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Working in a Different Culture-How Does This Affect an Individuals Experience of Work

A phenomenological research in work and organizational psychology from a cultural
perspective

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Abstract

The aim of the research was to explore for possible effects of cultural dimensions on people's perceptions and feelings of their work situation. A phenomenological approach was followed, in which the participants answered an open-ended question about their work situation and the responses were analyzed with MCA-Minerva where the individual's life-worlds were made visible and discussed. Four themes were looked at: social relationships, acculturation, leadership and group/teamwork. Participants from individualistic countries more often spoke of their role and achievements while those from collectivistic countries focused more on the relationship with colleagues and how they work together as a group. Those working for Swedish organizations showed surprise regarding the low power-distance. Swedish participants reacted to the great power-distance in France and the UK. Regarding acculturation it turned out that those who changed both management culture and country experienced the greatest difficulties and seemed to lack sufficient social relationships more than others. Those who solely worked for a foreign company and those who had a managerial position felt most comfortable in their role.

Keywords: Phenomenology, MCA, Work, Culture, Acculturation, Leadership and Teamwork.

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Working in a Different Culture-How Does This Affect an Individuals Experience of Work

In today's world organizations are branching out at a rapid pace and different cultures meet in the workplace. It seems as if people are more willing to move around these days and the thought of moving to a completely different culture does not seem to deter many. But perhaps such relocation, even though it is for a short period of time, is more complex than it seems at first. As this fluctuant work situation becomes more common, research in this field also becomes an important issue. What happens when different cultures meet? Which compromises are they forced to make? It is the simple things that one takes for granted that show when being able to freely discuss a new work situation. How do individuals from different cultural backgrounds perceive and handle these changes and how do they put this into words? How well do the employees understand the new management's structure and ways? For example how formal/informal would different individuals experience the relationship between levels of management in China compared to France? And is it mainly culture that has an effect or might there be more similarities among managers than among people from the same country? Looking at globalisation today, it is becoming more common that organizations establish themselves abroad; this is therefore a current theme. Chinese organizations for instance are now starting to establish business here in Sweden and more and more Swedish organizations are looking to moving abroad.

All these original thoughts have generated four areas that this paper will focus on. These are: leadership, teamwork, social relationships and acculturation. Possible subdivisions are conflict, roles, power-distance and individualism/collectivism. Appropriate participants are individuals who are currently working in a country other than their own, or working for a foreign company in their home country. The only criteria is basically that they are all exposed to a different culture than they usually are in.

The idea is to analyze the meaning of the individual's experiences and try to understand their life-world. Therefore the MCA (Meaning Constitution Analysis), a phenomenological approach will be used. The survey will consist of a single open-ended question about the participant's work situation. Allowing them to answer as freely as possible will bring out what they see in their reality and what they find important. It is when they give an answer without

being asked a specific question that ecological validity is confirmed. It is not only what the individual says but also how they say it and in what context they chose to present it. Perhaps the life-world differs depending on if the individual has had prior experience with other cultures or whether they are in a management position or not.

Theories

First in this theory-section follows a presentation of terms that are relevant to this study. Theories and term will be presented to shed light on different perspectives of the chosen themes.

Culture

Values

Individual beliefs and values often reflect a culture's values. Hofstede (1984) defines values as broad tendencies to prefer certain states of affairs to others. Selection is usually based on which values and preferences the individual identifies themselves with. Values are then reflected in the beliefs, attitudes and behaviour of everybody, at least to some degree. They are the core of culture. They may be conscious or unconscious and we only become aware of them when we meet people from other cultures. This might be exactly the case at an international work place. Values have a big effect on which goals are chosen and the appropriate ways of achieving them. They also affect conceptions of individual rights and duties etc., which are important to think about from an international organization's perspective.

Self

Tajfel's *Social identity theory* is based on the fact that individuals' relations provide them with a *social identity* (Hogg & Vaughan, 2002). The relations of an individual are often influenced by social stratification (presented further later on). Social identity derives from group membership. Meaning that an individual has as many social identities as group memberships. The relations and attributes that are connected with these identities are essential for the making of self-concept and self-perception. Once the individual has identified with a certain group they will start thinking and behaving according to the characteristics of the group.

The structure of the self varies from culture to culture. One of the distinctive differences between Eastern and Western cultures is the degree to which the self is viewed as connected to others. In the West the self is viewed as unique and separate from others. In these societies people emphasize on the individual self, not the collective self, and a person's identity is based on unique qualities associated with the individual. Pervin and John (2001) give an example of when Americans are asked, "Who are you?" the most of them respond with their name and their occupation. Other societies focus more on the group; one's identity is based on ties to other members of the group. What one owns and what one accomplishes bases one's identity in individualistic societies, for them it is important to be independent and self-reliant.

A sense of occupational responsibility is part of the Japanese *self*. Looking at Japanese crime statistics, as an Eastern example one can see that they are relatively low in comparison to other industrial countries indicate that the Japanese population fit into a conformist concept of self although the younger generation might be breaking out of this conformist attitude. The Japanese domestic life remains very cohesive with a low divorce rate and they more often join networks and voluntary organizations to build interrelationships. All these things point to that the Japanese are more cohesive and under the influence of more social conformity than their Western counterparts.

Culture

Olie (1995) explains that it is the collective values of a group of individuals that is called *culture*. One could say that culture is to a human collectivity what personality is to an individual. Within any given culture an individual's mental frame is partly unique and partly shared. Hofstede (1984) points out that all individuals belong to several collectivities such as families, ethnic groups and so forth. Whenever an individual engages in an intergroup activity it is usually in some way connected to social identity (Segall et. al.1999). A society's common preferences derive from economic and social forces that evolve historically. A society's common values are then reflected in patterns of religion, education and legal systems. Usually when culture is debated it refers to society as a whole. In this study, culture will not be used as simply the culture of a nation but the culture of the organization in the respective countries. Olie (1995) stresses that culture develops over time therefore in determining how well adjusted employee and employer are to each other depends on the length of their relationship.

Norms

Norms are sets of unspoken rules for acceptable group behaviour. Group members act according to norms to create order and stability within the group. A group always has a task and in order to succeed with that task, norms have to be established. When members of a group have the same background and naturally share structured views about authority, roles, conflicts, status etc. it is not difficult to find consistent group norms. There are unconscious norms, meaning norms that are taken for granted; no one will attack you when you enter a room. Then there are formal/institutional norms- a person who changes work place but still has the same kind of work can assume that they have the same core norms as the previous place. Norms are sometimes a direct result of a leader's statement and sometimes a result of repetitive patterns of behaviour, for example how people are seated around a table during meetings. Some norms only apply to some people, for example the leader. If someone in the group acts in contradiction to the norm, he or she might get some sort of punishment. The groups that an individual belongs to often depend on where in the hierarchy they are, and how much wealth and power they have. The relationships an individual has are influenced by social stratification.

Social stratification is a well-used concept that describes the system by which societies rank categories of people in a hierarchy (Macionic & Plummer, 1997). This is a system found everywhere but it varies in what counts as equal. It can be for several reasons that an individual has a low position in the hierarchy. Factors that play a role are economy, gender, sexuality, ethnicity and age. Class systems are stratified according to wealth, power and prestige. These are seen as "open" systems where mobility is greater and up to the individual - Anyone who is ambitious can do well. Social boundaries are more and more often broken down as people move across the world and integrate. Class systems are more common in Westernised countries, and even though for example Japan is becoming more stratified by class, they are still very much influenced by the old caste system.

After this presentation of values, self, culture, norms and social stratification, which gives an insight in cultures separately, by themselves. It is now time to look at theories focusing on the contact between different cultures.

Cross-cultural studies

As Tadmor and Tetlock (2006) write in their article, a growing number of people are being exposed to a second culture. Despite this fact relatively little theoretical attention has been

dedicated to this subject. As Michael Cole (1998) writes it has been difficult for many academic psychologists to keep culture in mind when doing research. They agree that one of the central characteristics of human beings is their need and ability to live in a culture but when some psychologists have done research they have not looked at mind and culture as a unity. Instead some psychologists have looked at mind and culture as response and stimulus, then the unity of culture and mind is broken. Cross-cultural psychology has tried to “put together” mind and culture and not look at them as separate: not culture as an independent variable and not mind as a dependent variable, but as a unity.

An international comparison of HR-practices indicates that the basic functions of HR-management are given different weight in different countries. According to Gaugler et al.(1993) some researchers deny the influence of culture on management. As they see it there are combinations of functions that have an immutable nature and are carried out independently of the culture of the country when it comes to management. Other researchers on the other hand adopt the cross-cultural approach meaning that there are connections between culture and management in any given country. According to them the differences in HR management in different countries reflect differences between cultural societies. As Gaugler writes the differences between two cultures can become very evident when employees from one culture are employed in an organization that is governed by another culture’s practices. There is an example from Germany, about thirty years ago, when the economic sector of the Federal Republic of Germany recruited several million workers from foreign countries, among them Greece and Turkey. The workers general upbringing and education were incompatible with the culture of the German workplace. The workers had difficulties gaining acceptance from their German colleagues and supervisors. The HR department was confronted for the first time with the conflicts that arise from diversity, they had before this always dealt with a homogenous workforce. German companies that are now establishing in the US mainly employ US experts and managers for their HR-management. They recognise the importance of having an HR-staff that is compatible with the employees. An HR-staff that has the same cultural background as the employees is more likely to be sensitive to the employees’ needs and expectations in the workplace and is therefore more likely to manage the company successfully.

Globalisation

Like Hatch (2002) writes, during this time of increasing international competition many organizations try to create for themselves a strategic position so they can benefit from a broad range of opportunities all over the world. Gustavsson (2003) writes that many smaller companies choose to establish abroad for exactly this reason and daily encounter the challenges and opportunities that accompany globalization. Internationalization has become important for the economic growth in companies. Hatch also mentions the growing diversity within the work place. As a result of this national borders and trade blocks are erased, mobility increases and more multinational companies are created. Hatch (2002) says this diversity of people will lead to innovation, creativity and better decision-making, as a result of various views, ideas and experiences that a more diverse work force represents.

Organizational structure differences

When expanding to a foreign country there are several factors to think about. Sorge (1995) points out that cultural differences between countries influence and infiltrate organizational structure in multiple ways. Differences in lifestyle and preferences may in some cases show themselves immediately while others may take longer to see. Companies should, in the same way they think about what market they are going to appeal to, focus on the employees' demands, needs and preferences. Many approaches emphasize universality whereas the cultural approach stresses national distinctiveness. This means believing that it would not be possible to get the same results by simply applying one country's method to another.

In most Asian countries for instance it is common with great power distance between teacher-pupil, parent-child and so forth. Naturally this affects how work organizations function. In these countries one can expect to find large gaps between authority levels. French organizations stress the importance of learning by hierarchical advancement, career distinction, upward mobility and restriction of autonomy. This is more of a Western view where individualism, independence and a masculine approach are more common.

When people move across different cultures internal and external changes begin which can have many effects on the individual and the society. Below follows the concept of acculturation that addresses these issues.

Acculturation

Millions of people are working in a new culture and it is of increasingly great importance that

they have a management who can understand what they are going through. *Acculturation* focuses on the internal changes that take place in the individual when he or she is exposed to the values, norms and expected behaviours that are essential for participating as a cultural member (Berry et al., 1992). Of course acculturation also leads to external changes that are noticeable in societies. The definition involves that the engagement is continuous, firsthand, and that it causes a substantial psychological and cultural change. Berry et al. stresses that this must not be confused with *enculturation* that entails change due to influence from one's own culture. The acculturation experience will happen for both the organization and the employee. There does not have to be only one dominant part. Both of them could have equal, or at least some, influence. It seems likely that there will be mutual influence, a concept known as *integration*.

