

# MANAGING SWEDISH GENDER EQUALITY POLICIES IN SHANGHAI

- A STUDY ON HOW SWEDISH BASED CORPORATIONS MANAGE  
SWEDISH GENDER EQUALITY POLICIES IN SHANGHAI

Thesis for Bachelor's Degree  
Business Administration

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### **Abstract**

Despite policy efforts by the Chinese state to eradicate gender inequality, statistics show that the issue of gender discrimination in the work domain has become increasingly acute in modern day China. The prevailing gender inequality derives from China's deeply rooted masculine oriented cultural and societal structure, and traditional norms and values towards women in the work domain are fighting the policies against gender inequality that the Chinese state has implemented. Studies show that foreign affiliations have the ability to transplant corporate culture internationally, which also infers a transplantation of certain policies. One of the many western countries that have seen its corporations establish offices in China is Sweden - a country which puts a lot of focus and emphasis on promoting gender equality. Chinese and Swedish cultural and societal structure differs a lot, and so does the focus on gender equality. The theory suggests that gender equality is highly prioritized in Sweden, while it is less prioritized in China. This constitutes an interesting phenomena regarding how managers at Swedish based corporations, established in Shanghai, manage Swedish gender equality policies cross-culturally.

The purpose of this study is to describe and explore how Swedish based corporations that are established in Shanghai, China, manage gender equality policies cross-culturally. In order to answer our research question, we performed four face to face semi-structured interviews together with four suitable Swedish based corporations at their offices in Shanghai.

The results from this study concluded that the Swedish based corporations transfer the vast majority of their policy framework to their offices in Shanghai, particularly gender equality policies. The gender equality policies were often included in the corporations Corporate Social responsibility (CSR) framework. The study could conclude that even though no adaption was done to the policy documents per se, the Swedish corporations did adapt modestly to how they manage the policies in practice in Shanghai. This followed as a consequence of a wish to respectfully adapt to Chinese legal and cultural prerequisites. Due to China's legal prerequisites, some policies, such as parental leave, could not be fully implemented at the Shanghai offices. In other words, in those instances, the policy documents were trumped by legal employment regulations. Cultural prerequisites affected how the managers in the shanghai offices dealt with the policy documents in practice. Our study could found that policy management was closely connected to the corporate culture in the Shanghai offices. Our study could thus conclude that the Swedish based corporations adapt the policy management in practice to the meet Chinese culture, without compromising the Swedish corporate culture and values.

**Keywords:** *Cross-Cultural Management, Policy Management, Corporate Cultural Imperialism, Corporate Culture, Corporate Policies, CSR, Managing Gender Equality Policies*

## Sammanfattning

Oberoende av de satsningar som den kinesiska staten har infört för att utrota ojämlikhet mellan män och kvinnor visar statistik att könsdiskriminering inom Kinas företagsvärld ökar. Den rådande ojämlikheten härstammar från Kinas maskulint orienterade samhälle, och traditionella normer och värderingar motarbetar de jämställdhetsfrämjande policyer som den kinesiska staten har implementerat. Studier visar att globala företag har möjlighet att överföra och etablera företagskulturen internationellt, vilket även innefattar specifika policyer. Ett land vars företag har etablerat många företagskontor i Kina är Sverige: ett land som har ett högt fokus på att främja jämställdhet. Den kinesiska kulturen och dess samhällsstruktur skiljer sig avsevärt från den svenska, vilket även inkluderar att arbetet för jämställdhet skiljer sig mycket mellan de två länderna. Teorin förklarar att jämställdhet är högt prioriterat i Sverige, medan den är mindre prioriterad i Kina. Avvikelsen mellan länderna leder till ett spännande forskningsfenomen, nämligen kring hur de svenska företag som är etablerade i Shanghai hanterar jämställdhetspolicyer interkulturellt.

Syftet med vår studie är att beskriva och utforska hur svenska företag som är etablerade i Shanghai hanterar jämställdhetspolicyer interkulturellt. För att besvara vår forskningsfråga har vi genomfört fyra semi-strukturerade intervjuer med fyra lämpligt utvalda svenska företag på deras kontor i Shanghai.

Resultatet av vår studie visar att de svenska företagen överför majoriteten av sina policyer till kontoren i Shanghai, framförallt de policyerna som är relaterade till jämställdhet. Dessa jämställdhetspolicyer är oftast inkluderade i företagets ramverk för Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR, företagets samhällsansvar). Studien kan dra slutsatsen att svenska företag inte anpassar innehållet och betydelsen av sina jämställdhetspolicyer, men att de anpassar och förändrar hur de hanterar och arbetar med dem på kontoren i Shanghai. Anledningen till anpassningen är att de svenska företagen vill bemöta Kinas kulturella och legala förutsättningar. Till följd av Kinas legala förutsättningar kan inte alla policyer etableras likadant i Shanghai som i Sverige; exempelvis vad gäller föräldraledighet. Sådana policyer övervins av de lokala legala bestämmelserna. De kulturella skillnaderna påverkar hur chefer på de kinesiska kontoren hanterar policyerna i praktiken. Studien visar att policyhantering är nära relaterat till företagskultur, och att det är genom företagskulturen som policyerna hanteras i praktiken. Således visar studien att de svenska företag som deltog i vår forskning anpassar hur de hanterar jämställdhetspolicyer i praktiken för att bemöta den kinesiska kulturen, utan att kompromissa den svenska företagskulturen och dess värderingar.

**Nyckelord:** *Interkulturell Management, Policy Management, Kulturimperialism, Företagsrelaterad Kulturimperialism, Företagskultur, Företagspolicyer, CSR, Jämställdhetspolicyer, Hantering av Jämställdhetspolicyer*

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# 1. Introduction

*In this first chapter, the area of research is presented. This is done via initially introducing an overlaying background, followed by the research problem, which leads to the purpose of the study as well as the research aim and question. Finally, a target audience is specified.*

## 1.1. Background

Over the past few decades, China has undergone a dramatic transformation. Since the initiation of the 1978 market reform, the country has experienced a level of urbanization, economic growth and reduction of poverty at a pace hardly unprecedented in human history (Zhu, 2012). China has managed to transition itself from an impoverished nation to becoming the world's second largest economy; establishing themselves as a candidate for overtaking the US as the next superpower (Investopedia, 2019; Ellis, 2018). As a consequence, the country is becoming increasingly modernized and globalized. China's traditional label as a manufacturing economy is fading, and the country is instead beginning to position itself as a service economy (Investopedia, 2019). White collar jobs are on the rise, and China is now offering world leading technology in areas like IT and infrastructure (Hsu, 2017). However, while the Chinese state has opted for rapid economic growth and poverty reduction, several other issues have been deprioritized - in particular gender equality (Sustainable Development, 2016; Wang, 2018).

