthrie and Wank, 2002). A person who has *guanxi* is one who is assisted by people in an informal manner. An example of this is if the staff or managers are familiar with the person with *guanxi* and therefore would give that specific person special treatment. For a Westerner, *guanxi* may possess a touch of corrupted flavor, though *guanxi* is also about helping a familiar person, especially if that person comes from the same family, village, or district, etc. (Guthrie, 1998).

It is often belived that in People’s Republic of China , *guanxi* is essential to successfully complete any task in basically all aspects of social life. *Guanxi* not only plays a big role in Mainland China, but also in the Chinese societies of Hong Kong and Taiwan and among

minority Chinese communities all around the world. It is by some viewed as a way of linking together the Chinese people, regardless of whether they are in Mainland China or not (Gold, Guthrie and Wank, 2002).

There is however a disagreement over the extent to which *guanxi* is something that is unique to China. Some observers and practitioners define *guanxi* as an essential and defining element of Chinese culture, which has been constant thorugh time. To others, *guanxi* is just a Chinese word for the personal networks, social capital, and gift economies found in every society. The word *guanxi* has both positive and negative connotations, with the latter dominating much of the discussions regarding politics etc. Some see *guanxi* as a big explanation of the prominent corruption in China, as well as an obstacle to China's becoming a modern society based on the rule of law. On the other hand, there are those who argue that *guanxi* makes otherwise cold interactions more cordial, and also works as guidelines when rules for social conduct do not exist. (Gold, Guthrie and Wank, 2002)

According to many sinologists, the concept of *guanxi* comes from the Confucianist tradition and the five key relationships (Guthrie, 1998). The five key relationships consist of five different relationships, with one superior and one subordinate in each. Confucius believed that behaviour within the framework of a set of relationships is essential for harmonious interactions (McDevitt, 2007). Although *guanxi* still includes the hierarchic aspect of its Confucius origin, in common usage it does not necessarily imply a relationship based on favors (Guthrie, 1998). In a broad meaning, *guanxi* has some resemblance to the definition of "social capital" by the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1986, p. 248): *"It is the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition – or in other words, to membership in a group – which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectivity-owned capital, a 'credential' which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word." Guanxi* can be seen as social capital that is accumulated with one purpose; to convert it into economic, political or symbolic capital (Gold, Guthrie and Wank, 2002).

The use of *guanxi* is widely known and often accepted in China, but more and more Chinese object the corruption in which personal connections can lead to promotion instead of professional skills or avoiding fines by local officials. Using personal connection to get a job in China is known as "using the backdoor" 门走后. The "art" of master *guanxi practise* is

known as *guanxixue* 关系学 (the study of *guanxi*) (Guthrie, 1998). Mayfair Yang, Professor of Religious Studies & East Asian Languages & Cultural Studies, begins her seminal book on "the art of social relationships in China" with a definition of the use of *guanxi*: *"Guanxixue involves the exchange of gifts, favors and banquets; the cultivation of personal relationships and network of mutual dependance; and the manufacturing of obligation and indebtedness."*(Yang, 1994 p.6).

In this book the author also explains that the instution *guanxi* is based upon personal relations and the "human sentiments" *renqing* 人情, whilst *guanxi practise* is manipulation of these relations and sentiments. She also argues that the emergence of *guanxi practise* in today's China can be contributed to primarily two factors. The first is the breakdown of social order that occurred during the Cultural Revolution, where people began to rely on connections instead of state organizational structure to survive. Individuals began to see exchange of gifts and favors as a way to deal with these social crises. People made everything in their power to reduce their dependency on the state. Secondly, she sees *guanxi practise* as a product of the economic reform, the influence of the capitalist West and the increased”ethic of self-gain”. (Yang, 1994) The term *guanxi practise* is relatively new and carries a negative sense in Chinese society. There is also reason to make a distinction between ”establishing good business relationships” 业关系搞好商, and ”using social relations to take care of procedures” 办手续靠关系学. The latter is considered corrupt and is becoming increasingly taboo for a lot of large urban firms. More attention to laws, rules and regulations can be seen by powerful economic actors on the Chinese market than before, since many firms see the danger of using *guanxi* as a mean of taking care of procedures when prohibition against such conduct exists. Firm's attitude towards this use of *guanxi* also depends on different factors in the organization, such as background of the general manager or the degree to which to company has dealings with foreign companies (Guthrie, 1998).

2.3.2 Mianzi

The concept of *mianzi* 面子(”prestige face”, or reputation), has been a part of the Chinese society for a long time. Face can be given (gei mianzi 给面子), gained (zheng mianzi 挣面子) or lost (diu mianzi 丢面子) and it is also important to give someone the chance to restore his face or to save it (liu mianzi 留面子) (Smith, 2012). In China, a person is often judged according to his/hers 'face', therefore it is of highest importance to many people in the Chinese society. (Crawford, 2014). Giving face to someone often involves an act that shows an

appropriate level of respect. Examples of this might include accepting an invitation to the wedding of a business partner's son, bringing attention to accomplishments of a business partner in a social event, avoiding direct conflict, and generally comply with expected norms of etiquette (Smith, 2002).

The word 'face' derives from different words in the Chinese language, *mianzi* is one of them. Another one is *lian* 脸, which is also used extensively in the Chinese language. According to Hu, *mian* (later: *mianzi*) is much older than its counterpart *lian* and is found in ancient literature, as early as the fourth century B.C. *Lian* on the other hand is a more modern term, the earliest cited around 800 years ago. These two words both have the meaning of a 'physical face', but according to Hu, there are some dissimilarities, at least in the original sense of the word. *Mianzi* stands for the prestige or reputation accumulated by personal effort and is in a sense a recognition ego dependant on external factors. In contrary, *lian* is the respect from a group that a man receives with good moral reputation. It is essential for a person in order to enjoy the confidence of a community. *Lian* is therefore not only an internalised sanction for moral behaviour, but also a social sanction for moral standards of the individual. Hu also argues that the Western concept of 'face' is corresponding to the Chinese *mianzi*, but does not have the same connotations as *lian*. (Hu, 1944)

There is often a sense of self-blame or shame with the loss of 'face' if it is the result of wrong-doing, regardless if there is an audience or not. According to an online survey conducted by the Sina Corporation made in 1998, 83.2 % of the respondents thought that in Chinese social interactions, *mianzi* is ”very important”, while only 2.7% thought it was ”not important”. (Chan, 2006).

'Face' is always a question of form – to say appropriate things at the right time and to avoid inappropriate or embarrassing actions or comments. In the Chinese society, disappointing others, being ignored or being interrupted in front of others can often be seen as losing face. In job interviews, it is not uncommon to take advantage of knowing someone in order to connect with someone else, to ”borrow someone's face”. Depending on the *mianzi* of the person that he/she has *guanxi* with, the chances of having more success in the job interview can very well be higher for someone with the relationship of a good *mianzi*, even if the relationship is not close. (Crawford, 2014). *Mianzi* is often seen as an essential way to build *guanxi* in China, but alone it is not enough (Chan, 2006). In China, it is common to provide introductions for others in order to provide *mianzi* for others and build their own *guanxi*,

while at the same time testing their own 'face value' or reputation. Giving gifts is a common way to give face value, but there are rules on how to receive gifts as well. If the gift is something that can be easily shared, the receiver risks losing face if not sharing his gift, since that would be a sign of greediness. (Crawford, 2014).

Another aspect of *mianzi* is the unwillingness to admit to something that may lead them to lose face, despite how blatant the evidence is. An example of this an employee who makes a mistake that is going to make him lose his job, and then chooses to resign the job before getting fired, to avoid losing face. The art of *mianzi* is an intricate craft, and people who with excessive effort try to improve their *mianzi* to a level higher than the actual status of that individual, risk being exposed of their intention and are therefore shamed and lose face. (Crawford, 2014).

When doing business in China, *mianzi* is a very important factor and it is a general rule in Chinese culture to strive for giving every party of an agreement or business transaction *mianzi*. This is also applicable inside an organization as well. It is the obligation of the employees as well as the senior executives to avoid making the other person loses face. (Crawford, 2014). It is necessary to preserve harmony through complaisance and courtesy when dealing with business associates whom one want to preserve working relationships with. (Hooker, 2012).

Chapter 3 Theories

A lot of studies have already been done on both the area of mapping cultural differences between people and nationalities and understanding the fundamental reason of what culture is and why it exists. Pioneers such as Hofstede´s report from 1983 and Trompenaars´ & Hampden Turner´s study from 1997 has been focusing a lot on this subject and in this report the most famous studies of these professors will be used as a foundation of understanding this dilemma called culture. Understanding the difference between what kind of way Swedish and Chinese employees are motivated is the other objective with this report. The well-known X and Y theory invented by McGregor in 1960 and Herzberg´s hygiene and motivational factors described in his book "The motivation to work" published in 1959 will be the basis for analyzing these potential differences.

3.1 Hofstede´s cultural dimensions

Hofstede´s studies from 1983, 2001 and 2010 include six different dimensions in which a country can be categorized. In each category one country may obtain points from zero to one hundred. Originally the study consisted of only four dimensions but the two last ones, *Long Term Orientation versus Short Term Orientation* and *Indulgence versus Restraint* were added later on. Long term orientation was added in 2001 and indulgence versus restraint was added in 2010. The first original four dimensions that Hofstede introduced are large or small power distance, masculinity versus femininity, strong or weak uncertainty avoidance and individualism versus collectivism *(The Hofstede centre, National culture, 2015).*

Large/ small power distance

This dimension describes that the society is unequal, that there is unfairness and inequity among people and how the society deals with this. Hofstede also mentioned that people have different intellectual and physical capabilities and that these are important. The power distance is measured in power and wealth and a high score on the power distance scale indicates that it is large and the other way around. Organizations that are more centralized and run by one or very few people usually score high on the power distance scale. Power distance is also high in societies where hierarchy is respected and where hierarchical rules are important. In organizations with a low power distance the gap between the head of the company and the employee is much smaller and in some cases barely visible. The chief is more seen as one in the group and not as a person that the employees just have heard of and respect for just being their superior. There is also a difference in the way the communication

and information flows within the different hierarchical levels within an organization depending on if the company is affected by a high or low power distance. If there is a high power distance the information from the leader to the regular employees often goes through middle line chiefs that pass the information further to the employees. In organizations where power distance is lower the communication often goes the head to the floor directly since the organizational latter is not of that high importance. (Hofstede, 1983).