Segall et al (1999) refer to Graves (1967) division of acculturation into two parts: Psychological acculturation and group acculturation. On the group-level changes will be biological, political, physical, economical, cultural and social. Just imagine suddenly having to live in a new society with a different religion. There are many things to adapt to. Psychological acculturation is more profound. This means changing the individual's values and behaviour, it also concerns identity, acculturative stress, pathology and adaptation.

All individuals acculturate in their own unique way (Berry et al., 1992). Some may accept change and adapt quickly This is called *assimilation*. Others may withdraw and even resist change. This is called *separation*. There are a lot of persons that fall in between these two extremes. Segall et al. (1999) say that those who seek contact with others and at the same time want to hold on to their old identity are *integrating*. Then there are those who have little interest in cultural maintenance and little interest in relations with others, *marginalization*. Thus, it is essential to understand each individual's feelings and experiences and see where they stand.

Berry et al. (1992) explain that when acculturation occurs the old norms and social rules change. This change can be disturbing for many and on a group level the changes also involve patterns of authority, welfare etc. *Acculturative stress* is basically another way of saying "culture shock" and the consequences of this may, for some, be anxiety and weaker mental health, confusion and a feeling of being different to others. These reactions are not true for everyone, some see the changes as opportunities and adapt quite easily. It is of great

importance that the organization quickly lets their employee join the group and not so to speak, stay on the sideline. The organization should also make sure that no rules of the organization prohibit or complicate integration. Emotions that are experienced could also depend on the social stratification of the country. For example a highly educated person coming from a hierarchical country would find having to accept a lower status job, (which newcomers often do), very difficult. Also, as mentioned earlier, an individual is all the more willing to take part and grow with an organization that reflects and shares their values, thus if an organization does this they will experience less acculturative stress.

A concept that should be mentioned when discussing acculturation, acculturative stress etc. is *ethnocentrism*. All individuals see things through a cultural filter consisting of norms and values given to them by their culture. Their natural perspectives on things are made accordingly. Ethnocentrism refers to the positive feeling that an individual tries to maintain toward the own group (in-group) (Segall et al., 1999). This means seeing things as if the group that you belong to is the centre of everything and its views are the right ones. It is natural for individuals to feel this and it is necessary in order to establish good self-esteem. It is best not to exaggerate stereotypes too much for danger of misinterpreting other people.

Hofstede's cultural dimensions

Hofstede (1984) conducted a study of how values in the workplace are influenced by culture. He analyzed the value scores of employees at *IBM* (International Business Machines) between 1967 and 1973, in more than 70 countries. From his results and later additions he developed a model with five dimensions. *Power Distance* Index stands for the extent to which a less powerful member of an organization accepts and expects inequality in power distribution. According to the PDI the followers endorse the level of inequality just as much as the leaders. The next dimension is *Individualism* and its opposite, *Collectivism*. This dimension explains to what degree individuals are integrated into groups. In individualistic societies everyone is expected to take care of themselves and their closest family. In collectivistic societies people are from birth integrated into groups and often have big families. Personal needs and goals are very important in individualistic cultures whereas in collectivistic cultures individual needs are set aside to satisfy group goals. According to some studies (Arnold et al., 1998) it looks as if *social loafing*, the phenomenon when a person does not work as hard to achieve a goal when working in a group as when they work alone, does not occur in collectivistic cases. He refers to a study by Earley (1989) who found that the people he tested from American

management did show effects of social loafing when tested on a task, while people from China showed no signs of this. It is believed that in collective societies, people feel a sense of shared responsibility with others. In Western cultures there is more of an individualistic view.

The third dimension is Masculinity versus Femininity. The fourth dimension is Uncertainty Avoidance Index and the fifth is Long-term orientation, but as this study does not focus on these dimensions, this will not be presented here.

Hofstede's rating of the countries in this study clearly show where the differences lie. Below two countries (China and The United Kingdom) are presented and the rest of the countries can be found in Appendix A (see p. 61) (Hofstede, 2003).

Figure 1. Hofstede's dimensions in the UK

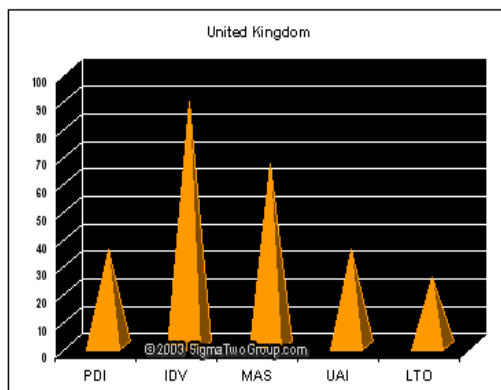
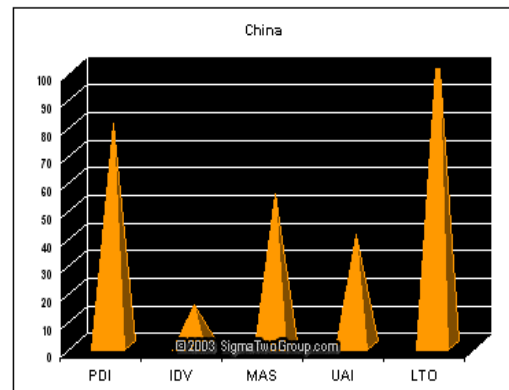


Figure 2. Hofstede's dimensions in China



As one can see the countries differ a lot in the individualism-collectivism dimension and as well as in the power distance index.

Leadership

Now after have had a look at culture and cultures in contact, it is time to present theories on the theme leadership. Below there are theories representing both Eastern and Western views on leadership.

Western views on leadership

There are different categories of leadership behaviour according to the Ohio State Leadership Studies (Kempton, 1995). There is *consideration*, where the leader has a supportive behaviour and focuses on relationships by showing consideration for the employees. This leader takes the time for each individual, encourages participation and treats everyone as equals. This

leader establishes trust, mutual respect and rapport. This is very much a human relations approach to leadership and reflects the democratic element. Then there is the *initiating structure* category in leadership behaviour, which is about authority and structure. This leader focuses more on the task. Most important is to define and structure roles, to achieve goals and coordinate the work. These leaders may criticise weak performances and emphasize the importance of deadlines.

According to Western studies done at the University of Michigan there are some behaviours that create what they consider to be effective leaders (Yukl, 2002). They call it *relations-orientated* behaviour (similar to The Ohio State Leadership study's *consideration*). Then there is the *task-oriented* behaviour (similar to *initiating structure*). Third is the *participative* leadership style in which the leader is group-focused. Everyone partakes in the decision-making, which improves communication and cooperation. Effective leaders are good at both consideration and initiating structure according to Yukl and he mentions some characteristics that are important for effective leadership: high endurance, high tolerance of stress, confidence, internal locus of control, emotional stability, personal integrity, a need for power and also to be performance oriented.

Eastern views on leadership

Matsumoto and Juang (2004) write about how the bond between the leader and the subordinate in for example India and Japan extends beyond the work place. In these countries leaders are not only expected to look after their employees at work but also to show concern for their employees personal life. In these cultures people do not hesitate to contact their boss and seek advice about domestic-related problems. This is very different from Western cultures. In American culture for example there is a clear distinction between peoples' personal life and work life. The boundary between work and personal life is clear. The differences in the definition of leaders are related to Hofstede's individualism-collectivism. In collectivistic cultures people identify themselves more with their work; they see their work as an integral part of themselves. But in individualistic cultures people have a clear distinction between themselves and the company they work for.

According to the Eastern view on leadership presented by Misumi (1988) there are three different leadership styles. The first one, P, is the *performance-centered* type. The behaviour of this type of leader is orientated toward the group goals and productivity. The second type

of leadership is referred to as M. This leadership style is orientated to *group maintenance*, and to strengthening the group and encouraging the subjects. The third type is combined task performance/group maintenance style (referred to as PM). Here the leader puts pressure on the group to increase productivity and at the same time maintain a pleasant group atmosphere by encouraging them and showing sympathy for a heavy workload. The closest Western equivalent to the PM leadership is democratic leadership. The *pm-type* combines a low effect of both the P and M style. Misumi points out that leadership will look very different depending on what level of management it is on, type of group and social situations. He refers in his text to Bale (1955) who says that the leadership role can be divided among group members; some are focused on achieving the goal and some on maintaining group harmony.

Teamwork

Beneath follows relevant theories on teamwork, group and related areas such as roles and conflicts.

Group culture

Wheelan (2005) refers to Slater (1966) who describes the culture and structure of a group as a reflection of the whole society. The norms and values of a culture influence the group. Wheelan (2005) says it is through the process of socialization that individuals internalize the culture of the society in which they live. When individuals form a new group, every member brings with them their own view of their society's culture; traditions, roles, values, acceptable behaviour, attitudes and such.

In order for groups to become organized and achieve goals they have to develop shared perceptions, a *group culture*. If group members are coming from extremely different backgrounds it is more difficult to develop common thoughts and plans. Whereas members from similar backgrounds often already share the same values and opinions. When a new individual joins the group, other members look to see how similar they are to that person. Resemblances are calming and understandable whereas differences are looked upon as threatening and problematic for the shaping of a group culture.

The society people live in plays a decisive part in what sort of groups they form. The Western worldview focuses on individualism, materialism and free competition. The members of these societies favour the individual over the group or society as a whole, in the U.S. for example

there is a saying: “Do your own thing”, that symbolizes the Western view. In these countries people tend to hold the individual responsible for successes as well as failures instead of looking at whether or not the group might have had an effect on the outcome. But not everyone shares this worldview. Other countries are more group-oriented and groups are seen as having greater impact and importance than the individual. Individual needs are secondary and instead the goal of the whole is more important Hofstede (1984).

Roles

Kempton (1995) says that roles in groups must be clear and occupied by appropriate group members in order to be effective groups. Different group members occupy different group roles. The status, behaviour and attitude within a role vary. Groups that contain individuals with diverse abilities, interests and experiences will be able to perform better than a single individual. According to Belbin (1993) some roles come with higher status. Members with high-status have more say in decisions and more direct influence on goals and processes within the group. When a person gets a role it creates a new mental perspective in the individual. A person who is assigned the role of manager often begins to perceive workers differently than before. Also workers start perceiving the new manager differently. When we are in a role people perceive us in a different way.

Role-conflicts can occur when groups are establishing roles. When role-conflict occurs, tension arises in the group. It is difficult to change a person’s role and it may be difficult to change the expectations of other members and such. A change in roles may result in a change of status and position. Moreover other members may resist the reassignment because they feel that their own position is threatened.

Conflicts

It is inevitable to have conflict in groups. In an effective group conflicts will be handled in the open and the group will be prepared to confront conflict issues. There are many different reasons for why conflicts arise, such as personality, individual differences, the environment and competition. To manage conflicts effectively there are some things that are important:

-*Trust*, is an indication of openness between group members. Trust takes a long time to develop but can be quickly destroyed.

-*Communication*, by improving communication between groups, conflicts can be reduced.

-*Domination*, power can be used to resolve differences, but the group with the most power may dominate the weaker groups.

Conflicts in groups are not necessarily bad. Conflicts can energise the group and the group values, roles and structures can become clearer. Hatch (2002) refers to Wiiteman (1991) who found that conflict could be associated with increased cohesion and member satisfaction within the group. But what is crucial is how conflicts are solved and dealt with. According to researchers there are two kinds of conflict:

Substantive conflicts-which are conflicts about goals, norms and other task-related issues, can be good for the group.

Interpersonal conflicts- are generated by incompatibilities or animosities between people, are harmful for the group.