Chinese society has a culturally masculine orientation, and women's position is subordinate to that of men in a range of aspects in life. This situation is contributed by the long-standing Confucian system of values and beliefs, which greatly affect the interactions between men and women. It also affects the differentiated positions that the two binary genders are ascribed in hierarchical relations, where women are assigned the inferior role in different spheres, including family and work domains (Tatli, Ozturk & Woo, 2017). As China's rapid economic growth created the need for a vast labour force, simultaneously as the Chinese state adopted a favored limited unemployment rate, a lot of women were introduced into the work force (Dasgupta, Matsumoto & Xia, 2015). This posed a challenge for the long-standing Confucian subjugation of women (Cooke & Xiao, 2014). The Chinese state consequently developed policies that held citizens equal regardless of any identity-based differences; including gender (Tatli, Ozturk & Woo, 2017; Stauffer, 2018). As a result, gender-based stereotypes and prejudices became silenced and taboo, but not eradicated. Research shows that female employees and managers in modern day China is subjugated to widespread discrimination and devaluation (Tatli, Ozturk & Woo, 2017).

Thus, despite the efforts by the Chinese state to eradicate gender discrimination in the work domain, it is still a prevalent occurrence, deriving from the deeply rooted masculine oriented cultural and societal structure. For example, in a study by Xiu & Gundersson (2012) it was found that Chinese women are paid 75,4% of what men are paid, of which 2/3 of the difference was attributed by unequal pay based on the same work, and the remaining 1/3 was based on that males had higher education and thus qualified for higher pay. Additionally, workplace related sexual harassment in China is widespread. In a study by the Hong Kong university, it was estimated that more than 80% of Chinese women experience sexual harassment at some point in their working life (Nathani, 2018). Moreover, gender discrimination is a common occurrence in hiring practices as well. According to Stauffer (2018), evidence show that both the private sector and (paradoxically) the public sector (i.e. state jobs) often express requirements or preferences for men. Women are often subjugated to sexual objectification, and job postings sometimes include requirements for physical attributes, such as voice, height and facial appearance.

Statistics show that the issue of gender discrimination in the work domain has become increasingly acute in modern day China. The country is faced with a major demographic issue (i.e. an aging population) that comes as a legacy from the one child policy, which was a social-engineering experiment introduced in 1980 to reduce the number of 'hungry mouths to feed'. The Chinese state realized that the act stalled growth, which urged Beijing scrap the act in 2016 and allow for families to get more than one child. However, the initiative was introduced while much of China had entered the "middle income trap", which is when rapidly developing economies with an emerging middle class starts having fewer babies. Chinese women are prioritizing careers, education and a stable home life over raising children - just like in the West. Thus, despite the dismantling of the one child policy, China's aging demographic issue largely remains un-defused. While Chinese women previously were encouraged to work and have a career, the new narrative by the Chinese state and society vigorously discourages women from delaying marriage for career, and propaganda exhorts couples to "have children for the state" (Campbell, 2019).

While female representation in the workforce is high in China compared to the rest of the Asia-Pacific region, statistic shows that the numbers are in decline. Over the span of 18 years, female representation in the workforce declined from 45% to 43,4% between the years 2000 and 2018 (World Bank, 2018). This is contributed by factors such as the widening gender wage gap, the lack of childcare options, the resurgence of traditional stereotypes and the diminished employment options for women (Dasgupta, Matsumoto & Xia, 2015). This has occurred despite that females constitute over half (51,7%) of all tertiary graduates in China (Catalyst, 2019). Moreover, the situation for females in the work domain is worsened by the early retirement age set for women. Female blue-collar and white-collar occupations has a pension age of 50 and 55 respectively, while men retires at 60 no matter the occupation. This further limits women's opportunity for career advancement, reduces their pensions and decreases their social security benefits (Dasgupta, Matsumoto & Xia, 2015).

Against this backdrop, it can be clearly understood that gender discrimination in China is a complex and deeply rooted issue within Chinese cultural- and societal structures. Gender discrimination is reemerging rapidly, and China's equality ranking fell from 57th- to 100th place between 2008 and 2017 (Zhang, 2018). The stereotypical role of the traditional Chinese woman is resurfacing, where she is associated with household and childbearing duties, and discouraged from career building. The traditional norms and values towards women in the work domain are fighting the policies against gender inequality that the Chinese state has implemented. Thus, despite the efforts to eradicate gender inequality throughout the years, the traditional norms and values about gender stereotypes remain largely unchanged.

## **1.2. Research Problem**

As the world is becoming more and more globalized and integrated, information and ideas spread quickly across borders. This has brought the issue of gender inequality to the world stage in a previously unheard of fashion. Many developing countries have access to information where they learn about life in other parts of the world, which arguably affects values and behaviors regarding gender equality. Likewise, developed countries have access to information regarding gender discrimination and inequalities in other countries around the world, which makes many developed countries global advocates for gender equality. For example, country's that do not strengthen incentives and policy action towards gender equality are hurt in their international standing (The World Bank, 2011). As a consequence, values and attitudes towards gender equality appears to be converging (at the macro level) as a result of today's increasingly democratic and feminine societies (Usunier & Lee, 2013).

However, values regarding gender equality still varies vastly between countries and cultures. In order to understand how a society's culture affect the values inhabited by its members (and how those values later translates into behavior), Hofstede (2001) developed the Model of Cultural Dimensions (MCD). According to the Hofstede Insights (2019), Chinese society is characterized by a high score of masculinity and power distance. This implies that the Chinese society is driven by masculine oriented values such as competition, achievements, success. Society believes that inequalities among people are acceptable, and that there is no defense against abuse of power by superiors and that people should not have aspirations above their rank. These beliefs affects how Chinese culture approaches gender equality.