Masculinity vs. femininity

This dimension is essential since it is often the case that some things are considered to be feminine while others are more masculine even though in reality this is something that the has been created by the society and that people just follow. The social role that people have is created by our parents and by the society. In societies with a small difference between what is considered to be masculine or feminine people have the right to take many different roles no matter if it is considered to be feminine and these societies scores low on the masculinity versus femininity scale. In a feminine society much more effort is put into factors such as quality of life, the employees and how they feel about their work and the environment. In some societies there is a norm that men are expected to be dominant and to automatically be in charge of everything and are expected to perform and make money while women usually are responsible for tasks with focus on service, healthcare and children. These kind of traditional societies where there is a big social sex role division have high points on this scale. (Hofstede, 1983).

Strong or weak uncertainty avoidance

People in different societies prefer to be safe or take higher risks in order to maybe obtain something even better. In areas where there is a high uncertainty avoidance, people are willing to work harder to be able to secure their future and do rather not want to risk what they have fought for and maybe get a little more. In these societies´ people often worry more about their future and therefore avoid risks. In these societies there are often institutions that have the goal to protect the citizens and avoid risk. This is made by technological innovations to protect us from natural catastrophes, having a secure law system to prevent people to act in an illegal way and religion. Religion is a way of dealing with the uncertainty of what is going to happen in the future and people feel more secure when they believe in something that is greater than themselves and that there is a reason for why some things occur. In societies where there is low uncertainty avoidance people live in the present and not worry about the

future. They tend to take higher risks and do not work that hard because they feel secure about the future. (Hofstede, 1983).

Individualism vs. collectivism

The fundamental dilemma whether one should focus on himself and what is best for him/ her or if a person should consider the whole group and what is best for everyone. In countries where there is a lot of space for individual freedom and having the possibility to choose, individualism is much more common. In an organization you get rewards such as higher salary for your performance only. One negative aspect with an individualistic society is that if you fail with something you are often left alone since people in these kinds of societies tend to be more selfish. In collectivistic societies people have a tendency to stick more together, help and rely on each other. The opinion of the group is the only thing that matters and there is no room for personal opinions. In an organization that is more collectivistic the performance of the group is judged and the reward system is based on the effort of the collective. (Hofstede, 1983).

Long Term Orientation versus Short Term Orientation

This is the fifth Hofstede´s dimensions and the main purpose with adding this new dimension was to easier be able to compare countries from the Western parts of the world with countries in the East. In Asia there is a much bigger focus on long term orientation in every decision being made while in Europe and the US short term orientation is more common. Long term orientation is unique in the way that you focus on persistence and encourage thrift. Lots of efforts are being done in modern education in order to be well prepared for the future. In Short term orientation on the other hand traditions and personal stability and steadiness are preferred (Hofstede, 2001).

Indulgence vs. restraint

In indulgence countries people feel more free to enjoy life and doing something just for pleasure and stop thinking about work once a while. In these kinds of societies people are encouraged to try to combine both work and hobbies to have more fun in life. The individual happiness and leisure is preferred. In restraint societies there is a completely other way of looking at this factor. In such societies people believe that satisfaction and pleasure should be much more regulated and not that spontaneous as in indulgence countries. Leisure is not of high importance in those societies and they believe that work is the way to achieve joy. (Hofstede & Minkov, 2010).

Criticism of Hofstede´s dimensions

Hofstede and his cultural dimensions research has been criticized in many areas. Jones (2007) once said that a survey is not the right way of finding out what the culture looks like in a country. Hofstede then defended his research in his publication *dimensions do not exist: A reply to Brendan McSweeney* (2002) by arguing that a nation is often the only way to compare culture and that it is better than nothing. In the same article we can also read that McSweeney criticized the assumption Hofstede made about that the whole population in a country is homogenous and that subculture within a country does not exist. Hofstede ignores the fact that each community in a country is unique and it is not correct to say that the culture is all the same all over the country. Having countries as units is not correct either since country lines sometimes change and there are sometimes ethnic groups of people living in two neighbor countries. McSweeney also pointed out that the cultural research is too old and out of date and that there are too few cultural dimensions in Hofstede´s research to be able to chart the culture in a specific country. Gernon and Wallace (1995) have also had a lot of critique against Hofstede´s theory. They criticized the theory due to the fact that it was made on one organization only and that there were issues and problems in the application of the model on other organizations. On the other hand Jones (2007) states that even though it has been criticized Hofstede´s theory is one of the best researches in mapping the culture in different countries made so far and is still very often used. It may not always be completely correct but it gives an accurate indication.

3.2 Trompenaars and Hampden- Turner´s cultural factors

Universalism vs. Particularism

Universalism refers to finding rules for how things should be and live according to that. In case that no one of the rules fit then the person chooses the best one of them and lives by this rule. He or she tries to fit some kind of pattern and be a part of this. Particularism is different because this kind of person does not try to fit in by a rule if no one of them fits. Instead a person trusts himself/ herself and live according to his/her own believes (Trompenaars & Hampden- Turner, 1997).

Individualism vs. Communitarianism

This is similar to the one that Hofstede invented. Individualism focuses on the right of each person and the individual in this kind of society take care of him-/herself in both good and worse times. Communitarianism refers to the importance of the community and the priority in

all cases is the group since the idea is that it is better for only one person to sacrifice a little in order to benefit the whole group believes (Trompenaars & Hampden- Turner, 1997).

Specific vs. Diffuse

It is not always easy to know when and how much our personal life can affect our working live. This dimension explains exactly the dilemma of how to separate our personal life from our work and vice versa believes (Trompenaars & Hampden- Turner, 1997).

Sequential vs. Synchronic

The way of looking at the time aspect is very different depending on where you are in the world. Some people see action as things that should be separated and done only one at one time and starting with another when finish the first action. Others prefer to see time as a synchronization of many different actions that can be done in parallel by coordinating all actions in the right way believes (Trompenaars & Hampden- Turner, 1997).

Achieved status vs. Ascribed status

The way of achieving respect and status in the society may differ. Achieved status is a dimension meaning that to be respected you have to perform in a good way and that you get respect by living and acting in a way that people respect. Ascribed status on the other hand refers to gaining status by other things than your own performance. It may because you are older or because you belong to some kind of more respected group of people. Achieved status is about gaining status through performance. It assumes individuals and organisations earn and lose their status every day, and that other approaches are recipes for failure (Trompenaars & Hampden- Turner, 1997).

Neutral vs. Emotional

In some cultures people tend to express their emotions when they feel a lot for a situation or person while in others it is expected that a person should act professionally and not express emotions (Trompenaars & Hampden- Turner, 1997).

Internal- vs. External control

This dimension focuses on the fact if we, all humans living on the world do have control over our environment and things that happen around us or if it is the other way around. Maybe all of us are controlled and delimited by the environment we live in (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1997).

3.3 McGregor´s X&Y theory

People with different background living in different parts of the world get motivated in various ways at work. Some people really enjoy their work and see it as a part of them and others just work in order to earn money to be able to buy food, pay the rent and survive.
In 1960 Douglas McGregor published his book “The human side of enterprise” where studied how to motivate employees and how to create the right management to get people more effective at work and benefit the company. He found out that there are two types of employees and that the manager must adapt his/her way of managing the work depending on what type of employees he/she has to deal with (McGregor,1960).

Theory X

In theory X there is an assumption that workers are lazy and unmotivated. They do not want to take any initiative or responsibility while working and would most of all just want to stay home and lay in bed. The only reason of why they wake up every morning and go to work is because they have to. This kind of workers need authoritarian leadership and need to be controlled, threatened and forced to make the work happen and deliver for example a certain amount of produced goods that the managers had decided. Without any kinds of goals or quotas of produced goods these people would not find any motivation to deliver since the work is often repetitive and easy to fulfill. The reward system in these kinds of environments is pretty simple, if you produce a specific amount of goods or more then you get rewarded and if not then the worker will not get any reward. McGregor stated that organizations and companies where there are a lot of X type employees tend to be more centralized and have a lot of supervision on every step in the production chain. This kind of work environment is usually found in big factories with a large scale production (McGregor, 1960).

Theory Y

Employees that fit into the group of theory Y tend to be more satisfied and happy with their work. They are creative and motivated to do their work and do not need that much of supervision or a manager demanding them to do the work. The Y group of workers constantly seeks more responsibility and enjoys having it because it makes them feel important for the company. Workers that fit the Y category see work in a completely different way than the X group. For the X workers work is a burden and for Y employees it is a part of life that they enjoy. The manager style in these kinds of organizations tends to be more democratic and employees have the right to express themselves and their opinions regarding different

problems, situations and way of improving things at work which makes them a part of the decision making and able to share their knowledge and give suggestions to solutions but the last word still belongs to the managers and it is his/her decision is final. In organizations that consist of mostly Y employees another kind of reward system is usually implemented. Y employees often have much better chances to advance professionally and to get a promotion compared to X persons. This is partly because of the fact that the so called Y employees tend to have higher education compared to the X employees (McGregor, 1960).