Three strategies for handling conflict have been defined; conflict resolution, conflict management and negotiation. *Conflict resolution* is based upon the premise that conflicts are destructive. Ending the conflict as quickly as possible or avoiding it altogether is the strategy. The strategy works through cooperation and quick resolution of disagreements that arise. *Conflict management* is based on the idea that conflict can be positive and constructive. By engaging the group members in constructive dialogue conflicts are solved. *Negotiation* is another important conflict management strategy. By negotiating and finding an agreeable solution communication and cooperation can increase. Consultants can be brought into the organization to assist if a group cannot resolve with conflicts. Some negative effects of conflicts are that the trust within the group diminishes and the communication channels close (Hatch, 2002). When conflicts lead to positive effects they can lead to innovation and teamwork and encourage future cooperation and establish a positive attitude among the employees towards the diversity within the company.

When a group has to solve issues regarding their own work situation their behaviour differs from when they are dealing with issues outside of themselves, for example, client or customer interests. In the latter example, the group works together to solve it. They use their work competence; everyone contributes with their knowledge. But when it comes to issues regarding themselves and when decisions can affect themselves in their work, then it is more complicated. Instead of wanting to deal with issues close to them, people prefer to leave the decision-making to an authority. This behaviour is mostly common in hierarchical

organization. The explanation of this behaviour, according to Granström (2000) is that the client or customer problem can be treated objectively while the issues regarding their own work, work group or/and colleagues is more subjective. Dividing resources and work assignments have direct consequences on the relations and power structures. Instead of dealing with this themselves, they leave it up to the leader to decide and in that way they can avoid conflicts.

Earlier research

Now having gone through the basic theories connected to this subject we would like to take up a few earlier studies that we feel are especially similar to ours in that their research integrates work and culture.

Studies on workplaces around the world have been done by a number of different researchers. When Smith and Misumi (Misumi, 1988) did research, distinct differences were found between Japan and Western countries regarding employee reward systems, worker orientation and policies. In Japan the workplace often provides more stable, lifetime employment with security as an incentive. The Japanese reward system is signified by gradual promotions and minor salary differences depending on job rotation. They also differed in decision-making processes, where the Japanese had more consulting and participative management. The Japanese culture puts more value on things such as group loyalty, balance and harmony among group members. Several cross-cultural studies have shown that leadership behaviours also differ between countries. Smith and Misumi (Misumi, 1988) write in their report on Japanese management about a survey conducted in several countries made by Kagano et al. (1985), which had a series of questions about leadership styles. This survey showed that Japanese leaders were reported by respondents to be significantly higher than those in America and Europe on the following behaviours: strictness in applying rewards and punishments, clarifying and gathering information, conflict resolution through the use of authority and frequent informal and social exchange.

There are endless discussions as to whether or not leadership behaviour is interpreted differently in different cultures. Arnold et al. (1998) writes about research that has been done regarding how leader styles are described using the same dimensions across different cultures. Arnold et al. (1998) refers to Kong et al. (1989) who used data from firms in the U.K., USA, Japan and Hong Kong and concluded that what they named *maintenance* and *performance*

leadership styles (equivalent to “consideration” and “initiating structure”) exist in different cultures. But the behaviour that was associated with the style differed between the different cultural norms of each setting. One question they asked was: “When your superior learns that a member is experiencing personal difficulties, does your superior discuss the matter in the person’s absence with other members?” In the UK and USA this was seen as talking behind someone’s back, but in Hong Kong and Japan this was seen as highly characteristic of *maintenance leadership style*. Leaders who work in another country have to be aware of how their behaviour can be interpreted by the employees, and they have to behave consistently with the style they wish to have.

A study of the PM-leadership (Misumi 1988) in a Japanese coalmine tested what effect different leadership styles have on the employees’ productivity and morale. Groups were chosen that were identified as either low producing or high producing. They got to answer questions about their leaders style using a five-point Likert scale. Results showed that the PM supervisory pattern was the most typical in high producing groups and the P-type was the most common in low producing groups. Hence a combination of M and P gives the optimal outcome.

Another cross-cultural experiment by Maday and Szalay (1976) referred to by Choi (1993) shows differences between East and West is a study performed on Koreans and Canadians. Korean culture, in accordance to the dominant philosophy, Confucianism, stresses that family relations are the most important and friends are an extension of this. In contrast, American psychology’s most frequent theme is a) I, person, individual and b) other people. Koreans try to contribute to family happiness whereas Americans try to impress strangers. Maday and Szalay asked what associations came to mind when hearing the word “we” and if this had any other connotations than its obvious one. As much as 55 % of Korean participants associated “we” with intimacy, comfort and acceptance. Canadians on the other hand had different answers. 60 % answered that they associated “we” with “me and others”, a group of individuals. 15 % said; same interests, hobbies and perspectives. Another 15 % said closeness, intimacy, belonging etc. Question two was: Which are your major “we-groups? To this question family was the most frequent answer in both countries. Question number three was: Does this affect your personal and independent identity? 31 % of Koreans indicated that one should follow the rule of the majority. 36 % felt that cohesion is necessary to maintain harmony within the group, and 10 % felt that being part of a group can result in loss or waste

of time. As much as 42 % of the Canadians felt that groups are non-restrictive to autonomy and personal identity. 31 % saw some restrictions and 20 % said it depends on the size and nature of the group. Koreans focus on the relational and undifferentiated mode, defining this as the key to dominant forms of a primary group. Canadians focus more on the group as an aggregate of plural individuals around oneself.

Triandis and Gelfand (1998) have tested four components of collectivism/individualism and horizontal/vertical. Collectivism/individualism is the cultural mindset of the individual and horizontal/vertical are the directions in which the energy of this mindset can be charged. They found that Typical for HI (horizontal/individualism) is wanting to do “one’s own thing” and a high degree of self-reliance but not too much interest in status or becoming distinguished. VI (vertical/individualism) people on the contrary are extremely competitive, seek status and are likely to say, “I want to be best”. HC (horizontal/collectivism) people see themselves as equal to others and identify common goals and sociability. They are not inclined to submit to authority. Persons that fit the VC (vertical/collectivism) profile are very focused on competing with their in-group. They are intent on meeting the in-group goals and will even sacrifice their own personal goals for the sake of the group. These four components can be used to see how people from different cultures might feel in given situations and what attitudes are sympathized with and the reasoning surrounding these.

Our purpose

Nowadays it is becoming more common with globalisation among organizations, for instance Chinese organizations choose Sweden as their number one choice of country to have as a base when expanding abroad. Swedish organisations are also expanding to countries all over. It is therefore important to explore what this means for the individual, the organization and to think about what issues accompany the changes.

Our purpose with this study is to explore how people who work in a different culture than they are used to perceive their work situation. The cultural context influences the norms and values of a person and with this study we will look at how these individuals express themselves regarding their work. Our focus will lie within four different themes: leadership, teamwork, social relationships and acculturation. It is important to have culture in mind when doing research on individuals who are working in another culture than they are used to, to not forget that their cultural background and the cultural context they are in have affect on how they perceive, experience and express themselves. The differences in leadership styles, teamwork and such might be difficult to adapt to and acculturation problems might occur. Whether a person comes from an individualistic or collectivistic country may effect a persons experience of their work situation.

The respondents answer an open-ended question and we want to look at how they express themselves and what they express. What an individual finds important and their attitude toward their work will show in their choice of discussion course. Our hope is that our study can help organizations that are already established or thinking of establishing in foreign countries.

We have chosen not to look at if or how gender affects the participants' experience, instead we will look at other things that might affect differences in the responses (such as position at work and if working in home country or abroad etc.). Hofstede's Masculinity-Femininity, Uncertainty-Avoidant dimension and Long-Term Orientation will also be disregarded from. As this is a phenomenological study we are not primarily intending to generalize. We look at these individuals and do not draw any conclusions about all Japanese people working for Swedish organizations etc. But studies giving us a detailed picture of meaning constitution in relation to the life-world can lead to further studies where one can do partial generalisations.

Method

Approach

To find out about the respondents opinions and feelings regarding their work situation, a phenomenological approach was chosen. When doing a research with a phenomenological approach there is no initial detailed design, it is important for the researcher to be open. By using an emergent design the method is open for possible changes and the research makes the researcher interpret the data more openly. As a researcher it is of course important with validity, that you measure what you intend to measure. By giving the respondents an open question they are free to bring up whatever they find important to themselves. By doing this you do not push them toward what they should talk about- what they express is what they want to express. Therefore ecological validity occurs. When using a phenomenological approach in your research one cannot avoid looking at the cultural context. The life world of the participants is studied and by using an open-ended question, the researcher can get closer to their life world. Phenomenology is a qualitative approach to psychology and it was first founded by the philosopher Husserl and has since then grown and been used by several other philosophers and psychologists. Kvale (1997) explains that the core of phenomenology is searching to understand how the subject of focus perceives their world. The idea is to make the invisible visible and not only define what appears but also how it appears. It is essential that the researcher do his/her best to leave all preconceptions behind when attempting to understand an individual's world. Of course we realise that this is not entirely possible. Freeing oneself of prejudice and realising the consequences of our natural attitude and presumptions is what is referred to as *epochè*. Phenomenology means to reach the employees' subjective perception and feelings about their work without eliminating the complexity of thought, mind and action. The goal is not to explain or analyze but merely to show and describe in detail what is observed and through that try to find meaning (Sages, 1999).

Sages (1999 p.46) explains that "human situations and encounters are on a partly shared life-world" on the basis of more or less agreed behaviour. Only the individual can know exactly how she perceives the world and is therefore the only source of meaning. The method by which this study will be analyzed is the MCA (Meaning Constitution Analysis). MCA is a method of text analysis based on Husserl's phenomenological psychology and is supported by a software (MCA-Minerva, 2003). The method is carried out through a *self-report*. The participant is given a single open question to answer as spontaneously and freely as possible

without thinking about what is right or wrong. The question is carefully formulated so that it in no way directs or restricts associations (see our whole self-report in Appendix C, our question is: “Tell us about your thoughts, emotions, reflections, experiences and impressions about your work situation (for example about teamwork, management, relations at work etc.)”). To give the respondents examples we thought it would help them get started with their writing.

The first step in analysis is defining the epochè. Every time the text takes a turn in meaning, (which is quite often) it is broken off into a *meaning unit*. Each unit is then numbered. These units of meaning are then divided into *pure, expressed meaning* and its *modalities*. These are then analyzed further, consideration is taken to the totality of all meanings to finally reach a formulation of the *life-world*. Understanding the life-world means seeing what the individual really thinks and feels, hence, what you can expect from an individual.

Participants

The participants (n=9) are from different countries, some of them working in their own home country for a Swedish organization, some of them are Swedes working in a different country, and some of them are from another country working in Sweden.

Table. 3.

This table demonstrates an overview of the different groups in which we will analyze results. The participants will be analyzed according to nationality and also according to work-country

Work-country relation:	Working abroad for Swedish organization	Working in home country for Swedish organization	Working abroad for a local organization
<i>Nationalities:</i>			
<i>USA (2 persons)</i>			P1 P3
<i>Japan (2 persons)</i>		P2 P4	
<i>China (2 persons)</i>		P5	
	P6		
<i>UK (2 persons)</i>			P8 P9
<i>France (1 person)</i>	P7		

Demographic facts:

P1 is a female from USA, 53 years, who has lived in Sweden for eight years and worked for her current company as an analytical chemist for seven years.

P2 is a Japanese male, 28 years, who has worked for 17 months for Swedish organization in Japan, worked five years earlier in Japanese manufacturing.

P3 is a 24 year-old female from USA. She has been working in Sweden at a large company for four months and this is the first time she has worked in another country or even been to another country.

P4 is a male from Japan, 39 years, worked in two years at Swedish organization in Japan, previously worked at another Swedish organisation for five years.

P5 is a female from China, 29 years, worked for Swedish organization in China since February 2003. Previously worked at another company that also had foreign management, a US and German joint company.

P6 is a female from Sweden, 41 years, has worked in China 13 years, co-founder and managing partner for three years, previously worked for a Swedish organization in China for nine years (manager leadership development).

P7 is a male from Sweden, 39 years, has been working at his current post for a Swedish company in France for one year. He has earlier been in a lot of contact with other countries

all over the world but only temporary project assignments. He is now Manager of Operations development.