China's important role in the world economy has motivated many western corporations to set up offices in China, and with those foreign offices follows foreign corporate culture. According to findings by Kodama, Javorcik & Abe (2018), foreign affiliations often transplant values and norms via corporate culture and policies across international borders. This phenomenon is described as corporate cultural imperialism (Simpson, 2017). China's historical and present relation to cultural imperialism is one of resistance. China values their traditions, customs and cultures - and the Chinese state has a history of actively taking measures to combat cultural imperialism from other countries (Simpson, 2017). Despite this, China is no exception to the influence of globalization, and Tomlinson (2012) states that developing nations (such as China) are importing cultures from more developed nations (such as the Western countries) at an increasing rate via, for example, international corporations.

One of the many western countries that have have seen its corporations establish branches in China is Sweden. Sweden is often associated with a high degree of gender equality. The perception coincides with Hofstede Insights (2019) MCD, where Sweden has a low- and very low score of power distance and masculinity respectively. This makes Sweden a very feminine society, which is characterized by feminine oriented values (quality of life, equality and solidarity), decentralized power distribution and equal rights. Although Sweden is no perfect example of a gender equal society, the country has been ranked among the top 5 countries in the international gender equality ranking since the measurements began in 2006 (Sweden, 2018). Sweden's high ranking is in part a product of good cultural and societal prerequisites (as describes by Hofstede Insights (2019)) combined with extensive governmental policies that promote gender equality. In particular, the Swedish government has put a great emphasis on promoting Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) policies to the businesses in Sweden, in which gender equality is a major aspect. As a result, CSR policies are now extensively implemented among Swedish businesses, both domestically and internationally, and the narrative by the Swedish government is that Swedish corporations should act for a 'humane globalization' (Idowu & Filho, 2009). In other words, unlike the situation in China, the policies implemented by the Swedish government coincided with the Swedish societal and cultural norms, which made them very successful.

Thus, it can be concluded that cultural values towards gender equality varies a lot between China and Sweden. Gender equality is highly prioritized in Sweden, while it is less prioritized in China. Sweden has long looked to China for business, and many well known Swedish based corporations have established branches in the country - particularly in Shanghai. This arises a natural question, namely how Swedish based corporations in Shanghai manage Swedish gender equality policies with the cross-cultural aspects in mind. All of the factors lifted throughout this chapter is what ultimately boils down to the purpose and research questions for this study.

### **1.3. Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to describe and explore how Swedish based corporations that are established in Shanghai, China, manage gender equality policies cross-culturally. The relevance for this study is motivated by the lack of previously performed research in this field.

### **1.4. Research Aim and Question**

Despite policy efforts by the Chinese state to eradicate gender inequality, statistics show that the issue of gender discrimination in the work domain has become increasingly acute in modern day China. The prevailing gender inequality derives from China's deeply rooted masculine oriented cultural and societal structure, and traditional norms and attitudes towards women in the work domain are fighting the policies against gender inequality that the Chinese state has implemented. Studies show that foreign affiliations have the ability to transplant corporate culture internationally, which also infers a transplantation of certain policies. One of the many western countries that have seen its corporations establish offices in China is Sweden - a country which puts a lot of focus and emphasis on promoting gender equality. Chinese and Swedish cultural and societal structure differs a lot, and so does the focus on gender equality. The theory suggests that gender equality is highly prioritized in Sweden, while it is less prioritized in China. This constitutes an interesting phenomena regarding how Swedish based corporations, established in Shanghai, manage gender equality policies cross-culturally.

This leads us to our research question:

- **How do Swedish based corporations that are established in Shanghai manage Swedish gender equality policies cross-culturally?**

### **1.5. Target Audience**

The target audience for this study are primarily organizations who are active on the Chinese market (or planning on expanding their operations to China) and who seek to gain knowledge within the field of how to manage gender equality policies in China. Organizations can use the result of this study to broaden their understanding of the subject, which in turn might enable them to approach the subject in a way that can better promote gender equality internationally. Moreover, the study will cover four practical examples of how four Swedish based corporations manage gender equality policies cross-culturally, which can be of use as learning examples for other organizations who are active in similar contexts.

## 2. Theory

*In this second chapter, the theoretical framework for the study is presented. The chapter begins by explaining cross-cultural management, which is an important discipline to consider in order to understand how cultural differences affect the management approach. Secondly, policy management and policy implementation theory is covered briefly, where it is concluded that there is a lack of such scientific frameworks. Lastly, theory related to cultural imperialism is lifted, as well as Chinas historical and present relation to cultural imperialism. The three main theoretical categories have been chosen based on their relevance for this study.*

### 2.1. Cross-Cultural Management

Thomas & Peterson (2017) defines cross-cultural management as the study of management in a cross-cultural context. It is closely related to the area of international human resource management, and covers how international organizations need to consider different cultural backgrounds as they communicate and manage their operations internationally.