McGregor concluded that when the workforce does not like their work and find it boring then a more authoritarian management style is needed in order to mobilize the employees to work effectively. If the employees really like their work and are enthusiastic about it then the manager should have a management style that is more democratic and be a part of the group instead of being someone that just demands and shouts at the employees. In this way the office or any other location of work might be more creative and people will feel that they are trusted by the manager. There are many different ways of managing people. A more democratic and participative management style is not necessary better than the traditional authoritarian one. All of this depends on the situation, the employees and the kind of business environment in which the company operates and it is the duty of managers to find out the right solution to work effectively and apply the right management style in the organization (McGregor, 1960).

3.4 Herzberg's motivation and hygiene factor theory

Hygiene factors

Herzberg, Mausner and Bloch Snyderman (1959) pointed out that the called hygiene factors did not provide any satisfaction at work but they are necessary to have and work well in order to prevent any kind of dissatisfaction and anger by the employees. The most important hygiene factor is the company policy. If the employee agrees with this policy that the company has, he or she will continue working without feeling any frustration that the company operates in a way that the employee disagrees with. Relationships to both the manager and the working colleagues is another important factor since collaboration at work is very common and you cannot argue with the colleagues and the superior about everything because this causes stress and a bad atmosphere at work. Supervision is another important point. An employee that is supervised by his/her manager all the time feels that there is a lack of trust and may feel controlled by the supervisor. Working conditions and salary are also of

importance since the main purpose of why an employee goes to work is to earn money to be able to survive and while being at work the employee wants to feel secure and have good conditions.

Motivational factors

Motivational factors lead to satisfaction at work according to Herzberg, Mausner and Bloch Snyderman (1959). They also state that if these factors are not fulfilled then it does not lead to dissatisfaction but simply to no satisfaction. The things that make an employee feel satisfied by the work he/she does are more abstract than the hygiene factors and can be compared to the higher levels of Maslow's hierarchy of needs such as self- actualization (Maslow, 1954). Maslow´s theory also include other stages that are similar to Herzberg´s, Musner´s and Bloch Snyderman´s theory(1959). The lower stages do have similarities with the hygiene factors while the higher stages can be compared to the motivational factors. The most important motivational factors are achievement and recognition and these are achieved when an employee succeed at work and is appreciated for the effort he/she has put in the work. These factors boost the confidence of the employee. In some cases the work itself is also a factor for satisfaction if the employee really enjoys the work. This pleasure of performing often leads to being willing to take more responsibility which could possibly lead to advancement at work and growth for both the employee as a person and for the whole company. Responsibility and growth are in this case also motivational factors (Herzberg, Mausner & Bloch Snyderman, 1959).

Chapter 4 Previous research

4.1 China

Prior to our study, there have been several other researchers who have been trying to find answers regarding differences between what motivates Chinese and Western employees. In one study that was made in 1998 by Cynthia D. Fisher and Anne Xue Ya Yuan, the researchers made an investigation of differences in what motivates employees in China and US. They interviewed several Chinese employees at a Western-managed hotel in Shanghai and explored several research questions. (Fisher and Yuan, 1998). Fisher and Yuan had reasons to believe that motivation among Chinese employees was not the same as for employees in countries like the US where previous studies had been made, for example Jurgensen (1978) or Kovach (1994, 1995). The idea was that cultural values, culturally expected leadership practices, societal experience and level of economic development all may affect reward preferences among people in different cultures. The researchers had from several different studies (Kent, 1992; Laaksonen, 1988; Wang and Heller, 1993), learned that Chinese managers keep their plans and intensions relatively closely held, share little information with the employees and do not share much decision-making power with the employees. (Fisher and Yuan, 1998). These studies also support the high power distance characteristic of Chinese culture (Hofstede, 1983). According to Zhao (1994), lower-level workers in China showed passivity in their work, so one might also expect lower-level workers in China to not value the managers letting them be 'in on things' (Zhao, 1994).

Previous research by for example Nevis (1983) showed that avoidance of personal credit for accomplishment has been a part of the post-1949 Chinese society. This was often observed in the form of employees meeting thanks from others with statements like “I am only doing my job” or 'It is my duty'.

There has been a lot written about China’s collectivist orientation, the importance of social relationships, and the obligations that attend hierarchical relationships in Confucian ideology (Hofstede and Bond, 1988; Tsui and Farh, 1997). This seems to play out in the form of managerial paternalism in companies, with superiors often developing warm relationships with their employees (Osigweh and Huo, 1993). Obligations incurred through good treatment of subordinates to ensure that employees will cooperate when needed. In China, state-owned employers are usually responsible for providing housing, medical care, and education to employees’ and their families. Before, many contractors also provided life-time employment,

although a contract system later replaced this for most employers. These are cultural and economic bonds between employees and employers that may still be seen as very important. (Fisher and Yuan, 1998).

Before 1978, salary was not a big motivation factor for employees in China since entrepreneurial and performance-based rewards were unavailable to most workers and differences between salaries were small. After 1978, however, performance-based bonuses became more common and accepted (Easterby-Smith et al., 1995), and the government also manifested this by promoting the idea that ‘It is glorious to be rich’ (Zhao, 1994). With reduced security for employees, increased variability in income, high inflation in the early 1990s, and strong competition for qualified employees by joint-ventures in major cities, Chinese employees did start seeing good wages as a highly important and attainable job attribute. The importance of wealth and materialism among Overseas Chinese has been well documented, combined with a willingness to speak openly about money (Redding, 1993).

The result of the investigation made by Fisher and Yuan (1998) showed that Chinese employees thought that good wages was by far the most important job attribute. This was evident amongst both female and male workers, as well as young and old workers. The researchers compared the result of the answers from the Chinese employees with the answers given by the American employees, taken from an investigation made by Silverthorne (1992). Another job factor that was found highly important in general amongst the Chinese workers was housing subsidy, which was seen as”extremely important”. One factor where the answers differed a lot between the Chinese employees and the American was how much he/she valued an interesting job. The Chinese employees rated it as the seventh most important factor, whilst the American employees valued it the second highest. The factor that was ranked the lowest for Chinese employees was the ability to be 'in on things' or being involved, whilst the American employees ranked it higher. Good working conditions was ranked much higher by the Chinese employees than the American, perhaps due to the fact that American employees generally took good working conditions more for granted. The factor that was valued the highest by the American employees was that others showed appreciation of the employee's work, whilst this was only moderately valued amongst the Chinese employees. (Fisher and Yuan, 1998).

Before the research made by Fisher and Yuan (1998), one of the most used theory to explain motivation amongst employees in different cultures was by the two categories motivators and

hygiene factors. The theory Herzberg (1959) presented later evolved into management thinking in the form of intrinsic versus extrinsic rewards. This was in many ways a Western approach to what matters in life: individual achievement, growth and recognition, versus everything else. However this stands in contrast to Chinese life which was much more centered around relationships and groups (Bond and Hwang, 1986), so Fisher and Yuan thought that it might be more appropriate to divide the motivation factors into three classes: security / material rewards, social factors, and intrinsic / achievement themes. When they ranked factors combined this way, the result was that Chinese sample comes out highest on material concerns, and equally and relatively low on social and intrinsic factors. The American sample on the other and comes out highest on intrinsic, substantially lower on material concerns, and lowest on social concerns. (Fisher and Yuan, 1988).

Yang (2011) published a similar study to the one made by Fisher and Yuan in 1988 but instead of comparing employees in Shanghai, Yang made her study based on the answers from 207 people working in six different organizations in Ningbo, China. In this research Yang (2011) interviewed 100 male and 107 female employees in the age of 18 to 58 years old. 83 of these participant had a university education and 124 had a high school education or below only. Concerning the respondents' income per month, 29.5 percent had an income below 1,500RMB, 25.1 percent were between 1,500RMB and 1,999RMB, 14.5 percent were between 2,000RMB and 2,999RMB, 18.4 percent were between 3,000RMB and 4,999RMB, 8.2 percent were between 5,000RMB and 10,000RMB, and only 4.3 percent had a monthly income above 10,000RMB. The question that the researcher aimed to answer was: What motivates employees in China? Yang (2011) states that Ningbo is a good choice since it is a typical second-tier city in China that can be representative for the economic development in the whole nation. In the study, the participants had to value how much 15 different motivating factors motivated them with a number between 1 and 7. The result showed that 'good pay' was valued the highest, just like in the study made by Fisher and Yuan (1998). 'Good welfare package' was ranked second, 'good supervisors' third and 'good bonus system' fourth. 'Interesting job' was ranked as the sixth most important motivator, higher than in the study made by Fisher and Yuan (1998). The least important factors according to the study were 'self-actualization', 'good interpersonal relationship', 'autonomy' and 'a sense of challenge and achievement'. Yang (2011) found that young people and those with a higher education tend to value promotion higher and that older people value job safety more.

4.2 Sweden

There has been a lot of cross cultural studies in terms of motivation. One of these is the research done by Fey (2005). He studied how middle managers in either sales or manufacturing were motivated in Swedish and Russian organizations. There were 82 Swedish participants and 86 Russian participants in the study. Fey chose firms that were similar to each other in order to be able to make a better comparison and therefore only interviewed companies with at least 20 employees. The sample of Russian firms was 275 but only 86 were completed and all firms participating in the study were from either Moscow or St. Petersburg. In the case of the Sweden, the total number of companies in the sample was 225 and out of these Fey received 82 answers. The average age of the interviewees was between 30 and 35 years old and the male percentage of the participants from Sweden was 75%. 73% of the Russians being part of the interview were men. The result of this study showed that the Russian participants were motivated by a high salary and bonus systems. Swedes on the other hand preferred to have a pleasant working environment. They also think that equity at work is of high importance and that the employee should be rewarded for the effort and work he/she puts into it. Fey (2005) also states that Swedish employees tend to slightly lose motivation as salary increases and Fey claims that this may be due to the fact that when Swedes have reached a specific level of salary that they consider is enough to live a decent life and then feel that they want to enjoy life instead of working harder.