P8 is a male from Sweden, 27 years, who has been living in the UK for one year now working as a tax consultant. He has no prior experience of working in another country.

P9 is a female from Sweden, 28 years, who has lived in the UK for nine years and worked as associate manager for four years. She has no prior experience of working in another country but has had different jobs in the UK.

Procedure

We wanted to come in contact with people working in foreign countries, preferably various countries in Asia and Europe. Through the website of Swedish Chambers we contacted via email several large companies who were placed abroad. They got our project plan (see Appendix B) where they could read a description of our study. The ones who then showed interest got our open-ended question to answer (see Appendix C). They were told to write in English and to write freely and spontaneously without any regards to the language. They were also informed about their anonymity and that they would be able to take part in the results. The open-ended question was carefully formulated so that the respondents would answer in their own words and write their feelings and opinions. They got two weeks to answer at first, but after not receiving any answers we sent out reminders where we changed the time frame to 5-6 days to answer. They were told to send us their answers through email. We came in contact with some Human Resource departments at different organizations who in turn send our question to the employees they thought might be able to help us. Some did not find our sort of question easy to answer; some said they would prefer a questionnaire. But many expressed that they thought it was an interesting and important study. After some time struggling to get participants, we made phone calls to some of them to make sure they would answer. We then got 13 answers from different countries. Unfortunately four of these were excluded because they answered too late for us to have time to include them. So finally nine self-reports were analyzed.

Text analysis

The answers were then analyzed with MCA-Minerva. Both authors analysed every text so that we would get both views on every individual and not divide the individual among us, then perhaps the analysis would not be as valid. But with two different individuals trying to get into the participants life world and put the two different analyses together we would get a

more correct view. The texts were divided into meaning units, small parts of the text that have meaning. Then every meaning unit was applied with modalities. All the modalities from MCA were used: Belief, Function, Time, Affects, Will, Property, Subject. With the modalities we can see how the person experiences his/her life world and not only what is expressed in the unit. Each modality has different categories to choose from (see table 4).

Table 4.

This table shows the different categories and modalities in which the text has been divided into for analysis.

Belief	Function	Time	Affects	Will	Property	Subject
Doxa-affirmation	Perceptive	Past	Positive-prospective	Engagement	My	I
Doxa-negation	Imaginative	Present	Positive-retrospective	Wish-positive	Your	We
Probability	Signitive	Future	Neutral	Wish-negative	His/her/its	One-all
Possibility		Pres-past	Negative-prospective	Aspiration	Our	Unspecified
Question		Pres-future	Negative-retrospective	Unengagement	Their	
		Always-recurrent		None	Others	
		Empty			Not stated	

A unit that for example has *perceptive* function is a meaning unit that is expressed in concrete terms and when something cannot be perceived in a different way than it is described in the unit. A *signitive* meaning unit on the other hand is something that raises questions. A unit in *doxa-affirmation* is when somebody is sure about something and *doxa-negation* is the opposite-somebody does not know.

After distinguishing the modalities to each meaning unit, we looked for partial intentions in the unit.

Table 5.

This table shows examples of partial intention extraction from meaning unit.

Meaning unit	Partial intentions
I think the team structure is quite stiff.	I think
	Team structure exists
	Things can be stiff
	Team structure is quite stiff
	I think the team structure is quite stiff
I can imagine that formal structure leads to effective work with few conflicts.	I exist
	I can imagine
	A structure exists
	A structure can be formal
	A structure can lead to something
	Work can be effective
	Conflicts exist
	Conflict can be few
	I can imagine that this structure leads to something
	I can imagine that formal structure leads to effective work with few conflicts

Then we distinguished the entities and predicated. The entities are the meanings that the partial intentions contain, and the predicates are how the meanings are expressed.

Table 6.

This table shows an example of entity and predicate extraction from partial intention

Partial intention	Entity	Predicate
I think the team structure is quite stiff	I	Who can think
	Think	Which I can
	Team structure	Which I think about
	Quite stiff	Which I think the team structure is

After that we look at each individuals life-world by looking more closely at how the modalities have been used and their frequency (how often something is said in a certain way). By looking at the entities and predicates you can see if the person talks about a lot of different things in different ways or if he/she talks about the same things in not so much different ways. By looking at each modality you can see in what tense the person expresses himself/herself, if they are mostly positive or negative (and when they are, what are they talking about when expressing negative feelings), if they talk a lot about “I”, “Me” or “We”, “Our” etc. We chose four different themes to focus on: social relationships, acculturation, leadership and group/teamwork. When looking at each individual we took each theme and searched for words that could be associated with the theme. For example the entities that were chosen under the theme group/teamwork were for one of the participants the following: Among individuals, Concrete relationships, Department staff, Future colleagues, My colleague, My colleagues, Other trainees, People. All of these words are connected to the theme group/teamwork according to us and they were therefore grouped into this theme. We then looked at how they talked about these words and what they said. The same was done with the remaining themes.

Outcomes

All self-reports have been analysed and two of them will be presented here more fully than the others to give an example of how our analysis has been done. Part 1 in our outcome consists of two self-reports, one from Japan and one from USA, they are presented here in order to present an even deeper understanding of two very different life-worlds. In Part 2 the results of all the self-reports are presented per group. A group consists of all participants with similar backgrounds. They are grouped together and analyzed according to country and nationality (see table 3). The self-reports have been analyzed and then scanned to see what has been said about the different themes of the paper (leadership, teamwork, social relationships and acculturation) to see if there are any other detectable underlying meanings that could possibly be of interest. In Part 3 a cross-analysis has been done to check for similarities and differences according to a) level of position in company, b) among those who are abroad working for a foreign company, c) those who are abroad working for a management from their home country and d) those who are in their home country working for a foreign organization.

Part 1

Two of the self-reports, P1 and P2, are presented here to give an insight in how we have done our analysis and what we have found when trying to understand these two life-worlds.

Analysis of self-report P1

P1 (USA) is a 53 year-old woman who has been living in Sweden for eight years and working at her current job as an analytical chemist for seven years. First of all we searched for words on the themes *leadership*, *teamwork*, *social relationships* and *acculturation*. All words that specifically mean the theme-word, are associated with it or can be linked to it in some way were grouped under the theme. The word will not be shown every time it is mentioned in the text but only when said in a meaning that can be linked to the theme. It is also stated in the table what kind of affect the person is talking in (for instance n-p=negative prospective, p-r=positive retrospective, n=neutral and so on).

Leadership

In table 7 the theme-words regarding leadership are presented in the left column and the context in which they were presented are in the right column.

Table 7. Leadership

Boss	If people in Sweden think someone is doing more than they should, they run to their boss and tell. (n-p)
Divisions	Whole companies have shut divisions down to prevent them from having a union.
In charge	The person who is in charge has kept us up to date before final decisions are made. (p-p)
Working conditions	The work conditions are much more laid back here.
Job classification	Depending on your job classification (in USA) you are allowed a different amount of overtime and vacation.
Privately owned	Since the company I work for is privately owned the owner can basically do whatever he wants.
Management	They have put people in management who have no business being there. (n-r) It is more than generous here.
Fire	To fire someone here is almost impossible, you can do just enough to get by and still work.

Elaboration on what is said about leadership in the text:

P1 talks a lot about what rules and regulations apply, regarding sick leave, vacations etc. When mentioning working conditions in the home country there are no implications as to if it is good or bad. Entities: “division”, “job classification” and “privately owned” have no affect directly attached to them, P1 simply states the facts. Although P1 does express that working conditions in Sweden are much more laid back. P1 also states that Swedish people run to their boss and tell on each other if they feel like anyone is trying to do too much or stand out in any way. When telling about overtime in the US, it is put forward as the employee being allowed unlimited overtime, as if this is something the employee appreciates.

Teamwork

P1 did not mention many words that could be associated with team or group-orientation therefore no table on this theme is presented. Only once the word group is mentioned in the sentence: *They do not make you feel like one of the group.* Other words that we check for any connection were; decisions, depend, depending and work. About decisions she wrote that; *the person in charge kept us up to date on what was going on.* Depend and depending referred to laws and government and what job classification an individual had. There were several predicates for *work*. They were; to get paid, very hard and to be stressed out for. Most of the time where colleagues were mentioned it was in a “them and me” situation. And it fits better into the social relation-theme than team-theme.

Social relationships

Table 8 shows in what way P1 has talked about things related to social relationships.

Table 8. Social relationships

Jealousy	There is a lot of jealousy here
Whiny people	I have never seen so many whiny people before.
Complain	They complain all the time about how much work they have.
Backbiting	There is much more backbiting here
One of the group	They do not make you feel like one of the group.
Belong	If you are not Swedish you are made to feel like you do not belong.
Stressed out	They said they were too stressed out at work.

Elaboration on what is said about social relationships:

P1 has mainly negative experiences in the social relation theme. She has a total of 4.9 %, negative-prospective, and 1.96 % negative-retrospective. All of these are about Social relations. She has a total of 1.96 % positive-prospective. One is directed to non-Swedish people being harder workers (social relations), and the other to been kept updated on decisions before they are made (leadership). Every single time the relationship with

colleagues is brought up it is to state a disagreement, (I think like this, they think like that). P1 one time phrases, *they said* they were stressed out, instead of they were stressed out making a point of it been their word, not hers. She also writes *They* do not make you feel like one of the group, instead of *I* do not feel like one of the group, making it their action instead of her subjective feeling.

Acculturation

Table 9 shows words that are in some way connected to acculturation. Words have been chosen that are thought to portray any differences about P1's cultures and emotions or opinions attached to these.

Table 9. Acculturation

Believe	I believe that the common decision-making is due to the union.
Belong	a) If you are not Swedish you are made to feel like you do not belong. (n-r)
	b) Companies encourage you to belong to a union.
Brought up	I think those who are not brought up in Sweden are harder workers.
Differences	There are quite a lot of differences between the US and the Swedish workforce.
Feel	They do not make you feel like one of the group. (n-r)
Here (in Sweden)	It is more than generous here.
Never seen before	I have never seen so many whiny people as there are there. (n-r)
Should	If someone is doing more then they should.
There (in USA)	They can fire you more readily there (in USA) than here.
The US	In the US, insurance and medical is more expensive. (n-r)
Did not want	If you did not want a job or were not able to

	work, you would be let go. (in USA)
There are major differences	Summing up major differences: Time off for sick leave, more time off when having a baby, more laid back working conditions. Much more backbiting and jealousy in Sweden. (n-r) Insurance is more expensive in the US but Sweden has higher taxes.

Elaboration on what is said about acculturation:

On major differences between the countries P1 added that there seems to be no cap on how long you can be off work. P1 went from talking about regulations to talking more about relation related statements. P1 says that there is much more backbiting and jealousy in Sweden and adds that this is if you yourself are not Swedish. She thinks that people who are not brought up in Sweden are harder workers and that Swedish people are the whiniest she has ever seen. More expensive insurance in the US is brought up but is weighed against Sweden's higher taxes.

Modalities used by P1 in the text

The text has been searched for how the participant uses "I" versus "we". Looking at examples one can see that *I* is used 7.84% of the time in for example; "I am American, I think". *We* is only used 1.96 % of the time, partly referring to the US; "We work undetermined overtime". And also when referring to the company for which she works; " We have had people take off as long as 4 1/2 years and over 2 years".

Predicates of interest are; A) Where that never would happen, when referring to Swedish people taking 6 months off for feeling stressed out at work. B) Where that might not happen, when referring to involvement in decision-making. C) Where it can also happen, when talking about bad management in Sweden. After saying that bad management also can happen in the US P1 points out that in USA they have more people to answer to such as the state, local and federal government and tougher laws.

Analysis of self-report, P2

Moving on to our other participant who's text-analyse also will be presented more deeply than the others: P2 (Japan) is a 28 year old male working for a Swedish company in Japan. He has worked for 17 months within the organization. Previous work was in Japanese manufacturing.