#### 2.1.1. Hofstede's Model of Cultural Dimensions

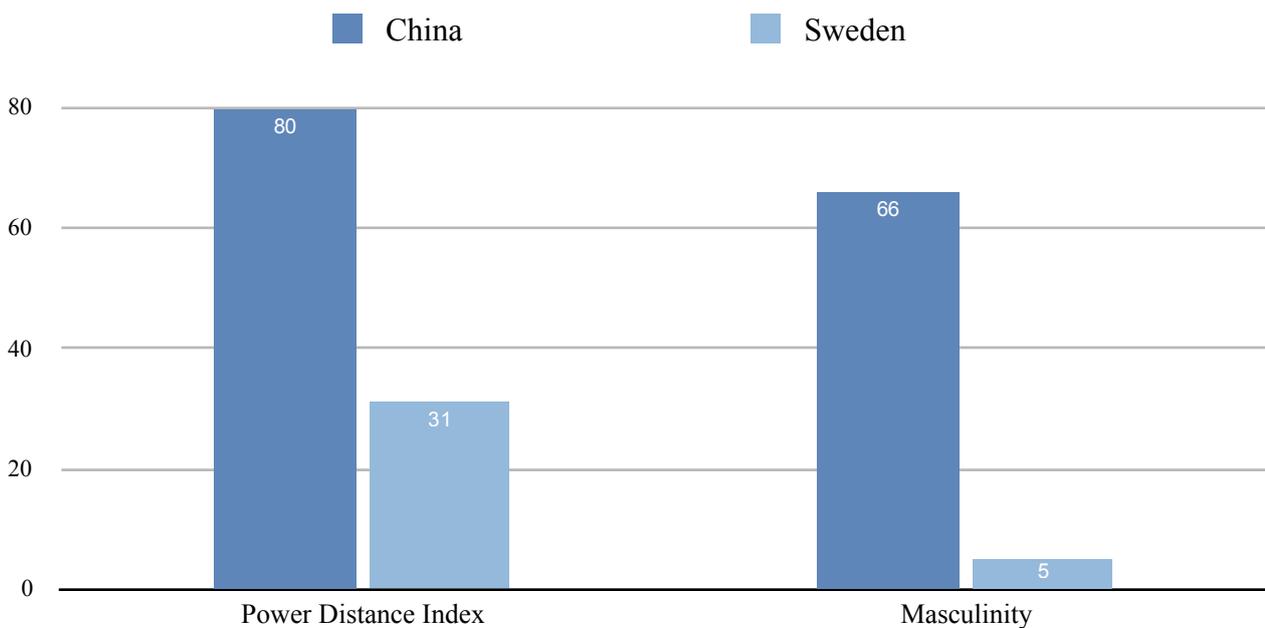
As mentioned by Thomas & Peterson (2017) in the previous chapter, it is essential to understand how different cultures differ from one another in order to successfully communicate and manage operations internationally. This is further emphasized by Pilhofer (2011), who concluded that cultural knowledge is essential for organizations who are active in intercultural business settings. This is why Hofstede's model of cultural dimensions is used in this study. Pilhofer (2011) explains that Hofstede's model of cultural dimensions is a widely established theoretical framework that describes the effect a society's culture has on the values of its members, and how these values relate to behavior. The theory is a framework for cross-cultural communication, and is primarily applicable in the context of understanding international business- and management. Thus, it is used in this study to provide an overview of the cultural differences between China and Sweden, which according to Thomas & Peterson (2017) and Pilhofer (2011) is essential to consider. The model of cultural dimensions consists of six dimensions: *power distance*, *individualism*, *masculinity*, *uncertainty avoidance*, *indulgence* and *long-term orientation*. For this study, two dimensions have been deemed particularly interesting in order to understand values related to the topic of our research: gender equality. These are: *power distance* and *masculinity*. The reason for why these two dimensions were chosen will be motivated after the definition of each dimension has been given.

1. Power Distance Index (PDI): The PDI refers to the way that society deals with inequalities. I.e. the extent of acceptable equality and inequality between people in a society. Hofstede (2001, p. 98) describes PDI as follows: "*The extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that the power is distributed unequally*". According to Hofstede (2001), a high degree on the PDI indicates that an imbalance of power and financial conditions are approved by the society. On the contrary, a low score on the PDI indicates that a society emphasizes and tries to minimize the differences of power and wealth between individuals. Citizens of such societies have the same equality and opportunities. In the organizational context, a high score on PDI infers that an organization has a high level of hierarchy, and that the power is distributed thereafter, often with an autocratic leadership.
2. Masculinity (MAS): The MAS refers to the extent of role divisions between genders. Hofstede (1991, p. 13) describes it as "*The social implications of having been born as a boy or a girl*". According to Hofstede (1980), the social role of men has more variations between different cultures in comparison with women. Therefore, he asserts that masculine cultures are those who

insists on a maximum distinction between the roles of men and women in society (Hofstede, 1980). Consequently, he argues that a country can be characterized as either a masculine or feminine culture, depending on the predominant values in the society. A high score on masculinity indicates that a culture is highly dominated by male traits, which translates to a society that is characterized and driven by competition, success and achievements. On the contrary, Jandt (2006) explains that feminine cultures care more about the quality of interpersonal relations as well as the quality of working life. Jandt (2006) continues by explaining that managers in masculine work environments are more assertive and decisive. On the contrary, managers in feminine cultures are intuitive and insists on general agreement.

The two dimensions mentioned above were chosen for this study since they arguably affect how societies and cultures approaches the topic of gender equality. For example, in cultures characterized with a high degree of masculinity, one could expect that the level of gender equality is low since male and females are culturally divided and assigned separated roles that inhabits different levels of societal power. Moreover, if the degree of power distance is high as well, the division of power between the genders will arguably not be questioned, but instead expected (Hofstede, 1991).

### 2.1.1.1. China and Sweden



*Fig. 1. A diagram visualizing China and Sweden's score on Hofstede's model of cultural dimensions (Hofstede Insights, 2019).*

According to China's score in Hofstede's model of cultural dimensions, China exhibits one of the highest degrees of PDI (80). This indicates that the society believes that inequalities of wealth and power among the people are acceptable. Hofstede (2001) argues that China's cultural heritage, along with its political history, affects the power distance enhancements of China. He also adds that China's Confucianism advocates for a social order based on unequal relationships, which he argues to further extend China's hierarchical culture. Moreover, a high score on PDI further implicates that superior - subordinate relations tend to be polarized, and that there is no defense against the abuse of power by superiors (Hofstede, 2001).

In contrast, Sweden's low score of PDI (31) indicates a society characterized by decentralized

power and equal opportunities. Communication in the workplace is direct and informal (Hofstede, 2001). Hierarchy is for convenience only, superiors are accessible and leaders are ascribed coaching roles. The role of management is to facilitate and empower, managers count on the skill of their team members, and the attitudes towards managers are informal (Hofstede Insights, 2019).

Moreover, China's high degree on MAS (66) makes it a masculine society. This means that China is driven by success oriented values and financial achievement, while also stressing the role of division between the genders (Hofstede, 2001). Managers are assertive and decisive (Jandt, 2006).