The dilemma of losing motivation when the salary increases can be explained by the very common Swedish word *lagom.* Williams and Devine (2005) define this word to *sufficient* and *just right*. Williams and Devine (2005) also state that Swedes differ from many other nationalities in way of doing business and work. In Sweden much focus is put into team work, egalitarianism between the manager and the employees and personal relations. Sweden is considered to be an individualistic country and scores high in studies such as the one by Hofstede (The Hofstede centre, 2015). Team work is according to Williams and Devine (2005) the way to increase the performance of each member of the team in order make everyone work at the same level and create a strong team. Further, there are no big hierarchical gaps in Sweden and Managers and employees are treated closely as equals. It is often said that in order to be respected, you have to earn it by your actions instead of relying on the position at work (Williams and Devine, 2015). In Swedish companies the manager often lets his/her employees to take more responsibility and be much more involved in different kinds of decision processes. Managers have the final word in decision processes but

they very often consult with the employees and ask them about their opinion, especially if the decision may affect the employees (Williams and Devine, 2005).

According to Hansson and Lindblom (2003), work is a natural part of life and if employees feel motivated and supported by the company this may lead to a feeling of self-realization for the employees. This self- realization may be fulfilled when three criteria are followed, namely that employees feel motivated, that they have some kind of connection with the task that they are realizing as well as getting feedback for the job effort at the workplace and having at least a little autonomy and possibility to choose certain things at work. Having the view that work is a natural part of life has a clear similarity to Mcgregor´s (1960) X&Y theory. As mentioned earlier in the thesis, the Y-type of employee sees work as something necessary and natural in order to feel productive and satisfied with your life but only if the working conditions are right and this is exactly the same conclusion as Hansson and Lindblom (2003) draws. Williams and Devine (2005) state that Swedish executives rank the employees as the most important factor to increase productivity and therefore a lot of focus in Swedish companies is put into the well-being of the employees so that they can self-realize themselves through their work and benefit the company.

Chapter 5 Methodology

5.1 Research method

A qualitative type of research method will be used in this report since these are mainly used to explore how people behave and how personal experiences affect us. Many research methods are included in the qualitative one such as observations and various types of interviews. The main goal with qualitative research is to understand people's experience from their perspective and to make a correct interpretation of the information. One must bear in mind that what the interviewees say is often subjective and so might the information gathering of the person making the interview be (Hennink, Hutter and Bailey, 2011).

We have decided to do semi- structured interviews with Chinese and Swedish workers in China and Sweden in order to find the answers to our research questions. This will be our main way of collecting data but not the only one due to the fact that literature and Internet will also be used. An interview makes it possible for the researcher to get an understanding of the problem from the interviewees' perspective, in our case regarding the way the employees in Sweden in China are motivated and how the cultural aspect has an influence on it.

In this case the semi-structured interview will be made one on one with the interviewee and one of us. In this kind of research method the researcher asks questions to gain information and an understanding of the issue. A semi-structured form of interview will be the specific form of our interviews. These kinds of interviews often seem to be like common conversation but the fact remains that it is only the interviewee that shares his or her experiences and the researcher simply asks questions (Hennink, Hutter and Bailey, 2011).

5.2 Sampling

To make a trustworthy report we think that less than ten interviewees would not be enough since it is important to have a view from both the Swedish and Chinese way of doing business that can be confirmed by other participants of the interview. Therefore the decision is to have five Swedish and five Chinese interviewees to be able to make a good comparison. The selection of participants is based on a couple of requirements. Firstly, the person must work in one of the lower hierarchical levels within an organization. We believe that this will generate more honest answers and be more applicable for the general population. Secondly, he or she must be no less than 20 and maximally 35 years old because we them to be from the same

generation. The Chinese participants in our research are generally older than the Swedish. This due to the fact that people in Sweden tend to work and study simultaneously and therefore get more work experience earlier in their lives (Hylander, 2009). We believe that it is beneficial to interview people that have relatively the same work experience. The last and most important criteria is that all participants have to live in either Sweden or China and be relatively familiar with the culture and mentality in the specific country. This study includes both men and women with different cultural backgrounds. The expectations are that there will be significant differences in the answers from the Swedes compared to the answers from the Chinese.

The participants are all people that we personally know. This kind of selection of participants is called convenience sampling. (Bryman & Bell, 2011) One of us has lived in China and some of the friends and colleagues from the time one of the writers lived there have been contacted and interviewed through the net, primary on skype. The same writer also knows a few Chinese that lives in Sweden and that has personal experience from both Swedish and Chinese organizational structure and culture. Five friends of ours live in Sweden and that fulfills the criteria is also a part of the interviews. We personally asked ten people either face to face or through social media if they wanted to be a part of our research and all of them accepted the request. We chose to interview people that we know for reasons such as that they fit the age criteria in most cases, because of the personal relation that creates a more pleasant feeling during the interview that we hope will make the interviewees feel more comfortable.

5.3 Criticism to the chosen method

This kind of sampling is considered to be less reliable due to the fact that it is not that representative because of the limited number of participants and because we personally know them (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Since convenience sampling does not generate a representative result the validity of the research may be questionable (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The benefits of this sampling method are that it is relatively fast to execute which was in this case essential since a bachelor thesis should be written in about two months. The other reason of choosing this kind of method is because it would be difficult to use another type of method to make a research in this area because it is not easy to randomly find and contact a Chinese employee that we do not know and hope that the person wants to be a part of the interview. If our research would only include motivation of only Swedes for example then a systematic or random type of sampling with people we do not know would be more suitable because it would increase the validity of the research (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

5.4 Data collection

It is of high importance that all sources that are used in the report are impartial and reliable because otherwise the study will not be trustworthy and to any specific use when it comes to mapping the differences regarding this topic. Therefore various kinds of sources have been used in this report to cover as many aspects and angles as possible. Articles and internet sources have been our main references apart from the interviews that are the main base for the whole study. Although all information might be found at internet in this virtual world that we are living in we have used books as well. The literature that has been used is primary in the descriptive part of the different terms that are found in the key concept part of the report and are in our case more of a complement and confirmation of the information found online and of course, the interviews.

In this research we have tried, as far as it was possible, to only find information regarding theories that are important for the research directly from literature published by the creator of the theory and not through other sources that are less reliable. In cases when this was not possible, all information we have found has been double-checked with another one in order to confirm that the information is correct

We have ten participants in this study. Some of them are Chinese and others are Swedes. The Swedish participants all live in Gothenburg and in these cases interviews have been completed through face to face meetings in a neutral environment that the interviewee could choose for himself/herself. Before making the interviews all participants were asked and informed about what kind of research it is and why we have chosen to ask them to participate. In the case of Chinese interviewees most of them live in different locations in the Eastern part of China and the interviews were made through Skype because no better option was possible in our case. One of our Chinese participants live and work in Sweden and face to face interviews have been made with these in the exact way as with the Swedish participants except for the language. We made it clear for that person that the answers should be based on her working experiences in China. The conversation language with the Swedish interviewees was Swedish and in the case of the Chinese participants these were made in primary Chinese since one of the writers speaks the language. Some misunderstandings might have occurred while doing the interviews, especially with the Chinese participants since we did not speak in our native language during those interviews.

Each interview was finished within 40 minutes and semi- structured interview questions were used. The reason why we wanted to use a semi- structured form of interviewing is because this would ease the process of comparing the answers between the two nationalities but at the same time the interviewees had the chance to share with their personal experience and not just answering the questions.

5.5 Validity and reliability

The validity of a study is also a criterion that needs to be analyzed. Does the empirical research that is done really give us the answer to our research questions? If not, why? The fact whether the validity of the research is high or low is closely connected to the chosen method of gathering information and in our case connected to our interview questions. All questions for the interview must be well written and needs to have a connection to our research questions. If they don't then there is now purpose of including them in the interview. In our study the interview questions has been deeply analyzed and there has been discussions with our mentor about them (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Reliability is another term that needs to be explained. A reliable study is one that can be confirmed by articles, books and other kinds of sources. If these criterions were not fulfilled the study would not be trustworthy (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

C - Chinese, S -Swede, M - Male, F – Female

Participants	Age	Work sector	Work experience at current company
CM1	34	Marketing	5 years
CM2	25	International relations	7 months
CF3	27	Communication	4 months
CF4	35	Marketing/public relations	2 years
CF5	29	Administration	2 years

Table 1 Background information of the Chinese participants

Participants	Age	Work sector	Work experience at current company
SM1	24	Retail	4 years
SM2	25	Event/advertising	4 months
SM3	21	Elderly care	2 years
SF4	24	Security	3 years
SF5	22	Manufacturing	2 years

Table 2 Background information of the Swedish participants

Chapter 6 Empirical findings

After summarizing the transcriptions of the 10 interviews conducted, the results can be categorized into the following two themes:

- *Relation between superior and employees*
- *Company culture*

The choice of the three themes is based on the main ideas summarized from the empirical data and their connection to the research question:

- How does motivation differ between Swedish and Chinese employees and how much of this can be explained by cultural differences?

The first section – relation between the superior and the employees, shows the interviewees' subjective view on how they are treated by their superior in companies in Sweden as well as in China. The focus lies on the relation with the manager and the possibility to influence his/hers decision, as well as feeling that you as an employee get seen and heard.

The second section – company culture, includes the similarities and differences between what motivates employees in China and Sweden in correlation to the working conditions. It also includes important factors when choosing jobs as well as how networking/guanxi affects their working conditions and personal benefits.