Leadership

Table 10 consists of words that P2 mentioned that can be connected to the theme leadership.

Table 10. Leadership

Boss	Once my boss told us that he was expecting us to be a good team as a good baseball team (p-r)
Lead	To lead the large numbers to one target (n)
Chief	It is impossible for the chief to be superior in everything (n)
Management leading	My boss would like to organize most likely as the management leading (n)
Hierarchical	Of course it is hierarchic and individually responsible at the same time (n)
Organization	So far this company is managing well organized individual responsible (p-r)

Elaboration on what is said about leadership:

He writes that it is impossible for a chief to be superior in everything. With individual responsible the employees are able to make decisions and then the boss does not have to make decisions about things he or she does not have all the information about. P2 also says that if there is a person who has more knowledge in a specific area, he or she should lead the others; by doing that you are "utilizing the best talent of each individual" as he puts it. Also by saying that a chief cannot be superior in everything he expresses the better use of a person with more knowledge in a specific area to lead than someone who just happens to have the role of being a chief. Having the title boss does not mean that you all of a sudden have knowledge in all kinds of different areas within the workplace. He does not express much about his current boss, he mentions more of the previous one who wanted to make a lot of the decisions. Whether or not he prefers one or the other of the leadership styles is not clear.

Teamwork

Table 11 consists of words mentioned that can be linked and associated to theme teamwork.

Table 11. Teamwork

Good team	Once my boss told us that he was expecting us to be a good team as a good baseball team (p-r)
We	We can be a good team (p-r)
Everyone	Therefore he said he was not expecting everyone to be the best homerun batter (n-p)
Teamwork	What I personally think is that there are three different type of interpretation in teamwork (p-p)
Management orientate teamwork	Management orientate teamwork- in the case when there is the one obviously knows better (n)
Other members	And he leads other members (the one who knows better) (p-p)
Individual	Utilizing the best talent of each individual (n)
Individual responsibility	So far this company is managing well individual responsibility (p-r)
Department	When it comes another department (n)
Conflicts and complaints	There is no conflicts and complaints for others (p-p)
They	With whom they can help each other (p-p)

Elaboration on what is said about teamwork:

As mentioned previously a lot of the focus in P2:s text is on *group* or *teamwork*. The importance of being a good team, the importance of helping each other out and there are no conflicts or complaints due to their teamwork and individual responsibility. Although he uses the subject “I” more than “We” it is clear that he focus a lot on teamwork, and sees them as a collective: “We know that we cannot do anything without support from others”, “People help each other out between the different departments within the organization, the employees work together within the company”.

Social relationships

In the theme *social relationships* P2 mentions some things that can be categorized into this area, which is shown in this table.

Table 12. Social relationships

Good team	Once my boss told us that he was expecting us to be a good team as a good baseball team (p-r)
Understand	Anyway I understood what he (the boss) wanted to say (n)
Teamwork	What I personally think is that there are three different type of interpretation in teamwork (p-p)
Role	The role of each employee is strictly specified based on the system and regulation (n)
Trust	I think the relation is, when it comes to be really deep in practical, basically trust, personal preference and give-and take (n)
Good partners	I think it is very important to the sales to have good partners in engineer
Conflicts and complaints	There is no conflict or complain for others (p-p)

Elaboration on what is said about social relationships:

P2 mentions “*team*” and “*group*” several times in the text. He refers to what a boss once told him. The boss wanted everyone to perform their best and by doing this they will get the best result possible. P2 compares different types of teamwork and explains different interpretations of the term. P2 compares his current work place to his previous work where the boss wanted to organize the workplace more with the management leading, a more hierarchic system. But at the organization he works now it is more individual responsibility. P2 has worked in different organizations with different types of teamwork. He mentions different forms of teamwork that exists, but does not put in a lot of his own opinions regarding these various sort of teamwork. He says that previous work places have had more hierarchic *leadership* style

and there roles have been distributed more strict. P2 goes on saying that to function with other people it is important to have trust and that people help each other out in order to have a good work environment. There are different departments at his workplace and it is important to have good relationships with them. In this sort of organization he works now he says that it does not exist any conflicts or complains. When he talks about his previous boss he mentions that he understood what the boss meant but that he did not “dare to comment this to him, of course”. Because the other person was the boss, he could not comment on what the other person was saying, the respect for his position was that high. By using the phrase “of course” he makes it clear that this is not something he would ever do.

Acculturation

The next theme to look at is *acculturation*. Since he has worked for different organisations previously, where the management were not Swedish, he compares the different types of work situations.

Table 13. Acculturation

Nationalities	I think whatever nationality there is, every company functions with these interactively affected (n)
Norms	Too many norms can be pressure, Have to specify the norms to each individual (neutral/n-p)
Universal	I think this is universal and in the end it is individual (support from others) (n)

Elaboration on what is said about acculturation:

He says that everyone within a company effects the organization. The nationalities of the employees have effect on how the organization is formed. His previous work was more hierarchic built with the management leading, but as he says “of course it is hierarchic and individual responsible at the same time”, indicating that there are not only strict managers telling the employees what to do. At current work, that is with the Swedish management, the organization has high individuality. According to him this company is managing this individual responsibility well. He does not express any opinions regarding which sort of

management he prefers, he sees them both as good ones. He does not seem to have had any problems with shifting from the hierarchical organization to the more individual based organization. P2 also mentions norms, saying that organizations with too many norms can be stressful for the employees. It is hard to know all norms that exist in the organization and a pressure to always think of whether or not you are acting or doing as the norms of the company are suggesting. P2 again emphasizes on the importance of *teamwork*; you need support from others in order to succeed. He says that this applies to all individuals; everyone needs to feel support from others.

Modalities used by P2 in the text

P2 writes as mentioned previously a lot about *relationships* and the importance of being a “good *team*”. He writes more “I” (21,43%) than “We”(5,36%) but he stresses a lot in the text that the group and team is very important to him and the organization. He is more positive than negative. P2 talks in negative-prospective only in 3.57% of the time and he talks in positive prospective and positive-retrospective in 12,5% of the time.

Part 2

Part 2 consists of the groups the respondents were formed into. All respondents were grouped together based on nationality (see table 3).

Group: USA

There were two participants from USA in our study (P1 and P3). Looking at the themes there are a few similarities but also differences within the group. They both express a lot of negative Affect in their self-reports, and emotions and opinions are written in a very open and clear fashion.

They only discuss *leadership* briefly and even when they do, the underlying meaning seems to be focused on something else. P3 expresses disappointment when “-me and my colleague have not gotten the feedback we have been waiting for” but then states that it changed and “Our opinions and views were being taking into consideration”. These comments are in a context which indicates that focus is more on personal achievement than leadership. P1 says that “the person that is in charge has kept us up to date as to what is going on within the company” but says nothing about whether she appreciates this or not. She then says “they have put people in management that have no business being in that position”, and “since it is

privately owned the owner can basically do what he wants". She gives further detail but it seems that she is not entirely happy with her boss and does not seem to have a good relationship with the boss. The only time she writes something positive about the company she writes "It is more than generous here yet people still complain". It comes across as if the focus here is not on how good the companies regulations are but instead on the colleagues who complain.

Teamwork is not discussed very much and they never actually say the word team or teamwork. Times when an in-group is created by using "we" are either in relation between management-employee; "me and my colleague have not gotten the feedback we have been waiting for" and "our opinions and views were being taking into consideration". It seems here as if the focus is not so much on her and the colleagues as a team but more on the management not giving enough feedback. However when discussing work tasks and performance outcome P3 always writes "I", for example; "I had succeeded to perform well". For the most part of the time they say things in the Subject "I", for example "I am an American" or when speaking about those who are in a "similar situation" (meaning other non-Swedish people). P1 writes "if you are not Swedish you are made to feel like you do not belong. They do not make you feel like one of the group".

The participants of this group seem to have had difficulties and negative experiences with *social relationships* and the fact that they discuss this a lot indicates that this is something important to them. All of the emotionally charged meaning units were in this category and almost exclusively negative. They express not feeling at home among their Swedish colleagues. And use a lot of negative attributes which are linked to this theme, "they (colleagues) complain all the time about how much work they have", "I have never seen people take so many breaks for so long as they do here", "there is also a lot of jealousy here" and "none of them (my colleagues) even wondered whether it was offensive to me". However P3 made contact with other "newcomers" and talks about these colleagues in a positive way. She says "People start to bond, learn from each other and motivate each other".

As far as *acculturation* goes they use the word "challenge" when concerning both work tasks and social relationships. They show no sign of having acculturated to Swedish culture or any understanding of it. On the contrary they instead seem to very much identify themselves as

“non-Swedish” and generalize among all non-Swedish people. P1 says “people that are not brought up in Sweden or don’t have a Swedish background are harder workers than their Swedish counterparts”. This statement somehow makes it so they themselves as individuals are not the odd ones out. It is the Swedish population that is different to all others in the world.

Group: UK

The group UK has two Swedish people living in the UK (P8 and P9). Both of them are working for British companies. Both of their reports are written in a very neutral way where emotions and opinions are subtle.

Leadership in this group seems very clear to everyone since there is always a formal leader and never an informal one. Words they use are for example: “hierarchical”, “top-bottom”, “delegation”, “formal structure”, “work above not over”. Despite this acceptance of authority, earning a leadership role does seem like something one has to work on. Words that are brought up in this context are: “curb and control, boundaries, guidance and authority, gain respect, guidelines”. P8 reports that the leader single-handedly makes decisions and there is no room for discussion. If someone with a low position has a good idea this rarely is brought to the front. P9 who has a manager position reports that the leader must listen to the employee in order to motivate them in the appropriate way. She uses a lot of words associated with success: “improvement”, “increase productivity”, “deadlines”, “work hard”, “succeed”.

They talk quite a bit about things concerning *teamwork*. Feeling that you belong to a team is important, and putting in your two cents for the team is equally important. The rule of structure seems to be hierarchical so every person only has one individual to answer to. The boss or superior employee assigns tasks to people under them and then report themselves to their superior. It is reported that all work is produced in this manner. Even though things follow a formal structure there seems to be discussion and feedback to the whole group so everyone is updated on what everyone else is doing. Results are the most important, and things can be changed or reassigned in order to reach the common goal. They state that although they perform the actual tasks individually they look at everything that they have done collectively.

When looking at how often the subject writes “I” versus “we”, we found that P8 often writes “we” when concerning teamwork and colleagues. P9 on the other hand rarely uses “we” and mostly makes clear distinction between “me” and “them”, often in a cause- effect relationship. A one time she says “we” is: “We have all started from the bottom somewhere”. Although the reports talk a lot about employees as a team, they make a point of the persons as individuals. They talk about individual needs “...in order to find what motivates someone...”, and “regardless of the results been presented as a team it is always clear for the immediate boss to see what each separate individual has done”. P9 writes that “to take pride in your work seems to be a fading breed”. And “since the government takes so good take so good take of people there is no need to put in the extra effort”. Being in a manager position herself indicates that these statements do not apply to herself which again creates a “Me-Them” situation.

This group did not address emotions and *social relations* very much. P9 did little more than P8, but it was always about what the staff was feeling and never an expression of a personal emotion. P9 mentioned negative-retrospectives such as: “being stressed out at work”, “staff being signed off sick” due to this stress and “high staff turnover”. Positive words that she discussed were: “Staff feeling at home”, “better teamwork” and “work environment”, “friendliness”, “listen”, “build something with them”, “respect” and “improve”. All of these attributes of employees where phrased as a result of her actions. For example: “If I do not motivate my staff/.../ there will be repercussions”. P8 reinforces this realization of relational consequence by saying: “I think the structure makes one become more dependent of the people under you”. They say that the never diverged formal structure eliminates all conflict. But P9 being in a management position shows recognition of the possibility of conflicts and the hard work that goes into avoiding these.