In contrast, Sweden scores very low on MAS (5), which makes it a feminine culture. Hofstede (2001) explains that this creates a balance between leisure time and work. Thus, Sweden's feminine society is characterized by the importance of life/work balance, and a focus on including everyone. In Sweden, an effective manager is supportive towards their employees, and decision making is achieved through involvement. In other words, managers strive for consensus during decision making. According to Hofstede Insights (2019), people value equality, solidarity and quality in their working lives.

### **2.1.2. Criticism Towards Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions**

The scores, characteristics and scales used in Hofstede's model of cultural dimension is often misapplied in both teaching and research as if they apply to individuals. Such applications are erroneous, and related conclusions reached by such teachings or research is flawed or even meaningless. Brewer & Venaik (2012) explains this by addressing that the items used to identify dimensions at the national level are invalid measures of dimensions at the individual level. This is because Hofstede's dimensions were developed through factor analysis of the means of nationally aggregated individual item responses. Minkov & Hofstede (2011, p.12) explains:

Hofstede's dimensions of national culture were constructed at the national level. They were underpinned by variables that correlated across nations, not across individuals or organizations. In fact, his dimensions are *meaningless* as descriptors of *individuals* or as predictors of individual differences because the variables that define them do not correlate meaningfully across individuals.

Brewer & Venaik (2012) states that in order for Hofstede's dimensions to be used correctly in management research and teachings, one must approach the theory with an understanding that the dimensions are applicable on a national level, and not on an individual level.

### **2.1.3. Managers, Policies & Corporate Culture**

From a societal perspective, the core of culture is according to Hofstede (1991) the norms and values inhabited by the society. From a corporate perspective, corporate culture consists of beliefs, norms and values that influence the thoughts and behavior of the employees and managers within an organization. According to economic theory, corporate culture is attributed as an important success factor if it is managed correctly (Flamholtz & Randle, 2011). According to Cronqvist, Low & Nilsson (2007), corporate culture plays a central role for a corporates policy choices. They also observed a linkage between corporate culture and a firm's economic performance, where organization with a strong corporate culture gained an advantage over competitors who were active within the same industry.

According to economic theory, corporate culture is often managed via hiring managers who fit the cultural profile. The reason is that managers inhabits a different status within an organization that

employees tend to look up to and respect. The respect might then be transformed into a smaller desire to act like the managers, to think and perceive about things more in line with the corporate culture (Danis, 2003). According to Vasile & Nicolescu (2016), the role of the manager becomes extra important as corporations establish foreign affiliations. The authors argue that the success or failure of management is dependent on the way managers understand the cultural environment. In the case of their study, the cultural environment is described using Hofstede's model of cultural dimensions. The study by Vasile & Nicolescu (2016) shows that international managers (i.e. managers who are active in an international context) who ignore aspects from the cultural dimensions risk causing economic disruption in foreign affiliations. Consequently, the authors argue that it takes a certain adaption to the cultural dimensions in order to successfully manage cross-culturally (Vasile & Nicolescu, 2016).

In regards to gender equality, Eden & Gupta (2017) argues that gender equality has made advances around the world and has gained a larger focus in the context of cross-cultural management. They argue that international corporations need to establish policies and internal structures (such as corporate culture) that constitutes a foundation for increased gender equality. They explain:

Culture and context are central to understanding a society's differing role expectations of males and females. Both must live, survive and thrive within the constraints and opportunities imposed by culture and context. Forces for change are typically slow to occur and can be restricted or supported by government regulation and business policies (Eden & Gupta, 2017, p.206)

## **2.2. Policy Management**

According to Khan & Shahriar (2016), the success of an adopted policy depends entirely on how successful it can be implemented and managed. The authors argue that even the best policy, or policy framework for that matter, is of little worth if it is not implemented properly. However, Nilsen (2015) addresses that there has been a debate in the policy implementation research field for many years concerning whether it is possible to produce a theory that is applicable to policy implementation as a whole. Creating a theory for this field is considered a futile undertaking, because the world is considered to be too complex to allow for parsimonious explanations (Nilsen, 2015). Consequently, there is a consensus amongst scholars that the discipline of 'policy implementation' suffers from valid, viable and universally accepted good theories. The discipline is considered to still be in its infancy, which is why no grand or good theory have yet been established.

Despite this, the Organizational Development Moment (ODM) has been developed. The model was created in order to provide guidelines for how to successfully manage policy implementation in organizations. According to Khan & Shahriar (2016), the model's hypotheses can be summarized into that the success of policy implementation largely depends upon the leadership. The model suggests that factors such as effective leadership as well as engagement and motivation of people are important aspects that affects the success of policy implementation (Khan & Shahriar, 2016). However, models such as the ODM is widely criticized based on the aspects mentioned in the previous paragraph.

## **2.3. Cultural imperialism**

Cultural imperialism is defined as the cultural aspects of imperialism. The term cultural imperialism refers most broadly to the exercise of domination in cultural relationships in which the values, practices, and meanings of a

powerful foreign culture are imposed upon one or more native cultures (Abeysekera, 2015.p.8).

Tomlinson (2012) states that a result of cultural imperialism is that developing countries are importing cultures from more developed countries. Cultural influence from a developed country could cause the developing country to adopt its customs, philosophies, world-views and general ways of life. One major reason for the rise of cultural imperialism is the ongoing globalization. By acknowledging the need of adaption and raise the awareness of culture differences, organizational managers can prepare for how to approach the targeted market in the most suitable way (Abeysekera, 2015).

### **2.3.1. China's Historical Relation to Cultural Imperialism**

The attitude towards cultural imperialism from the western world has its roots from the mid-late Qing dynasty. Around 1759-1860, the so-called barbarians (European nations) came to China with the purpose of trading various goods. In order to trade they had to understand each other and English became the leading language. In the eyes of Chinese, the English language was a savage language only spoken by barbarians. If one spoke the language more than necessary one could suffer a significant social stigmatization.

In the beginning of the 20th century English spoken missionary schools were established around China. The language was considered a key to high status employment opportunities and the Chinese government started to engage in diplomacy with western powers. As the demand for English arose, several anti-foreign movements sparked and resulted in the deaths of 231 foreigners. The western educational system was considered too far off from the Chinese tradition. After the Chinese civil war in 1949, the Chinese Communist Party established People's Republic of China (PRC). In order to combat the ongoing cultural imperialism, China banned all broadcast in foreign languages, all imported foreign books and English teaching schools were closed.