6.1 Relation between manager and employees

When asking if the interviewees felt like their manager listened to their suggestions, all of the Swedish employees interviewed thought that their superior listened to them to some extent. However, when asking the same question to the Chinese interviewees, only CM1 and CM2 felt that the boss listened to their suggestions. CM1 and CM2 both pointed out that this may be because the companies they work for are transnational companies, with perhaps a more Western approach. CF3 felt like the manager had his own ideas and that he would never care what she had to say. CF5 shared this feeling, while CF4 thought that it was highly dependent on the relation you have with the manager. Four of the five Swedish interviewees felt like they had the power to influence the decisions made by the superior, while only CM1 felt the same among the Chinese employees interviewed. He said that this could be explained by the fact that the superior was only a few years older than him and that he had been an employee at the company for five years, which according to him is relatively long in China.

When asking how the interviewees would act if they did not agree with the manager, the Swedish interviewees seemed more inclined to tell the manager, although SF4 said that she would probably think twice before to make sure she would not say something out of order. The main difference between the answers given by the Swedish and the Chinese interviewees was that the Swedish employees, although willing to tell the superior, often hesitated because of fear of saying something stupid. The Chinese employees on the other hand were very reluctant to question the manager, in fear of making him/her seem weak or to lose face. CM2 said that”I would not say it directly to his face if others were around, that would give him bad face. If I have something to say I always do it when no other employees can hear. If it is not something of great importance I tend to just let it go.” CF5 said that the matter is important, she would tell him/ her opinion, but also be polite and say that his way is not wrong. CF3 said that the best way is to be very polite and say that the manager is right, but try to affect his way of thinking, but in a very subtle manner. CM1 was the only Chinese interviewee who had no trouble being blunt with the superior.

When asked if the manager cares a lot about the employee's well-being, all the Swedish interviewees answered that they felt that the manager cares for their working situation, at least to some extent. SF4 and SF5 said that they feel that he/she puts focus on their well-being and that it feels good to be seen. SM2 argued that his superior seems more interested in how things were done rather than the outcome. SM1said that his manager cares a lot about the employees and that it is good for everyone, since you feel more motivated to work hard if your superior treats you well. SF4 also argued that it is hard to only focus on the results, since one of the keys to good results is to have a good environment for the employees, in order to maximize the potential of every individual.

The Chinese interviewees had a different experience. CM2 and CF4 said that the focus always is on the result and that the superior is not interested in how the employees feel about certain things or if they find it a suitable way or method. CF3 said that ”he (the manager) cares a little, but it does not feel very genuine, it feels like he does it to make us work better in order to make more profit”. CF5 explained it as following: ”The boss is definitely more result oriented. I have never seen any tendency towards him caring about his employees, more than getting the job done.” CM1 said that the manager often is happy to see that the employees are working hard and overtime, even if it is because of low efficiency. CM1 also believed that there is a culture in Chinese companies that working overtime means that you are working hard, when it often is the result of having spent several hours browsing the Internet or playing

games in the office. This is especially evident among female employees in China, something that CF4 also agreed with.

All the Swedish interviewees said that they felt appreciated at work to some extent. They felt that the work they put in was not only appreciated by the manager, but also the colleagues and the people they had dealings with. Only SM3 said that he did not feel much appreciation from the manager, but that the appreciation from the people he worked with made up for it. The difference was quite big compared to the answers given by the Chinese interviewees. Only CM1, CM2 and CF4 felt appreciated at work, whilst CF3 and CF5 did not feel that at all. CF4 said that she ”feel appreciated, but would like the manager to show it more and not take my work for granted”. CF5 felt that the manager did take her work for granted and that she easily could be replaced by someone else, which made her motivated to do a good work, but not in a positive way. 'Management by fear' is how she would describe the attitude of her manager.

Regarding housing and other facilities, the difference was rather big between the answers from Chinese interviewees. 4 out of 5 Chinese employees said that housing is an important factor when choosing job. CM2, CF3 and CF5 said that housing was included when they accepted their employment. None of the Swedish interviewees thought housing provided by the company was an important factor.

The answers from the interviewees also revealed that neither the Chinese nor the Swedish employees interviewed thought it was important that the superior helped with personal problems.

6.2 Company culture

Regarding willingness to take risks in their work, all the interviewees from China said that they were not ready to take big risks. CF4 said that she generally chooses the safe way and that most employees don't need to take risks. ”As an employee you do not feel that it is part of your job”. She thought that there is a difference between work and career. ”In China many people choose a work with little risks and stable income, since the competition is so tough due to the immense population. It is just not realistic to find your optimal job, so most people settle for a safe one”. CF3 felt that her male colleagues were much more inclined to take risk, in order to get personal benefits. CM1 and CM2 said that they were conservative in their attitude and afraid that the company would be hurt because of their actions. The Swedish interviewees also did not show willingness to take risks, except for SM2, who said that ”If I

am convinced that my way is effective, I would choose it, even if it meant that some risks would be taken". He highlighted his views by saying "nice guys finish last".

Regarding guanxi/networking, CF3 and CF5 felt that the existence of *guanxi* sometimes made them less motivated to perform, since they felt that promotion was too much based on the relationship with superiors and other important people, rather than their actual performance. CM1 did not agree with this however, he felt that the opportunities given by the manager were based on his work and not their relationship.

The Swedish interviewees showed more willingness to do more than what was asked of them. SM3 said that he "always try to work a little harder to impress the boss". SF4 felt that she always put more effort in the work in order to make a favorable impression on the manager. SM1 and SM2 put more effort in, but more for the feeling of doing a good job than to impress the superior.

The general picture given by the answers of the Chinese respondents was that as an employee you generally do what is being asked of you, nothing more, and nothing less. CF4 stressed that she and her Chinese friends have the attitude that the quality of the work only affects the manager. "If you are not very fond of your boss, you do not really care if the boss makes more profit or not". CM2 thought that "Chinese business lacks the motivation by individuals". CF5 said that she would not "put effort in if I do not know that I will get something for it in return". The lack of a bonus system was something that CF5, CM2 and CM3 thought was a major reason for not feeling motivated to do more. SM2, SM3 and SF4 thought that a bonus system would make them feel motivated to work harder.

When asked if the effort you put in is for personal benefits or for the good of the company, no clear distinction could be seen between the interviewees from the both countries. SF4 and CF4 were the only ones who said that they only worked for personal benefits. All the other interviewees felt that personal benefits were the main motivation, but that they also wanted to make a good work for the company. No interviewees felt that success for the company was the main motivation.

When asking if there are differences in being a woman or a man in the workplace, the differences in the answers seemed to be more dependent on gender than nationality. SM1, SM2 and SM3 did not see any advantage/disadvantage of being a woman in the workplace. SF4 thought that as a woman, you always have to prove yourself capable in order to get the

respect of the male colleagues. SF5 believed that men generally are being taken more seriously than women at first, but that through showing that they also are capable this is possible to change. She also pointed out that it may be easier for women to get employed in many workplaces since the companies want to show that they regard equality as something of high importance.

CF4 thought that there were no advantages of being a woman in the office. She also said that since ”many female colleagues spend much time browsing the Internet for clothes and other products, they often need to work overtime. This makes many women in China tired”. CF3 said that she saw a difference between her female and male colleagues in that the men were more relaxed and self-confident when talking to the customers as well as the boss. CM1 thought that ”women often meddle in other employees work”. He also thought that women have it easier, with smaller workloads.

There was quite a difference in the responses regarding social activities in the company. The Swedish interviewees all said that social activities were not common at all, with three out of five mentioning Christmas Party as the only social activity. The Chinese interviewees had a different experience. CF3 and CF4 said that the boss sometimes invites the employees to dinner at restaurants. CM2 said that they have badminton at weekends, with the occasional KTV. CM1 said that they have social activities ”very often”, including KTV and dinner. Our Chinese participants also pointed out that due to the high number of social activities they feel that they do not have enough time to spend with their family and friends.

When asking the participants if they feel like they have much freedom in their work, all the Chinese interviewees answered no, except for CM1. The general answer was that it was a very controlled environment and they felt like they lacked the power to make their own decisions. CF4 said that ”I have very little freedom, which I do not think is only negative, because it means that I always know what to do and that there are clear rules”. The answers from the Swedish interviewees showed that they have much more freedom in their work, although SM3 and SF4 said they do not have much freedom, but that it is possibly because of the nature of their work. SM1 said that he was ”encouraged by the manager to make my own decision, I just went for it”. SM2 said something similar and also said that the manager trusts the employees to do a good job. SF5 felt that she could control many aspects of her job and that it was something she was grateful for. The Chinese participants generally did not find freedom in work as important as the Swedish interviewees.

There were some differences between the answers from the Swedish interviewees and the Chinese ones when asking what the most important factor is when choosing job. SM1, SM2 and SF5 thought that having a job which is fun and interesting is the most important. They thought that the salary is not that important, as long as it is not too low. They all valued the possibility to climb the ladder more than a high salary. SM3 thought that a good salary was the most important, since he is young and wants to save money. SF4 valued short distance to the workplace highly, saying that she would never consider a workplace that requires commuting. The Chinese interviewees tended to value salary more highly than the Swedish ones. CF3, CF5 and CM1 all said that salary is the most important factor when choosing job. CF4 and CM1 argued that the choice is highly dependent on your stage in life. When CF4 was younger she thought the salary was most important, but that gradually decreased when she got a little older. CM1 said the following: “In China there are three stages; the first is when you are young and want to earn money in order to be able to start a family. You are more inclined to choose a job with high salary. The second is when you have established your family and care more about climbing the ladder and get respect as well as getting a good income. The third is when you are tired of the constant pursuit of a high status and just want to do something that you find interesting or fun. Most people never make it to stage three.” CM2 valued a good working environment more than a high salary, although he says that most of his friends do not.