Regarding *acculturation* the group does not show signs of going through significant change or adaptation. They express opinions about their work situation, incitement and hierarchy and them choosing to write about these things indicates that this is where differences between cultures lie. They explicitly say- “working in the UK is very similar to Sweden” but make no further comparisons.

Group: Japan

The group Japan consists of two Japanese people (P2 and P4) living in Japan working for Swedish organizations. Their self-reports are very positive, no negative thoughts or feelings

are expressed. Their self-reports give a very unified impression of what it is like for a Japanese person to work for a Swedish organization in Japan.

At P4s previous job the *leadership* style had a more hierarchic outlook on the work and the leader made more of the decisions alone. In Japan the boss is someone who is considered to be a bit “above” the others according to the respondents. P4 is really positive towards the company’s care toward the employees, which he says “creates a better working environment for the employees”. He also expresses a bit of disappointment (probably the only sign of any negativity) with the globalisation that is going on throughout the world, he fears that some of the traditional Swedish features within the company that he likes so much might disappear.

They both focus a lot on *teamwork*. Both talk more in “I” than “We” but despite this both of them believe that the group is the most important. Both texts express their belief that teamwork in the sense of belonging to a group and working like a group is the number one priority for them. One example of how they express their cultural mindset is when P2 says “we know that we cannot do anything without support from others”, they help each other within the company and there are no competitive feelings between the different divisions. Another sign of their need to belong to a group is when P4 talks about the colleagues in Sweden. It seems important to them to feel that they have a good and well-established connection to members of their group and network,

The *social relationships* discussed in the self-reports are mainly professionally based. But having good, harmonious relationships within the company are clearly important to them. One could perhaps think that when working for an international Swedish company in Japan, the relationship with colleagues in Sweden would not be so frequent or worth mentioning. But P4 really expresses how “warm and friendly the colleagues in Sweden” are and he seems to see them as part of his team at work although they live so far away.

Looking at *acculturation* neither of them indicate having any direct problems with adapting to work in a Swedish organization. Although they do agree on that the Swedish organization differs from the traditional Japanese organization, in Sweden there is, as P4 puts it, “less distance from top to regular staff level”. They describe the work place as very individual, “there is high individual responsibility”. In them pointing this out it shows that it is a noticeable difference and therefore a change they are adapting to.

Group: China

The second Asian country is China. Two participants (P5 and P6) represent this country. P5 is a Chinese working for a Swedish company in China and P6 is a Swedish person working in China. This group only writes in positive affect.

The participant's say that a difference in *leadership* style can be noted when it comes to the direction of focus of the Swedish and Chinese boss. "Swedes prefer to focus on the task, what need to be done, while Chinese leaders focus more on building and maintaining harmonious relationships". A Chinese boss asks, according to them, more things around the work and initiates more social talk, how the weekend has been and such. On the other hand the participant with Chinese origin (P5) appears to appreciate how the Swedish management shows concern for the employees. She was surprised yet impressed when the head of the global human resource department asked her to express her views: "We talked about what were my hopes of the company/.../my feelings about work conditions, my interest, and my expectation". The equality between employees are mentioned several times in her text "what title or what level you have in the company does not effect how people treat you", "you can talk to anyone in the company, even the CEO". P6 confirms what P5 says, that the distance between manager and employee is greater in China than in Sweden, and describes Swedish organizations as "flat not hierarchical". They also write that in China it is important to do what your boss tells you and in China you, for example, do not walk into the bosses office without an appointment. They say that in China the boss tells you what to do whereas a Swedish boss asks you "what do you think we should do?" P5 expresses that when working for a management that motivates you, shows concern for you and your interests and encourages you to find your potential; you are more willing to "make efforts for the company". Yet she is surprised that some of her colleagues have worked for the company for more than 10 or 20 years.

P5 expresses that work feels like "being a part of a family", as if she sees them as a collective group. She describes the company as a "warm *team* and family". Describing the company in this way seems to show that she sees them as a unified team and group. She talks about the colleagues in Nordic countries as "good friends and colleagues". Bringing them into the picture indicates that she sees them as part of her team and takes them into consideration in her daily working life. P5 describes the Chinese as people who see themselves as part of a

group or network, they have a “collectivist nature” as she puts it, “the family is the most important to them”. The group or network is very important to a Chinese the both of them agree on, as a Chinese “you don’t put your own needs higher than the needs of the group”.

Social relationships seem very important to this group. Several times they refer to their company as a family and with attributes such as “warm”. Describing your work place as a family gives the impression that it feels close in an intimate way. P5 says she is surprised and impressed with how close the management is to the employees, “you can talk to anyone in the company, “the impressive thing is all we talked about was what my hopes of the company and what my feelings about work condition, my interest, and my expectation”. Even though this group talks about social relations on a professional level the predicates they use to describe the company and colleagues are on a personal level. They also say that even the colleagues from Nordic countries ask about their feelings and opinions: “The very first question they all will ask: Are you happy to work here?”

This group takes up many differences concerning *acculturation*. P6 says, “being a foreigner in China/.../has been a greater difference than being a woman working in a male-dominated work environment”, “It is hard being a foreigner because you’re in the focus of attention a lot since you differ from the others”. She also describes the Chinese people as ethno-centric. P5 on the other hand, who is Chinese, does not seem to have had any difficulties with working for Swedish management. She is surprised yet positive to that the company has such an equal structure that is different to the Chinese structure, according to her. The way she brings this up and mentions her surprise entails that it is an acculturation issue, and this difference is described as confusing for someone who is not used to it. P6 warns that there might be difficulties in starting a business in a foreign country such as China “when two so different cultures meet it will for sure bring some challenges into the picture, that need to be taken into consideration for companies and organizations working on the global arena”.

Group: France

There is one participant (P7) in this group. He is a Swedish male working in France for a Swedish company for one year now. He talks somewhat more positive than negative and uses both positive and negative affects regarding both Sweden and France. He writes in a very balanced manner, seemingly trying to see both good and bad sides to the potential differences in Sweden and France.

He states that the view on *leadership* is the greatest difference between Sweden and France. In France “the boss really is a boss” and “the boss's word is law”. He sees this as an advantage in situations “when it just has to be done- there are no alternate solutions”. In France it is easier to plan work, to delegate tasks and to know that the task is done without discussion or questions. A negative side effect of this is that you do not get a lot of feedback in France. In Sweden he says the staff is more participant and when it comes to a more complex task Swedish employees are better at brainstorming as a group, which produces better results. He continues by saying that a boss in France “should always give an answer” and as he describes it, “make decisions without having all the facts/.../ then change his decision the next day when he or she is more informed”. He finds this difficult and says “we (Swedes) live more according to that a word is final”.

When talking about *teamwork* he keeps it mostly on a professional level and tries to see things two ways. He uses “I” more than “we” and uses “we” concerning both Swedes and when talking about the organization for which he works, but never regarding the French which shows that he feels belonging to different in-groups: Him as a Swede and him as part of his organization. The hierarchic structure in an organization is important to the French, and he says that this must be followed if you want to communicate with someone at another division by going via the boss who in their turn will talk to the employee. This seems to disturb P7 and he says it is easier in Sweden also when one wants to brainstorm with a group.

P7 is quite sparse in comments in the *social relationship* theme. An interesting statement is when he says “My interpretation is that the system forms the employees/.../they are used to being told what to do and it makes them feel security”. It is interesting that he seems to think the French culture is the only one to form the individual mind. Another statement that displays emotion is “When I tell them to contact the person directly they get frustrated”. Here he tells us how they feel but not how he feels.

P7 shows many signs of what you might call *acculturation* maturity. Perhaps his position as a manager pushes him to be aware of differences, think about why they exist and at the same time try to adapt or make compromises. When first coming to France he thought there was too many routines and bureaucracy and that in Sweden there is more participation, consensus decision-making and engagement. P7 seems to have acculturated a lot and often writes that he

understands or has realized things such as, “I have realized that it is considered important for a boss to know everything” but points out that these rapid changes of decisions can be hard for a Swede. He also explains solutions to difficulties such as to make French employees participate he asks them one on one instead of as a group. He shares, “At first I thought the French way of organization was a catastrophe” and continues to say that he is still struggling but now sees some light in it all.

Part 3

Depending on whether the participants are situated in their home country or working abroad, whether they are working for a company from their own country or a to them foreign one, might influence how they perceive their work situation regarding the four themes of this study. Therefore the participants will also be grouped together and analyzed according to this in order to see if there are any similarities and differences. In part 3 follows a cross-analysis to look for similarities and differences in groups that are grouped according to Work location and also position in company: if they a) work abroad for a local organization, b) are abroad working for a Swedish management, c) in your home country working for a foreign organization and d) if you have a managerial position in the company.

Group: Working abroad for local organization

This group includes four participants, two females from USA (P1, P3) who work in Sweden and (P8 and P9) two Swedish people who work in the UK. These participants seem to be the ones who go through the biggest change. Overall they express more negative Affects than the other participants. The person in this group with the highest score on negative Affects had a total of 19.3 % and the person with the lowest score had 6.9 %. Their mean score on negative-prospective and negative-retrospective landed on 10.5 %. Comparing this to the highest scorer of the rest of the participants who had a total of 7.47 % shows that they possibly have found it more difficult understanding the new culture. A lot of the time they talk about “I” and not so often “We” showing the distance they feel between themselves and others. However it must be taken into consideration that the UK and USA are countries that score exceptionally high on Hofstede’s individualism scale. P1 and P3 express a much more radical change than P8 and P9 and are much more negative in their self-reports. Moving from Sweden to the UK does not involve language difficulties to deal with. P3 from USA brings up language barriers as a problem for fitting in with the group but P1 has lived in Sweden for eight years and her problems are only attitude based.

Group: Working abroad for a Swedish organization

This group consists of two Swedish participants who work for Swedish companies in France (P7) and in China (P6).

There were some similarities (despite the fact that these societies score very differently on the individualism/collectivism chart by Hofstede) (see table 1-6). In both countries the *leadership* styles are described as more hierarchic based than they are used to in Sweden. P7 says that in France hierarchy is valued highly and they both state that there is a greater distance between managers and employees than in Sweden. They explain that “the boss really is a boss” and “what the boss says is carried out without questioning”. P7 says that the French people like it this way and this is what they are most comfortable with. P6 working in China agrees that the Chinese are used to being told what to do and they get confused when a Swedish boss asks: “What do YOU think we should do?”. In other words the participants both perceive that managers in other countries are given more authority. Both these Swedes talk about the same amount in “I” and “We”, P7 talks in “I” 29,91% and in “We” 7,48% and P6 talks in “I” 22,09% and in “We” 8,14%. Though being in a collectivistic country, the Swede in China does not talk more about “We” than the Swede in France. The move to a collectivistic country seems not to have had an effect on her in that way. None of them seem to have that big of a problem with acculturation, but P6 thinks it can be tiring being “in the focus of attention” because her appearance stands out from the typical Chinese person, which hints that there might be an acculturation issue. They also tend to side with management in understanding why it works a certain way and pointing out differences in how the local employees want things done.

Group: Working in home country for Swedish organization

This group includes three people, P2, P4 (from Japan) and P5 (from Kina). All of them are in their home countries working for Swedish organizations.

One interesting discovery is that they all score very high on Affect, positive-prospective and positive-retrospective. They scored an average of 8.53 % on positive prospective and 5.16 % on positive-retrospective. For negative-prospective they landed on an average of 1.79 %. None of them say anything under the category of negative-retrospective. Mostly they discuss their management and colleagues from a professional perspective and not so much in a

personal relation kind of way. Also all of the participants in this group come from Asian countries and their similarities might be more because of this than the fact that they are living in their home country.