However, the strong negative attitude towards western beliefs did not last for long. After Mao's death in 1976, Deng Xiaoping took control and effectively ended China's self-imposed isolation. This increased China's participation in international diplomacy and saw the country open up to the world. In 2001, China became a member of the World Trade Organization, which provided the country the right fuel to continue what they once started. Thus, the English language became relevant and considered as a necessity for the sustained development of the country (Simpson, 2017).

#### **2.3.1.1. China's Present Relation to Cultural Imperialism**

Simpson (2017) describes the relation between China and cultural imperialism to be sensitive. Today, anti-foreign movements such as the modern "Great Firewall of China" (blockage of western media outlets by the Chinese government) shows that the country does not want to be too culturally influenced by western beliefs. The Chinese government has expressed that learning English could lead to loss of Chinese identity to some extent. Thus, the literature suggests that the recurring view of western cultural imperialism as a threat to Chinese culture is still very strong. Preserving the indigenous cultural identity is important for China, but the view of English as an instrumental tool for economic development shows little sign of loosening (Simpson, 2017).

### **2.3.2. International Pressure**

There is a trend towards more feminine societies, and increasing international pressure forces countries to grant and enforce formal rights for women. World Bank (2011) explains that gender

differences in access to market work and persistent employment segregation by gender could weaken a country's capability to compete internationally and ultimately hamper economic growth. International organizations constantly work to improve the gender equality around the world, such as International Labor Organization (ILO) and United Nations (UN). These organizations are prestigious, and combined with the home-grown pressure, many countries have taken serious actions to prevent gender inequality. International trade and other economic agreements may have the power to pressure to elicit these actions. Furthermore, the international pressure on countries to take action transfers to multinational corporations as well - particularly those who are established in developing countries, who faces increasing pressure to enact policies for gender equality from both the media as well as local customers. As mentioned in the previous paragraph, gender inequality or a lack of focus on gender equality risk compromising a corporation's external validity. In other words, a corporate focus on gender equality translates into a commercial value as well (World Bank, 2011).

### **2.3.2.1. Impact on Gender Roles and Norms**

The World Bank (2011) propose that globalization influence the existing gender roles and norms. Increasing economic opportunities and knowledge among women affects certain traditional views where women are not regarded to belong in the work force. The opportunity for women to become income earners and improve their power in society might even impact the traditional status of women in the households. Technological innovations and the improved communications within developing countries could be used to promote changes in gender roles and improve women's status in society. According to Gray, Kittilson and Sandholtz (2006) globalization will impact the norms and ideas inhabited in a country via values and beliefs that are traveling across borders. It can already be seen that the results of globalization (and the fact that countries open up for international influence) has improved health care and increased the ratio of women participating in governmental decisions. Gray, Kittilson and Sandholtz (2006) also concludes that the more a country engage with other countries, the more likely it is that they will get influenced by other norms and values. The result from previous studies conducted by Portafke and Ursprung (2012) is that globalization is extra important for women in developing countries. With more knowledge about how women in other countries live, they can improve their own situation (given the other countries provide a better life for their women). Institutions in the developing countries learn from other more well-established institutions on how to work and promote gender equality.

### **3. Methodology**

*In this third chapter, the choice of method for obtaining the empirical data is presented. The chapter also provides arguments for why a certain approach was chosen.*

#### **3.1. Choice of Method**

According to Cresswell (2003) there are primarily three main research methods available when collecting data; the qualitative-, quantitative- and mixed method. The qualitative method is best suited for research questions where the research variables are unknown and needs to be explored. In other words, the emphasis is put on exploring and understanding concepts that constitute the particular research phenomena (Cresswell, 2003). The qualitative premiss is that reality is far too complex to be reduced into numbers, and that in order to understand reality, one must gather information in the form of *words*, which can contribute to more nuanced and elaborate answers (Jacobsen, 2017). Thus, the qualitative method focuses on deeper understandings, details and descriptions of certain phenomena (Patel & Davidsson, 2003). The data is typically collected via the use of for example interviews and case studies, and the data is characterized by a low level of structure. On the contrary, the quantitative method is characterized by collecting data that is highly structured, where the results can be quantifiable and measurable. This is typically done via for example questionnaires, numerical studies and statistical gatherings (Cresswell, 2003). The premiss with the quantitative method is that reality is objective and possible to measure (Patel & Davidsson, 2003).

This study sought to answer a complex question, and it did not seek to answer it in a quantifiable way. Instead, this study strived to achieve deep and nuanced information that would deliver an elaborate understanding of how Swedish corporations manage Swedish gender equality policies cross-culturally. Via profound semi-structured interviews with strategically selected participants, we wanted to achieve information that could be used to fulfill the purpose of this study. According to Carrasco & Lucas (2015), the qualitative method allows researchers to explore questions and achieve answers that can not be accomplished via using the quantitative method. They also argue that a qualitative method is absolutely necessary in order to provide rich contextual subjective information from respondents, which perfectly matches the purpose of this study. Consequently, the qualitative method was chosen as the method for this work.

Moreover, our choice of method can be tied to the comparative research method. According to Bryman & Bell (2013), the comparative research method is defined as a method where two or more subjects are studied through identical methods. The objective is for researchers to be able to compare results and find similarities and differences among participating subjects that have experienced similar situations in similar contexts. In the case of this study, this translates to comparatively studying how four Swedish based corporations, established in Shanghai, manage gender equality policies cross-culturally.

#### **3.2. Reasoning**

When collecting data there are primarily three main reasonings that can be applied in order to relate theory and empirics to each other, these are *deductive-*, *inductive-* and *abductive* reasonings. According to Patel & Davidsson (2003), the deductive reasoning (or top-down approach) implies that the research moves from theory to empirics. In other words, the research is based on existing theories and principles. In contrast, the inductive reasoning (or bottom-up approach) implies that the research moves from empirics to theory. It is often referred to as 'the path of exploration'. In other words, the inductive reasoning infers that researchers create a new theory based on observations of

reality. Lastly, the abductive reasoning can be described as a combination of the two (Patel & Davidsson, 2003).