Job security was valued higher by the Swedish employees than the Chinese. CM2 said that “in China, there are so many people that could do the same thing as you do, so it is easy to get replaced. But at the same time there are so many opportunities to find a new job so I do not think security is that important, there are more important factors, like salary”. SM1 said that job security for him was as important as the salary. “The constant fear of losing my job would affect my well-being as well as my work ethic negatively”.

The Swedish employees held 'interesting job' as the most important motivational factor. All five interviewees felt that the nature of the work was the deciding factor when choosing job. SM2 said that he needed a job that ”made him leave his bed in the morning”. SF4 and SF5 thought that passion for the job was a criterion that they could not ignore. SM1 said that ”high salary is a good thing, but if you have to waste 40 hours every week for a big part of your life to get it then it is not worth it”.

The answers from the Chinese employees showed that interesting work is something that is of course sought for, but not very realistic. SF4 said that ”In China it is not very realistic to get a job with good salary, good working conditions AND is related to something you have a strong passion for”. CM1 noted that you also have responsibilities towards your parents, wife and children.

When discussing skills at work, there were no distinct differences between the answers from the Swedish and Chinese interviewees. 3 out of 5 thought that getting better at your job was a big motivational factor from both countries.

Chapter 7 Analysis

This chapter includes an analysis of the empirical data that we have gathered. In this part we also draw parallels to the previous research in this area as well as theories described in chapter three, namely Hofstede´s cultural dimensions, Trompenaars dimensions as well as McGregor's X&Y theory and Hertzberg's hygiene and motivation factors.

7.1 China

The answers we got from our interviews clearly showed that the Chinese employees generally value a good stable income the highest. If we compare this to the study made in 1998 by Fisher and Yuan we see that this has not changed substantially. Until 1994 there was no wage floor in China and the wage floor they do have today is still comparatively low ,thus a good wage becomes something that employees cannot take for granted, in contrary it becomes a main factor when people in China choose what job to take and what subject to major in at university (Frost, 2002). Millions of Chinese students are pressured by their parents to choose an education that is certain to lead to a job with good or at least a stable income. The lacks of a security net as well as a good retirement system are economic factors that make many Chinese people dependent on their relatives and children. The weak retirement system in conjunction with the Confucian idea of a strong centered family unit makes many young Chinese people feel that providing for their parents is their responsibility, therefore a strong motivation for a good salary is understandable from this point of view. (Shobert, 2012). The low wage floor in combination with tough working and living conditions is also another reason why Chinese people do tend to choose with their brains instead of their heart. The lack of safe working conditions and a stable and relatively high salary explains why Chinese people are still driven by Hertzbergs, Mausners and Bloch Snydermanns (1959) hygiene factors to a much higher degree than by motivation factors. Comparing it with the answers from the Swedish participants we can clearly see that they are more triggered by motivation factors and we believe that this is partly because Swedish employees take many of the hygiene factors for granted. We also argue that Maslow's hierarchy of needs (1954) is worth mentioning here since it gives us a clear indication that although China is experiencing a swift economic growth, its population is still largely on the more basic levels in this model.

The motivation and hygiene factor model by Herzberg (1959) explains the motivation of individuals from a mere economical point of view, but what about differences in culture? Are there differences in culture between Sweden and China that makes a good salary more

important to the Chinese? According to some previous research, for example by Redding (1993), the importance of wealth and materialism among Overseas Chinese has been well documented, combined with a willingness to speak openly about money. However, we can find no clear indication in history that striving for wealth is something that can be connected to Chinese culture in any distinct way. In contrary, in the traditional Confucian perspective, too big gap between rich and poor is seen as a failure since it promotes social instability (Dai, 2009). We therefore feel that it is not likely that the difference in the degree of motivation from economic rewards in these two countries is mainly due to cultural differences, but more likely because of differences in economic conditions. We believe that only when salaries in China approach the levels of those in Sweden, the economic rewards will play a smaller role as a motivating factor. This is supported by the study made by Yang (2011), where she found that factors that are highly valued by our Swedish participants, such as 'interesting job', are more highly valued by people with a higher education.

According to Hofstede´s (1983) study as well as the research made by the Hofstede center, China´s score indicate that it is very collectivistic and in a typical collectivistic country the citizen should work in order to benefit the whole society and not primarily for own benefits. The research made by Nevis (1983) showed that 'avoidance of personal credit for accomplishment' has been a part of Chinese society for a long time. The sense of commitment to the company has for long been the view of Chinese employees regarding motivation. This might have been how it looked like when Hofstede made his study, but our own study shows that this is no longer the case. The answers given by the Chinese interviewees indicate that they do not feel a strong connection to the company or a sense of commitment to the manager. We can therefore assume with our empirical research as foundation that in some areas Hofstede´s individualism and collectivism dimension is outdated. It is also worth noting that China is a vast country with big differences between regions. The region that has been the focus of our research as well as the one made by Fisher and Yuan in 1998 is Eastern China, an area that is famous in China for the business mentality of the people living there. Eastern China is therefore not a perfect representative for the whole country, something that makes it hard to make general conclusions about a country as big and varied as China. The research made by Fisher and Yuan (1998) only focused on employees in Shanghai and in a very specific environment, namely a Western-managed hotel. We believe that this with high probability affected the answers given by the interviewees. Employees working in that kind of

environment will have a significant Western influence and therefore the values of the West regarding consumption might have played a role.

The strong company culture in Chinese companies is still present to a high extent, this is evident in the many social activities and company songs which are all meant to make a commitment to the company. This was even stronger when housing, medical care and education was almost mandatory for companies to provide for their employees. But we do see a changing trend where the Chinese economy is becoming less dependent on the government and the Communist Party and that the market economy is allowing more private enterprises to bloom. The salaries in China will likely see a steady increase partly because of this, which in turn means that housing and other facilities becomes a less important factor when employees choose workplace. With an improved economic situation for most Chinese people, the ability to buy or rent an apartment will become more and more common. The result we got from our empirical data however tells us that housing is still an important motivator for Chinese employees. This can be compared to the study made in 1998 by Fisher and Yuan where housing was seen as ”extremely important” by Chinese employees. In our interviews we found that the Chinese interviewees generally thought housing was important, but that it was not of the same importance as for the participants in the study made by Fisher and Yuan. One objection we have regarding the reliability of the study made by Fisher and Yuan is that it focuses only on Chinese employees working in Shanghai. It is not impossible that housing was seen as more important in Shanghai than other areas, due to the high costs of apartment there. However, it is also worth mentioning that housing still is a big factor for many employees in China, since the prices for houses have risen significantly, largely due to the urbanization that is a phenomenon seen globally and perhaps the strongest in China. With urbanization that swift, the result has made many Chinese employees dependent on their workplace regarding housing. The *hukou* system that China has, makes urbanization somewhat difficult since it reduces privileges such a free school and medical care if you choose to move outside of your *hukou* district. With new reforms coming, the changes in the *hukou* system are expected to make moving easier, thus accelerating the already swift urbanization. (Cheng, 2015).

Social activities orchestrated by the company are much more common in China than it is in Sweden. This may come as a surprise to some, since China is infamous for bad working conditions such as the case of many suicides in the company Foxconn, the producer of I phones for Apple (Palis, 2012). Our Swedish interviewees mentioned Christmas party as the

only social activity, whilst the Chinese interviewees said that KTV (karaoke), badminton and dinner were regular activities in their companies. The objectives of these social activities are obviously to increase motivation among employees and perhaps to improve teamwork and efficiency. The question is if that is really the case. We believe that these social activities in Chinese organizations are closely connected to Hofstede´s indulgence vs. restraint dimension. Hofstede´s study shows that Swedes score higher on indulgence which means that they enjoy life more while Chinese have a low score (The Hofstede centre, 2015). Even though these social activities that are common in Chinese organizations are not work per se, they are connected to it since the activities involve colleagues and the common topics are often work-related. This in return may in reality mean that Chinese employees find it harder to separate work from leisure time compared to Swedish employees. It is therefore not surprising that the Chinese employees to a higher extent felt that they do not have a meaningful spare time. An interesting observation regarding the social activities is that even though the Swedish interviewees to a higher degree felt that the manager cares about the employees, the social activities were much more common in Chinese companies. This may indicate that social activities are not as important to the employees as perhaps the superiors in China might think.

The often hierarchical structure of companies in China is something that affects the motivation of employees in both positive and negative ways. These hierarchical gaps that we can see in China can be compared to Hofstede´s power distance dimension. China scores very high in this dimension and the big distance and inequality between manager and employees is therefore confirmed (The Hofstede centre, 2015). A study made by Yellen (1984) on motivation amongst employees suggested that higher wages can create conditions for workers to become more productive, reduce shirking by employees, an improvement in the average quality of job applicants and improved work morale. We believe that the low salaries in China for workers is one of the main reasons why motivation generally speaking is much lower for employees in China compared to in Sweden. When a person does not feel that his/hers effort is valued, it is easy to become passive and indolent. This combined with a management that lacks a genuine interest for the employee's working situation makes for employees with low confidence and efficiency. CF3 made a rather accurate standpoint when she said that ”Chinese business lacks the motivation by individuals”.