Group: Participants with a managerial position

In the group where the participants have a managerial position we have also tried to look for similarities. All these participants who have a managerial positions are Swedes working in another country. This group consists of three participants (P6, P7 and P9) All these participants with managerial positions talk more about "I" than "We", including P6 who works in the collectivistic country China. So despite spending several years in China, she still uses "I" a lot more than "We". It is more descriptive talk than many of the other participants and a lot of their thoughts concern what they do as a manager, what the employees think and expect from them and how they believe a manager should be. The one who has experience working as a manager in the UK (P9) says it is important as a manager that your staff/colleagues see you are "hands on in your work" which P7 seems to agree with saying that in France it is important for a boss to have all the answers. When talking about how a boss should be P9 describes it as a universal belief, not only what works in the UK for instance, but what works for a boss in general. P6 and P7 on the other hand talk more of differences in leadership styles depending on culture. They all stress the importance of respect and social talk with employees. The one who has worked as a manager in the UK describes some people as not interested in their work and not doing their best at work, whereas P7 in France describes employees as really trying to give a serious and hard working impression to their boss.

Part 4

In part 4 follows a summary of the results found based on our four themes.

Summary of Results

On the theme *Leadership* they all seem agree on that the Swedish way of management is flat, not hierarchical and that participation is more encouraged by Swedish organizations. The participants in Asia and also the Americans in Sweden all mention experiencing increased participation in decision-making and low power-distance. In France, UK and China the participants say that the boss decides and tells you what to do. Despite this the participants in

China say that the Asian boss is more focused on creating a harmonious relationship at work and the Western boss is more task-oriented.

On the theme *Teamwork* participants from Japan and Kina tended to describe their colleagues, even those far away, in a more positive way with words that gave a feeling of belonging. These participants were also overall more positive in their self-reports. A lot of their text was dedicated to how they as individuals fit in with the team and on how good relationships they had. The participants from Sweden working in the UK and in France were similar in that they talked more about the team structure and hierarchy of the organization and hardly mentioned the relationship with colleagues at all. And when they do it is more about how communication works, consequences and opinions on this. The Asians write more about their feelings on the relationship and not necessarily how they communicate. The participants from USA do not address teamwork at all.

On the theme *Social relationships* there were large differences among the participants. The self-reports from USA were dominated by this theme and most of the discussion was in a negative tone. The other participants gave this subject less attention and those in Asia managed to say only positive things. All of the participants except the group from USA always connected their views to either the communication structure or their relation to colleagues in the way of work performance. Group; USA on the other hand talked solely about the relationships without any clear relation to any actual work. An interesting finding is that the group with a managerial position had in common with the group; USA that they ascribe other people emotions, which the rest of the participants do not.

Looking at the theme *Acculturation* it seems as if the clearest differences among the participants are not dependent on country of origin or current work but instead how distant they are from their own culture. Those who are both working in a different country and different company seem to experience the biggest acculturation problems. We see that those who work for a Swedish company abroad identify more with their management than the others and those who solely work for a different company in their home countries only mention surprise over the management and perhaps go through less change.

The participants with *managerial positions* show signs of more problem-focused thinking in their acculturation. They seem to think of themselves as part of the team but do this with

greater locus of control than the other participants, which they show by first saying how the team and structure functions and then continue with how they could/have changed or effected it.

Discussion

Leadership in France from a Swedish persons point of view is that it is autocratic and hierarchical. The same applies to the English system where it was said that nothing ever escaped the formal structure of communication and delegation. Participants from Japan also say that there the boss is like “above clouds”, they felt that the Swedish way of management was more “flat” and informal. At the same time participants state that in China the boss tells you what to do whereas the Swedish boss asks you “what do you think we should do?” In the UK it seems similar in the sense that depending on your level of authority you single handily get to decide how the task will be carried out. In France it is said that the boss is expected to know the answer to everything and therefore does not waver in his/her answer. But may very well return the next day after collecting information and then give a totally different answer or instruction. Perhaps this can be seen as giving the impression of *internal locus of control* and *confidence* which Yukl (2005) names as important characteristics for an effective leader. In the UK they also mention that being “hands on in your work” gets you respect, this is oriented toward personal integrity.

The group who are working in home country for Swedish organizations all very much express how they appreciate the Swedish way of management and say that everyone is treated equally and with respect, this they say makes you want to work hard for the company. Sorge (1995) and Hofstede (1984) say there is greater power distance in Asia and that resembles with what our Asian participants says. One of the participants refers to the Chinese educational system and so does Sorge when exemplifying the power distance in Asia. And Sorge also mentions France as a country with a more hierarchical system, which corresponds with what the Swede working in France says. The participants with connection to China and France also mention what Granström (2000) writes, that people there leave it up to the boss to take decisions and do not want to make decisions they find hard.

The participants have said that the advantages with a hierarchical structure are that an easily made decision will be carried out quicker and without questioning. Also the role of the individual is very clear and often they say they only have one person to answer to so there is no confusion. The two participants from USA did not really talk much about leadership, but it seems as if Sweden encourages more participation than in USA. They gave the impression that management was too soft and were overall more concerned with feedback and how

management acknowledged their individual achievements. The Eastern participants on the other hand all commented on how the management individualized the personnel and how everyone was made to feel equal. When they use the term individualized it is difficult to know exactly what they mean. It seems as if it correlates better with Hofstede's power-distance than with his individualism/collectivism. When they use the word it is more in context with the management asking for their opinion and where they dare feel it is okay for them to express themselves as individuals. They probably perceive the Swedish management as more feminine (Hofstede's cultural dimension) than they are used to- their personal feelings are taken into consideration by the management, but it is regarding their work life and not regarding their family life and such which is more common for Eastern leaders to show concern for.

The Swedish participants self-reports from the UK talked more about deadlines and role specificity which could indicate two things, either they are more used to the leadership style- *initiating structure* or that this is a noticeable difference between Sweden and England and therefore they bring it up in the self-report. They also point out that in order to meet a deadline and increase productivity one can use a *consideration* approach. Here the consideration approach is used to increase productivity yet it gives the impression that the leader cares about the wellbeing of the group.

P1 says in her self-report that she experiences more backbiting in Sweden compared to USA, which can be connected to Kong et al. (1989) who say that talking about someone in their absence is in some cultures a sign of consideration whereas people from USA and the UK see this as something wrong.

The theme *teamwork* is stressed the most by the Asian participants. Even though the participants from the UK and P7 in France also discuss this a lot. We think that they have different reasons for discussing it and ways of looking at it. The Asian participants express a very strong belief that group/teamwork is the most important to them. Just as Hofstede says, in collectivistic countries (in our case Japan and China) people put individual needs aside to satisfy group goals. They explain that you do not put your own needs higher than the needs of the group. We feel this is well demonstrated by our participants. They describe their team in an affectionate fashion compared to the others. But they also say that too many norms can be a pressure and that the Swedish management balances individuality in a good way. This

shows that they have realized that one can belong to a group without always having to conform and they appreciate that.

It is important for the Asian participants to be a good team, indicating that it is important to have the role of a team worker, you should help each other within the organization and such. Perhaps in the individualistic countries there instead might be a more competitive environment, whereas in the collectivistic cultures people are more obliged to help each other out. Trust is mentioned as important in groups by one of the Japanese participants that is an indication of openness between group members. The Japanese participants consider trust to be a crucial quality that a group must have. Our American participants talk a lot about “I” and refers to the other employees at their work as “them” and such, which is resembling Chai and Cross (1993) that American psychologies most frequent themes are: I, person and individual contra other people.

All participants with connection to Asia talk a lot about the collectivistic system. They are very focused on their group and they are all very positive. Chinese people do not say “no” to the same extent as Western people. When you for instance ask a Chinese person if they would like a cup of tea, instead of saying “no” if they do not want any, it is not uncommon that they start doing something else to draw attention to that instead of drawing attention to not wanting what is offered to him/her. Perhaps this is an indication of why they talk so positive in their text, they might find it difficult and not “normal” to express negative feelings or opinions like this.

One question that arise while studying the Japanese and Chinese participants responds was that although they are from a collectivistic society and have this sort of mindset, they do not seem to have had any problems with the individualism in the Swedish company. The Japanese stresses the individualistic responsibility that the Swedish organization has but this does not seem to bother them. Perhaps they always see themselves as part of a group and therefore try very hard to conform. Despite that the other group members might be individualistic, they, the collectivists see them together as a team. It is perhaps easier for a collectivistic person to adapt to a group with individualistic persons than it is for an individualistic person to adapt in a collectivistic society.

Conflicts are not necessarily bad, as Wiiteman found, conflicts can lead to increased cohesion and member satisfaction within the group. Our participants do not talk much specifically about conflicts. Though one of the participants say that conflicts do not exist at their work, indicating that conflicts are bad and since they do not have any, their organization is managing well. The Americans express interpersonal conflict at their work place by not feeling like a part of the group. This is a kind of conflict that is harmful to the group and perhaps this explains the lack of team spirit.

Just as Wheelan (2005) writes, every person brings with them their own view of their society's culture when forming a new group. That seems to have been problematic for some of our participants, the Americans in Sweden had problems adapting to the new environment at work. When they are used of having things a certain way at their work place at home, the shift to another culture and meeting of that cultures norms and attitudes is difficult.

Social relations at work have shown to be most important to participants from collectivistic countries (Japan and China), those who are working abroad for local organization, and for those from USA. They all express different reasons for seeing social relations as an important factor.

In collectivistic cultures (Japan and China) it seems natural to mention the members of your group and they do this only in a positive way describing their colleagues as warm and family-like. They talk about management in the same positive regard. They state openly that it is important to have good relationships. It seems to agree with theories on that they find it important to maintain a harmonious and unified group. Their culture has taught them to strive for this and perhaps they are unconsciously contributing to this harmony more than they realize. Their self-reports correspond with studies made by Maday and Szalay (1976) showing that all human relations in an individuals network are important and all social groups are looked at as an extension of one's family.

The participants from USA find social relations just as important as the Asians but their discussion is put in a totally different way. First of all they talk dominantly negative about both their colleagues and their management. They do not seem to strive for group-harmony in the same way. They show great individualistic tendencies by being very clear in distinguishing themselves from others and express disappointment with not being seen or

acknowledged enough for their opinions and achievements. The Asian participants on the other hand show surprise over the management taking such personal interest in them, which clearly shows the differences in cultural expectations. Perhaps the collectivistic participants also have negative thoughts regarding relationships but go by cultural norms that suppress these in order to put the group first. We can see that the Americans have felt no need to suppress their negative feelings at all.

Both Americans express feeling very much like outsiders. This brings us to a group that they are also part of: those working abroad for a local country. We think them belonging to this category could have a big influence in this area. What these participants have in common is that they are assumed to go through the most radical change in changing both country and management compared to the other participants who only change one or the other. This means that they most lightly feel a lack of social support and therefore have a more negative view on things. They are probably craving more social interaction from their colleagues and expect more than just a professional relationship. When not receiving this they experience negative emotions toward their colleagues and work situation. Those participants working abroad for a local organization (group- UK) are somewhere in between the Americans and the Asians. They do not discuss this theme very much and when they do it is scarce of emotion. There are a couple of factors that we think can explain this. For one they do not have the language barrier that the Americans mention as a big problem. And two, when looking at Appendix A, (Hofstede's dimensions) you can see that perhaps although they belong to an individualistic country they are low on masculinity. Maybe this means they are less assertive and more considerate in their choice of expression, which makes them appear more similar to the Asian way.

When people move across different countries *acculturation* problems might occur. Just as Gaugler (1993) writes there are some difficulties that organizations come across when having employees from different countries, which this globalization that Hatch (2002) writes about has led to. Just as Berry et al. (1992) says all individuals acculturate in their own unique way, as we can see when looking at our different participants. Some seem to have no problem to adapt, though shifting from collectivistic organizations to individualistic organizations, like for example the Japanese working for Swedish company. Others seem to have more problems adapting to a new culture, even though the two cultures are individualistic, like Americans working in Sweden. The group who works in Sweden who comes from another country

probably comes across different challenges than the participants who are in their home country working for Swedish organization do. The change for them is greater than it is for the other groups.