For this study, the deductive reasoning was chosen. In other words, our work began with an extensive literature review where we established our theoretical framework, which was followed by an empirical data collection where we observed our theoretical findings in practice. Thus, our study moved from theory to empirics, which coincides with the characteristics of the deductive reasoning.

### **3.3. Collection of Information and Data**

The data collection was done with the goal of providing this thesis with purposeful information that matches the purpose as well as the problem statement of this report.

#### **3.3.1. Interviews**

The primary data for this study has been collected via semi-structured interviews. This is motivated by the (to us) desirable characteristics associated with the semi-structured interview. As described by Bryman (2012), in a semi-structured interview, the researchers has a list of questions and topics that are going to be explored throughout the interview. The list is often referred to as the *interview guide*. The semi-structured nature of the interview allows researchers to not follow the questions in a systematic order. Instead, researchers are allowed to shift between questions freely and explore topics further via asking additional questions (that are not included in the interview guide). It also provides researchers with a framework for consistency, i.e. the interview process will behave similar at each interview occasion as a result of the interview guide. Bryman (2012) mentions that in unstructured interviews, which is another popular interview method, themes and and topics risk being forgotten throughout the course of the interview. This has to do with the unstructured characteristics of such interviews. Thus, as Bryman (2012) describes, in comparison to the unstructured interview, the semi-structured interview provides researchers with great flexibility simultaneously as it does not compromise the inclusion of important topics and themes.

Consequently, the semi-structured interview was chosen for this study. In total, four semi-structured interviews were performed with four different corporations at their offices in Shanghai, where one or two individual/s participated at each interview occasion. All interviews were performed face to face and were conducted based on our, as well as our interviewee's, disposable timeframe. The benefits of face to face interviews are that they establish a high sense of openness and trust between the researchers and the interviewees. Moreover, the face to face interviews also put a great emphasis on the conversation and reduces distractions. Negative aspects surrounding face to face interviews are tied to geographical, time consuming and cost related aspects. In other words, it is time consuming and costly to perform face to face interviews since they occupy valuable time, and they also demand one party to travel to the other. However, we considered the negative aspects to be offset by the positive, since the quality of the interview is better during face to face interviews in comparison with other methods such as e-mail or telephone interview (Jacobsen, 2017).

##### **3.3.1.1. Interview Guide**

The layout of the interview guide that we used during our semi-structured interviews consists of four main sections; *general questions*, *policies*, *values* and lastly *conclusion*. In the first section, *general questions*, the interviewee/s were asked to provide background information about both the corporation that they are working for as well as themselves. Our intention with this first section was to get a good overview of both the corporation as well as the interviewee/s. The second section, *policies*, included questions regarding how the Swedish gender equality policies had been transferred from Sweden to the Shanghai branch, and how they are managed in the Shanghai office.

The second section also sought to explore if there were any obstacles or incentives to the implementation of gender equality policies. Moreover, the questions in the second chapter further explored how the managers had experienced the effects that Swedish gender equality policies had on the employees and corporate culture in the Shanghai office. The third section, *values*, contained unassuming general questions about our interviewee's values towards gender equality. The goal with this section were to get general answers containing knowledge and values that could be of use to get a broad understanding of our research area in its cross-cultural context. We regarded such knowledge to be essential in order to properly answer our research question. It was for example via these questions that we were provided with answers that brought up the connection between practical policy management and corporate culture, as well as the importance of corporate culture in policy management. In the fourth section, *conclusion*, we asked one rather large question, with the intention to provide the interviewee the ability to summarize the previous two chapters into a concrete answer. The conclusion section tied the interview together.

### **3.3.2. Practical Research Process**

At the start of each interview occasion, we began by introducing ourselves, our research area as well as the purpose of the interviewee/s inclusion in our study. We then followed the interview guide as described in chapter 3.3.1.1. After the interviews, we transcribed the interviews and used the thematic analysis (which will be described thoroughly in chapter 3.4) in order to find various themes. The themes were then analyzed together with the theoretical framework for this study in order to discover a logical connection between the two. Ultimately, we arrived at the conclusion and answer to our research question.

### **3.3.3. Selection**

According to Denscombe (2010), qualitative research is characterized by a relatively small number of participants. Therefore, he argues that the aspect of selection (i.e. selecting the participants) is an important factor in qualitative studies. According to him, researchers often need to pick out a few participants from a wide range of possible participants. In order to do so, it is important for researchers to establish criteria for the selection, so that the most suitable participants are chosen.

For this study, the selection criteria has been the following:

1. The corporation must be based in Sweden and have offices in Shanghai.
2. The interviewee must possess knowledge about our research area (which translates to: must be an office manager or human resource personnel).

The participants for our study ultimately resulted in four corporations, where one- to two managers were interviewed at each interview occasion. All corporations and every individual coincided with our selection criteria. Ultimately we had four participating organizations, with six participating managers, of which two were female and four male (There is an extensive presentation of the participating corporations and managers available in chapter 4.1).

## **3.4. Data Analysis**

Qualitative research data is characterized by its nuanced, complex and extensive nature (Denscombe, 2010). Thus, it is essential for researchers to adapt a suitable data analysis framework in order to structure and make sense of the data. According to Bryman (2012), one of the most common approaches to qualitative data analysis is the thematic analysis (also referred to as thematic code analysis). The thematic analysis is described as a framework for ordering and synthesizing data. Bryman (2012) explains that the idea is to construct an index of central themes and sub

themes, which essentially can be described as recurring motifs that can be found in the transcribed text. According to Bryman (2012), the thematic analysis is a remarkably underdeveloped despite its popularity, and it lacks a universally accepted set of clearly specified series of procedures. However, this study used Braun & Clarke's (2006) step by step guide to the thematic analysis. They describe that there are five phases in the thematic analysis. Braun & Clarke (2006, p. 87) describes these steps as follows:

1. Familiarizing yourself with your data: Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas.
2. Generating initial codes: Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
3. Searching for themes: Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
4. Reviewing themes: Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic 'map' of the analysis.
5. Defining and naming themes: Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.
6. Producing the report: The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.