The hierarchical gap between the superior and the employees is according to our empirical findings somewhat big in Chinese organizations while in Swedish ones the employees have more right to express their opinions and suggestions and they also feel that the superior takes

that into account when deciding. In China the employees are often reluctant to say what is really on their mind. In terms of difference in decision-making, Chinese employees were not as willing to make decisions themselves, and instead, they wanted their superior to do it for them, which stands in contrast to Swedish employees who were used to take responsibility and make decisions. This can somewhat be explained by the assumption that egalitarian cultures tend to be more democratic, while hierarchical ones tend to let decisions be made from the top (Meyer, 2014). Chinese tend to always agree with their manager because of the fear of making the manager lose face and are generally not likely to speak before the manager on meetings and gatherings. If there was something of importance the employee would talk to the superior and express his/her opinion in privacy to not embarrass the manager. One of Trompenaars and Hampden- Turner´s (1997) dimensions is the so-called neutral vs. emotional. This dimension describes that in some cultures people tend to express their emotions and opinions when they have a strong opinion about a specific situation. If we categorize our Chinese and Swedish participants, both would be in the neutral category, as people from both countries tend to first carefully think and then express themselves because they are aware of the consequences. However this is even more evident in Chinese culture, since the concept of face or *mianzi* plays a much bigger part in China than in Sweden. We would argue that the existence of *mianzi* is a contributing factor why Chinese employees do not feel motivated by “standing out” or expressing his/hers opinion if it is different to the superior's. There is a Chinese expression that portrays this cultural phenomenon rather well: *the bird who sticks his head out gets shot* 枪打出头鸟 (Yan, 2014).

The aspects of *guanxi* and *renqing* also create differences in how employees behave at work. In China, promotions and business deals are more likely to be based on personal relationships than in Western countries (Yang, 1994). This may lead to employees thinking that personal connections are as important as their actual performance when it comes to potential to climb the ladder and get personal benefits. This is also manifested in the answers from our Chinese interviewees that tell us that some of them feel less motivated to perform at work because of the existence of *guanxi* and especially *guanxixue*. The presence of *renqing* is also affecting the actions of employees as well as employers in China. The constant sense of having a debt to various people may affect the neutrality and rationality of the actions that people make, since the *renqing* make them feel 'forced' to give back the kindness that they have received. These cultural factors can have a negative impact on the motivation of employees, since there is risk

that some employees feel that other get benefits whilst performing work of the same quality as the employee himself/herself.

A similar comparison can also be made with another cultural dimension. Both Trompenaars & Hampden- Turner (1997) and Hofstede (1983) do have the individualism vs. collectivism/communitarianism dimension and the reasons why Swedes and Chinese hesitate when they want to express themselves in different situation can be explained thanks to this dimension. In China, if the employee wants to tell the manager something that he/she considers important, the employee tries to avoid telling it when there are other people around. This was said to be mainly because they do not want to make the manager seem weak or that he/she loses face in front of other people. This is a more collectivistic way of thinking because we can clearly see that the employee does not focus on himself/herself but rather on the potential negative consequences for the superior (Hofstede centre, 2015) (Trompenaars & Hampden- Turner, 1997).

Parallels to McGregor´s (1960) X and Y theory may also be drawn because people might be seen as either the X type of person or the Y type. From our research we believe that employees in China are seen as the X type of person. The X types needs to be motivated and controlled in order to do their jobs and in these kinds of organizations a more hierarchical and centralized organization style is used. This is exactly the case in our research. We can for example see that interviewee CM1 said that a lot of his time at work is spent to browse the internet and CF4 agreed that this is how it looks in many Chinese organizations.

7.2 Sweden

After our empirical research has been made, we can see that Sweden and China differs in many areas regarding motivation and this can be explained by the culture. Strong connections to the result can be made to the common Swedish word *lagom* that means *sufficient* or *just right* (Williams and Devine, 2005) This utilization of *lagom* in the daily life can clearly be seen in the way managers work and motivate their employees. For instance the manager only supervisors the employees when absolutely necessary and there is a lot of unwritten cultural rules that the employee has the right to freedom at work to some extent (Hansson and Lindblom, 2003). Our empirical research indicate that in the Swedish society the employees often have some kind of possibility to affect the decision of the manager, or at least express their own opinion regarding for example a new business agreement that the company is making that the manager will bear in mind when taking a final decision and Williams and

Devine (2005) confirms this information. Our empirical research also shows that the Swedish interviewees only hesitated about saying what they think if they did not agree with their boss out of fear of saying something stupid and embarrass themselves.

The possibility that the employees have to show the manager that they are ambitious and want to take responsibility as well as want to be part of the decision process indicate that Swedish employees are the so called Y- type of employee according to McGregor´s X&Y theory (1960). The theory says that the Y- type wants to take responsibility, be independent and increase the own capability to make a good work. This kind of employee also sees work as a natural part of life and wants to reach self-realization and be appreciated by working hard and that is what motivates this kind of employee. In the empirical findings we can read that the manager often takes the opinion of the employee in account and let him/her decide about certain things connected to the work area of the employee. This is a sign that a Y type of leadership is implemented in the organizations in which the Swedish interviewees work (McGregor, 1960).

The same parallel can also be drawn to Hertzberg´s (1959) motivation- and hygiene factors. Swedes seek appreciation, self- realization and wants to have a responsible work according to our empirical research. Our findings also say that Swedes has passed the stage where money is the ultimate motivator and this may be because the salaries in Sweden are always enough to be able to afford necessities compared to the result of our Chinese participants who see money as the most important factor for motivation. There is generally a higher living standard in Sweden compared to China even though China is catching up. The differences in living standards and inequality in China are still big (Steinbock, 2014). Swedes are driven by having the possibility to show the manager that they are capable of performing difficult tasks at work in a good way and take responsibility for it. Our research says that most of our Swedish interviewees wanted to perform better and do more than only the task they are supposed to do in order to impress the manager and personally benefit from it in ways such as climbing the ladder. Employees personally want to gain benefits from doing something good and that is an accurate indicator that Sweden is an individualistic country (The Hofstede centre, 2015). Trompenaars & Hampden- Turner (1997) as well as Hofstede (1983) state that in individualistic societies such as Sweden, employees put in effort to gain and benefit themselves and in these societies the group is never prioritized. One thing that might come as surprising and contradictive compared to the individualistic point of view in Sweden is the very big focus on team work in the business culture as well as in schools and the daily life.

Previous research in this area such as Williams and Devine (2005) claim that team work is very common in Sweden and that this kind of fellowship will lead to an increase of knowledge for everyone and better decisions will be made in groups. We believe that team work might be one aspect that lowers the score that Sweden has in the research made by the Hofstede centre (2015) and that this is partly why Sweden is not as individualistic as The United States.

Sweden is according to the Hofstede centre (2015) a very feminine country and the score of five in a scale of 100 clearly shows that. Our Swedish interviewees confirmed that this score is accurate and representative for the Swedish employees. The interviewees valued many typical feminine factors to make a good climate at work such as that they really appreciated having good colleagues, the possibility to make a career and being seen and appreciated by the manager for the effort they put in to the company (Fey, 2005). The Chinese society on the other hand scores very high in the research made by the Hofstede centre (2015) and this is confirmed by our Chinese interviewees who all states that they feel that Chinese managers only strive for as high profits as possible and that no time is spent on the well-being of the Chinese employees. How people feel at work affect the outcome of their work and most of the Swedish interviewees agreed that the manager is result oriented but that a lot of effort is put in the well-being of the employees.

The answers we got regarding if there are any differences in being a woman or man in an organization were interesting since we saw a pattern that it had nothing to do with the nationality. Instead the gender was the important factor. Our male interviewees did not see any advantages or disadvantages in being a woman compared to being a man. The female interviewees on the other hand pointed out that they felt that men have many advantages such as higher salaries and better possibilities to get top positions. This is perhaps due to the fact that men often take these privileges for granted and they do not notice them since they have been privileged in some areas since the beginning. This conclusion regarding differences between men and women that we have done thanks to our research is confirmed by a report published by *diskrimineringsombudsmannen* concerning how people feel discriminated in the society (DO, 2010). With high gender inequality in a society, it is not impossible that women may become less motivated to perform at work since they feel that they have little chance to get a promotion or climb the ladder. It can work as a self-fulfilling prophecy if men regard women as weaker and the result might thus be that women are not given the same opportunity to excel. The Chinese society, although based on Confucianism, is surprisingly equal between

genders in some aspects. China is the country that has the second highest female CEO percentage (Hu, 2014). Sweden is one of the countries where gender equality is highest in the world (EC, 2013). It is therefore not likely that neither Sweden nor China is a country where gender inequality affects the motivation among female employees to a high extent. The result from our empirical data also supports this.

Chapter 8 Conclusion and future research

This chapter includes four sections namely the conclusion, a description and figure of the CIM- Model, the limitations of the research and thesis and possible future study in this research area.

8.1 Conclusion

Previous research showed that employees in the two countries value some factors completely different such as 'being in on things' and a good salary (Fisher and Yuan, 1998). Perhaps the main question was if these differences were related to the contrasting cultures of China and the Western ones, or if other factors were more decisive. Many of the studies were made in the 90s, in a time where China's economic strength was far from the level it is on today. One of the main previsions we had was that the economic development of China, that lacks an equivalent in the history of mankind, had somewhat erased the differences between China and the West regarding motivation among employees. According to the results from our empirical data, we can say that the answer to those previsions is both yes and no.

The purpose of the research was to find out the differences in how employees in Swedish and Chinese companies are motivated. We also wanted to investigate the importance of culture and how the cultural differences can explain the way workers are motivated. This research is based on the interviewees' subjective opinion about this area and the information is gathered by semi-structured interviews with our ten participants.