Those who have a higher position in the company (P6, P7 and P9) seem to have had fewer difficulties with acculturation than those who do not, and they seem to have learnt a lot through trial and error. Perhaps they feel surer of themselves because they are in a position where they can decide how things are going to be and implement more of their culture. Not to say that they do not have to compromise and understand how the employees reason for it to work. The participants from USA seemed to have had the most difficult adapting to a new culture. Even P1 who has been in Sweden for eight years does not seem to have adapted the Swedish way of thinking. There can be several explanations for this. P1 is living in Sweden for good and does therefore not see the work conditions as separate one-time experiences. The other American, P3, working in Sweden has more positive things to say about the work situation than the other and writes about, “a learning experience” and “personal and professional development”. Perhaps her more positive outlook is due to the fact that she is only living in Sweden temporarily and will be returning to her home country; therefore one could imagine it would be easier to take lightly on the negative things.

The way the predicates are used by one participant from USA working in Sweden is very interesting because it reveals some tendency to display the home country as better. The choice of words, saying that Sweden is more “laid back”, together with comments on how whiny the colleagues are indicates that the American way of working is still the norm that P1 goes by.

Another thing that is interesting is that all things that can be interpreted as negative in P1s answer about USA are regarding the government and system whereas most of the negative things said about Sweden are on an individual level. And even when P1 talks about the Swedish system and it really could be a good thing she makes it out to be unnecessary, exaggerated or unappreciated by the Swedes. This looks like typical ethnocentric behaviour. P1 is portraying her in-group as more likeable. Maybe because she still identifies very much with this group. Working hard and accepting the systems regulations seem to be strong characteristics for her in-group. Swedish values are not compatible with these. In Sweden the system is more lenient on the employee and acceptance of system regulations are not valued as high. If not identifying with or at least understanding this way of thinking it would be natural for P1 to feel left out of the group. Another example of ethnocentrism is when the

Swedish participant working in China describes the Chinese people as ethnocentric. She looks different to them, they, the Chinese, are the in-group, and she, as a foreigner, belongs to the out-group.

The reason that the group; working in home country for Swedish organization, being so positive and experiencing very little acculturative stress might be because of that they are still living in their home country. The cultural change is much smaller for them than for the other participants and they are not in a position where they must make new friends and create a new personal life for themselves. The Asian participants seem to have acculturated with ease. Although because of their collectivistic ways and their habit of adapting to the group the conclusion might be misleading. Their feeling obliged to follow the group norm might be the reason for them settling in so well. In this case they might not have acculturated as much as it first seems but are simply following their collectivistic view in trying very hard to understand the group and to blend in as quickly as possible. Acculturative stress could depend on changes in social welfare and status position. However none of our participants have degraded in position when moving. Instead some of them have found that their position is given more status for example in P7's case in moving to France. The more ethnocentric a person is the harder it will be to gradually identify with the new group. Or perhaps it is the other way around, if the person after some time still does not feel at home they start becoming more ethnocentric. This circle of cutting yourself off from the group can enhance the acculturative stress and escalate the individual's negative view. And it also prevents the individual from seeing true advantages with a different system.

The participants from individualistic cultures write in their self-reports what they have learnt and how they as individuals have grown and how they have developed their professional ability thanks to the cultural experience. The collectivistic participants do not mention any personal growth but instead talk about how well they manage to cooperate and how they learnt "not to take the support of others for granted". This shows very clearly how the different groups see themselves in relation to others. For the individualists it is most important to have personal growth, and for the collectivists it is most important to grow with the team.

Method discussion

Looking back at the work that has been done we think that perhaps we gave the participants too long to respond. They were initially given two weeks but after the deadline had past and

hardly any answers had come in we had to send out reminders. We later changed the time frame to 5-6 days, which we thought was a reasonable time to complete the answer. Perhaps they thought two weeks was a long period of time and lost focus, maybe they felt they had plenty of time, relaxed and then forgot to answer. They were informed to write about one page in English and were given a considerable amount of time to answer. This might have intimidated some and given the impression that it was a longer and more difficult task than it was, despite our explaining that they could answer freely and that the language did not have to be perfect. Although it is understandable when considering that English is many of the participants' second or even third language, and they might not feel comfortable writing feelings and thoughts in a language they do not usually express themselves in. A few of the potential participants were sceptical to how we were going to analyze the material in a profitable way. Perhaps we should have been clearer in our project plan, and this uncertainty about the validity of our study probably put off a few. Many times people commented on that it would be easier if we could only send them a questionnaire. We tried to explain that the nature of our study could not allow this and we probably lost a lot of participants because of it.

The human factor also has a role in the outcome when working with a program such as Minerva. What is presented in the result-section is based on what the researchers have selected to focus on after looking at what was discovered in the Minerva-analysis.

We have simply looked at the individuals in our study and not at a large group of individuals from each group. We would like to point out that it is important to remember that there might be large individual differences within the same culture. Therefore we have no intention of generalising among whole populations for example; all Japanese persons working for Swedish organizations feel and think like our study indicates. Also, we would like to say that when discussing cultures as either collectivist versus individualistic, we are doing so according to Hofstede's theories. Obviously an individual can be more or less individualistic regardless of nationality. It might be wise to keep in mind that Hofstede's findings are not automatically true for everyone.

Future research

Further exploration in this area can be made after our study. Perhaps one could use a quantitative method with a structured questionnaire on the subject of the four themes used in

this study. By doing this one could see if the results in the study resemble the results we found in our phenomenological study. Since we looked at different groups, such as people in managerial positions and such, one other thought is that one could explore these groups even further. Research can be made looking at how managers experience working with people from other cultures and how the managers experience not being on “home-ground” but at the employees “home-ground” instead. Also doing a bigger exploration with our initial aim would be interesting, including more countries or perhaps instead concentrate on a few countries but with a bigger number of participants. For instance look at only Asian people working for Swedish organisations. This would be helpful for organizations that are thinking of starting a business there. By doing this more specific research in Asian countries, these organizations could get a closer insight in how people have experienced this sort of change of work situation before.

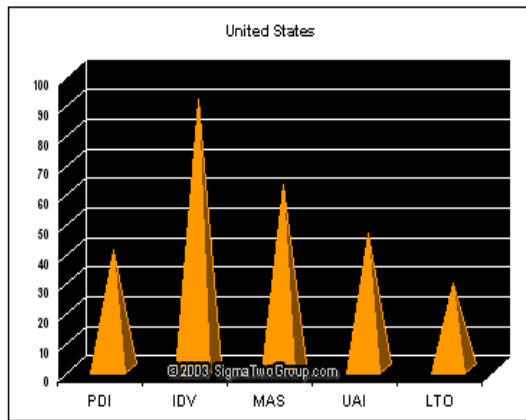
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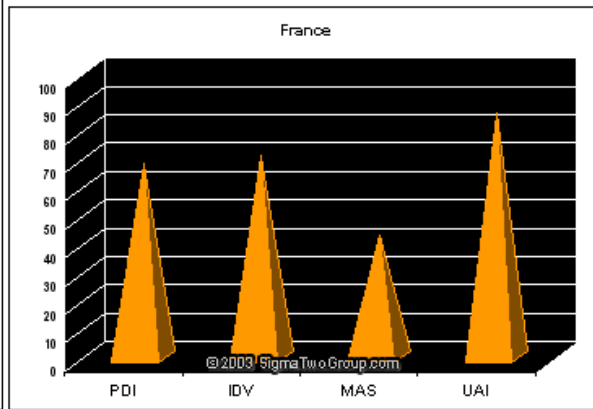
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Appendix A. Hofstede's Cultural dimensions.

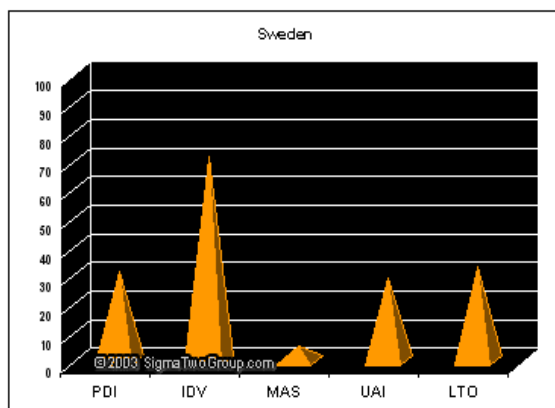
1. USA.



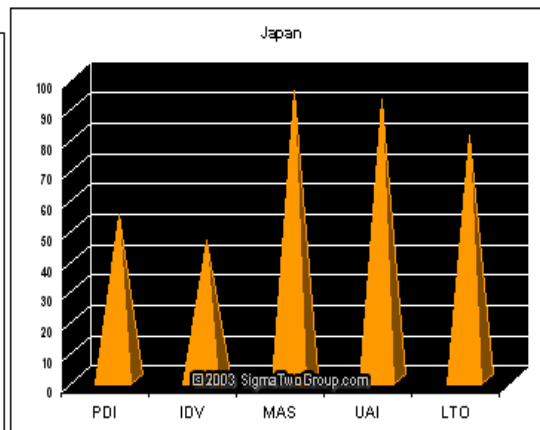
2. Frankrike



3. Sweden.



4. Japan



(Hofstede, 2003).

Appendix B: Project description.

Project description

Background

We are two students from the University of Lund. At this point we are studying our last term of psychology, specializing in work and organizational psychology in a cultural perspective and we are about to write our master thesis.

We are interested in finding out if culture influences the work place. In today's world organizations are branching out all over the world and different cultures meet in the workplace. We want to look at if people have different expectations on leadership and teamwork and we are curious to find out if this has possible effects on the working environment.

We want to look at organizations placed around the world. Because of today's expanding work environment we find this very interesting and important.

Purpose/Aim

Our purpose is to explore leadership and group-orientation. Our aim is to look for what kind of relations exist, how these are perceived and for possible conflict management in the organisation. So we are interested in looking at teamwork. Whether it is individualistic or collectivistic, how are roles distributed and how conflicts are solved.

We hope that our study could be of help for your organization and future companies looking to work in a foreign culture. You will get an insight in how people at other organizations feel about this and also how people at your own organization perceive their work environment.

Method

We will use a phenomenological method with self-reports from individuals. This means that the participants will be answering an open question with their own words. With this method we hope that the individuals will be able to express themselves freely and this will give us the opportunity to understand their experiences and feelings. All participants and of course your company are guaranteed full anonymity.

We will send you the self-report we want the participants to answer. This study requires longer answers, we estimate about 1 page. The more information we get in this free text the more accurate analysis can we do. We would like to see participants from all sectors and positions in the organization to get a wide perspective of experiences. It doesn't take long to answer, less than an hour.

We anticipate that a few days, about 5-6, for answering the open question could be a reasonable time frame. As we realize that you also have timeframes to meet, we hope that this time frame is acceptable, but we are ready to modify it according to your needs.

The results, analyses and conclusions will be presented as a master thesis in January 2007. Then will we forward to you a copy of our paper.

We hope you and your organization find this interesting to take part in and that you will help mediating participants to us.

Best regards

Appendix C: Self-report

Please email us your answers within a few days. Please write “study in Sweden” or such in “subject” of your mail.

-Please be so kind and, in your own words, tell us about your thoughts, emotions, reflections, experiences and impressions about your work situation (for example about teamwork, management, relations at work etc.)

-Write freely and spontaneously! Spelling and grammar is not important. It is your individual thoughts and feelings and views we are interested in, exactly as you want to express them. Please write about 1 page.

Thank you for participating in our study. The information we receive will be treated confidentially and anonymously.

If you have any questions please don't hesitate to contact us.

Best regards,
Karin Ståhl
Anna Viklund
Roger Sages, Ph. D., Asso. Prof. supervisor