For the purpose of the study we intend to answer the following research question:

- *How does motivation differ between Swedish and Chinese employees and how much of this can be explained by cultural differences?*

Based on the answers from our interviewees we have drawn the conclusion that there are clear differences in motivation of Swedish and Chinese employees and that some of these can be explained by cultural factors. The Chinese employees generally value hygiene factors such as a good salary and a good welfare package the highest. One of the reasons to this is the fact that the wage floor is low in China. Due to this people feel unsafe about their future due to the reason that a stable economy is the foundation to live a more stable life. Apart from that, Chinese youths are often also pressured by their parents to choose an education and work that

will generate a relatively high salary and this can be explained by the fact that the retirement system in China is weak and that the parents must rely on their children in order to survive economically. The Confucian idea of a strong centered family unit is also a contributing factor. The study we made also shows that Sweden has passed that stage and that employees generally value other things such as having an interesting job and feeling appreciated at work.

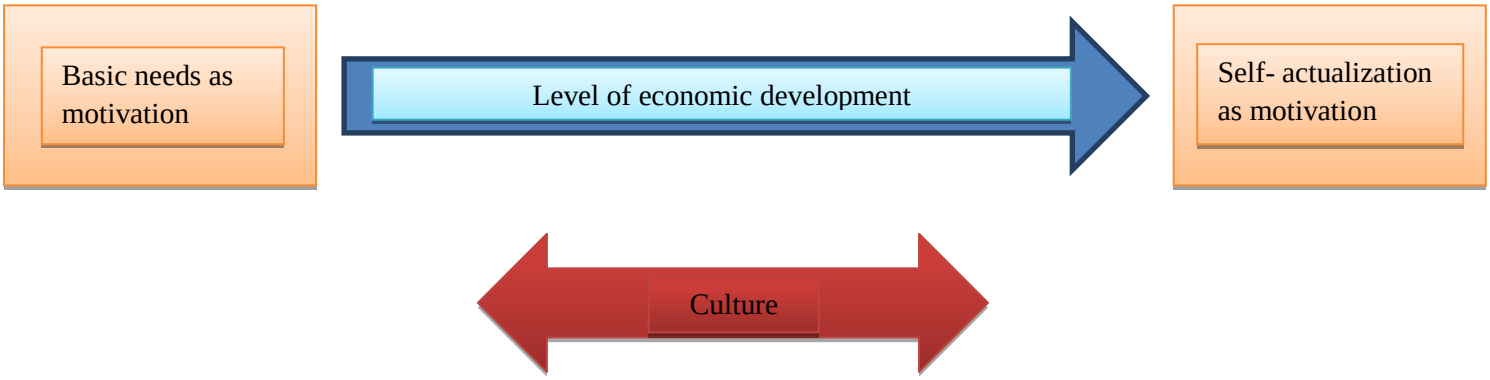
We also found that the Chinese employees did not show more loyalty to the company compared to the Swedish employees. China is according to Hofstede (1983) a collectivistic country, where the good of the company is higher valued than personal benefits for individual employees. Our study shows that this is changing and that individualism is becoming the new pattern of motivation amongst Chinese employees. The obligation to the company is not significant enough to make the employees care more about the company than themselves. This can somewhat be explained by the relationship workers have with their manager in China. In our study we have found that the Chinese employees did not have a very good relationship with their manager, compared to the Swedish employees. This is in line with the studies of power distance by Hofstede (1983) where China is a country where hierarchy is more evident than in Sweden. In Sweden, which is an egalitarian country, the hierarchical gap between manager and employees was smaller compared to China, according to our study. Sweden is also a more feminine country than China according to Hofstede (1983), which in our study was found in that Swedish managers cared more about the well-being of the employees and were less result-oriented compared to the Chinese managers.

Our study shows that both Swedish and Chinese are relatively reluctant to express their own opinions to the managers. According to Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997), employees are either emotional or neutral when expressing their own opinion, and we believe that the employees of both China and Sweden in our study are neutral, since they tend to first carefully think and then express themselves because they are aware of the consequences. This is slightly more evident amongst our Chinese participants and we believe that a contributing factor is the existence of *mianzi* in the Chinese society. However, we also believe that the existence of the Swedish phenomenon *lagom* is also having an impact on the Swedish participants. We did not find that the existence of *guanxi* and *renqing* in the Chinese society had a big impact on the motivation of the Chinese employees interviewed. In our study we noticed that the Chinese participants were more aware of networking or *guanxi* as a mean to climb the ladder, but it did not seem to affect the motivation in a clear way.

The study has also showed us that the Swedish participants of the study enjoy life more and are able to combine both career and personal spare time while the Chinese participants feel that their entire life is dedicated to work, partly because of various social activities connected to work. This inability to separate work from the personal life has according to our study a bad impact on the motivation of employees in China even though the purpose of these activities is to unite the employees to motivate them.

If we compare our study of motivation amongst Chinese employees to the one made by Fisher and Yuan (1998) we see that the some basic motivating factors, such as housing is valued less amongst our participants. The tendency seems to be that the Chinese employees need more intricate incentives to feel motivated now than 17 years ago. The economic development is the most obvious reason for this, but perhaps the changing norms and values in China are other contributing factors why the motivation amongst Chinese employees is getting increasingly similar to the motivation of employees in countries like Sweden. With a continued economic development in China, it is thus feasibly that 15 years in the future, the motivation amongst Chinese employees will bear considerably more resemblance to the motivation of the Swedish counterparts than today.

8.2 The CIM- model



The cultural impact on motivation-model, or CIM-model as written above, is a model composed by us in order to generally describe the motivation of employees and the impact that culture has on it. It also visualizes how motivation amongst employees changes in line with economic development. When the level of economic development is low, employees tend to value hygiene factors such as a stable income to fulfill the more basic needs. In contrast, when the economic development is high, employees tend to value motivational factors such as self-actualization.

The red arrow points in two different directions and represents culture and its impact on motivation. Culture can affect and push the motivation of employees in either the direction towards basic needs or the other way, towards self-actualization depending on the specific culture.

8.3 Limitations

This research has some limitations and things that could have worked out better during the research and writing process and this could have affected the outcome of the study. First of all both of us are born and raised in Sweden and we look at the world with a Swedish "pair of glasses" which basically means that we have a subjective way of analyzing the empirical data. This is due to the influence of the Swedish culture and our personal experiences.

Secondly there are always minor mistakes in translating the interviews from Chinese and Swedish to English and especially with the firstly mentioned language since only one of us know the language and it is not his native language. Besides that, some of the interviewees may have misunderstood a question or two and this could have had an impact on the result. The method that we have chosen- interviews, do have some limitations as well. It is not easy to both listen and write down all of the interviewees' answers and at the same time also try to write down some information about the way the interviewee behaved and reacted to some of our questions. The interviews were recorded and we always had a backup with information if we would miss to write down anything during the interview but the transcription process is very time consuming and some errors in the transcription might have occurred. Secondly we can never be absolutely sure whether the participants of the interviews have told the truth of not. It might be that some of the answers were not completely sincere and honest and this could eventually have affected the result of the study.

There are also limitations in the process of electing interviewees. First of all 10 participants is probably not enough people to get information and trying to find a general pattern for how employees are motivated in both countries and also comparing the culture of both Sweden and China and making assumptions about how the culture affects the motivation. Besides that, we did not considered aspects such as the education background and religion. We did consider age since all of our interviewees were at least 20 and maximally 35 years old. The amount of men and women were also exactly the same but we still had a limitation regarding gender since three out of five Chinese were women and only two out of five Swedes were women. As we said, there is a fair sectioning of both men and women considering all the participants but

it is not fair looking at it from a division perspective since 60% of the Chinese in this research are women and the percentage for the Swedish women is only 40%. This inequality in the number of male and female participants in each group might have affected the research due to the fact that the Chinese group is dominated by women and the Swedish group is represented by more men.

8.4 Future research

There has already been a lot of research in this area but it is still not enough since the importance of China on the world market still grows and the Western world needs to adapt to it. During the 20th century the studies done in this research area were very much centralized to companies in the US and also Europe to some extent. Today we can see that this is shifting rapidly. In the 20th century many countries and markets were Americanized with adaptations to the American way of doing business in order to stay competitive. With the now raising Chinese economy this may come to change in the future. For that reason more research is needed.

One interesting thing to do would be to make a similar study but with two different countries, one from the Western part of the world and the other one from East in order to make a comparison and see if the result would be more or less the same or if there are any specific cultural and motivational aspects that are unique for Sweden and China. Another interesting study would be to see if the culture and motivation of employees in organizations in China changes as China is getting more developed and economically stronger. Will it become more like the Western world or will their way of doing business preserve

This study is based on ten semi- structured in- depth interviews but an increase of the number of participants or a switch in the research method might give us completely different information than this study did and this would also be another possible future study.
The fact remains that more studies are needed since the world gets more globalized for every day that goes with increasing trade and new trade agreements between nations taking place constantly. This is especially needed in the case of these two countries because the culture and work mentality is very different.

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Appendix 1- Interview questions

Organizational hierarchy

Does he/she listen to your suggestions?

Do you feel that you can influence his/hers decisions?

Do you feel ”in on things”. Is the important to you?

If you don't agree with the boss, how would you act?

Does he focus a lot on employee's working situation?

Do you feel appreciated at work?

Company culture in China/Sweden

Do you choose the safe alternative or the risky one with bigger potential benefits?

When it comes to chores, do you do what you are being told and nothing more, or do you try to more in order to get seen by the boss?

When you work, do you feel that you put in effort in order to get personal benefits or for the good of the company?

Do you feel like there is a difference in being a woman or a man in the workplace? Advantages/disadvantages?

Do you have any social activities to increase the social connections between the employees?

Do you have a lot of freedom in your work? Examples?

Would you like to have more freedom in your work?

Networking (Guanxi)

Do you feel that networking/guanxi is creating unfair advantages for those who employ it? How common is it?

What is the most important factor when choosing job?

Do yu feel motivated at work? What is the biggest motivator?

Does the company offer housing or any other facilities?