Our process began by transcribing all the data from the interviews. This was followed by reading and re-reading the data, while taking notes on overlaying observable themes. Themes were discovered primarily based on repetitive occurrences in the text, the use of metaphors and analogies in certain ways, as well as similarities expressed by the interviewees. According to Braun & Clarke (2006), it is beneficial to use some sort of visual representation when discovering themes. Thus, when a certain theme had been discovered, we color-coded the transcribed data, where each color represented an overlaying theme. To provide an example, 'government regulations' was a theme that we found. We color coded this theme green across all instances in the transcribed data where government regulations are mentioned. This made it easy for us to see and review the themes, and to judge if the data in fact constituted a theme. We then added the theme to a table, where we collected and compiled all our themes. Afterwards, we decided on which name a certain theme should have.

As described by Braun & Clarke (2006), there are several advantages to this approach of thematic analysis. The authors describe that it is both quick, flexible and easy. They also emphasize its suitability for qualitative interviews, since it is useful when compiling key features of a large amount of data.

### **3.5. Ethical Aspects**

In the context of contemporary social research, ethical aspects is an ever present concern. Denscombe (2010) states that it is up to researcher to make sure that no-one should risk exposure to

harm as a result of their participation. In this context, the emphasis is on the possibility of harm, rather than the actuality of it. In order to reduce the possibility of harm, Denscombe (2010, p. 7) provides four guidelines that researchers should follow as they perform qualitative interviews:

1. Participants will remain anonymous.
2. Data will be treated as confidential.
3. Participants understand the nature of the study and their involvement.
4. Participants voluntarily consent to being involved.

Denscombe (2010) further emphasize the importance for researchers to be open, honest and not engage in deception towards their participants. This study has made sure to strictly comply with the guidelines provided by Denscombe (2010). Each organization and individual have been asked to participate and have done so at their own will, they have been well informed about the research subject and purpose as well as what their involvement will entail, and they have also been able to read the interview guide before deciding to participate. Furthermore, every participant have had complete power to decide their desired level of anonymity.

### **3.6. Trustworthiness**

According to Denscombe (2010), it is essential to demonstrate the trustworthiness of any research. For qualitative research, there are four conventional key aspects used for establishing trustworthiness, these are: *validity*, *credibility*, *generalizability* and *objectivity*.

Bryman & Bell (2013) describes *validity* as an aspect reflecting if the study measures, observers or identifies what it set out to do. According to Denscombe (2010), a major issue with qualitative research is the extent to which researchers can demonstrate that their data is appropriate and accurate for the study at hand. He continues by arguing that it is impossible for qualitative researchers to prove in an absolute way that they have 'got it right'. In other words, the goal with validity is to ensure that the data that is collected accurately reflects the purpose of the study, and that the nature of the data is appropriate and accurate for the study. There are measures available for qualitative researchers to use for strengthening the validity, one of which is *respondent validation*, which means that researchers can return to the participants with the data for validation (Denscombe, 2010). In order to strengthen the validity for this study, we have utilized respondent validation, I.e. during our interviews, we often repeated our interpretation of their answers, which provided them with the opportunity to correct us if they thought that we had not understood them correctly.

The goal of *credibility* is to make sure that the results of the study reflects as close to a universal truth as possible (Bryman & Bell, 2013). According to Denscombe (2010, p. 298), the question of credibility translates into "*would the research instrument produce the same results when used by different researchers (all other things being equal)?*". In other words, independent parties should be able to perform the same study several times and end up with the same conclusion (Bryman & Bell, 2013). However, according to Soila-Wadman (2010), credibility is often argued by the scientific community to not be truly applicable in qualitative research. This is motivated by the that the empirical data in qualitative research often is gathered via methods such as interviews. The argument is that it is impossible to perform the same exact interview several times, and thus that diminishes the opportunity for an independent party to perform the same study and arrive at the same conclusion. However, Jacobsen (2017) argues that in the case of qualitative research, credibility is associated with the context of how the data has been collected, and if that context has affected the result in any way. We sought to minimize the issue of context via performing our

interviews in mundane settings. I.e, our interviews were performed under no extraordinary circumstances.

According to Denscombe (2010), qualitative research is typically characterized by intensive studies of a relatively small number of cases. The small number of participants raises a troubling question, namely "*How can you generalize on the basis of such a small number?*" (Denscombe, 2010, p. 300). *Generalizability* addresses the extent to which the results of a study can be deemed generalizable in the grand scheme, i.e. to which extent the results of a certain study are representative for more similar cases. This study is no exception to the difficulties of generalizability in qualitative research. Thus, it can be concluded that this study is only generalizable among the included organizations, and that the results may not be regarded as universally representative.

The issue of *objectivity* addresses the concern regarding if researchers are able to produce results that are free from the influence of the researcher/s who conduct the study. Denscombe (2010) argues that at a fundamental level, one must recognize that no research is ever free from the influence of those who conduct it, and that qualitative data is always the product of an interpretation. For this study, we approached the research subject with openness and humbleness in mind. It was essential for us to remain polite and culturally sensitive, and attempt not to infuse our own personal bias as we conducted the interviews and interpreted the answers. Furthermore, respondent validation (as mentioned in the *validity* paragraph) is also a tool that promotes objectivity, which is why our interpretations were verified with the respondents to see if they match reality.

## **4. Empirical Collection**

*In this fourth chapter, the empirical data is compiled and presented. The chapter begins with a presentation of the participating corporations, which is later followed by the empirical data. The data is presented based on several themes that were discovered during the thematic data analysis.*

### **4.1. Company Descriptions**

#### **4.1.1. Handelsbanken (HB)**

Handelsbanken is a Swedish based corporation which is active in the banking and financial services industry. It established its Shanghai branch in the middle of the 1980's with the purpose of supporting their home market corporate clients. Today, the branch consist of one office with 45 employees, of which six are foreign whilst the rest are local Chinese. The ratio between female and male employees are 65% - 35%, in favor of female. Furthermore, Handelsbanken's Shanghai branch has twelve managers of which four are male and eight are female.

#### **4.1.2. Corporation 2 (C2)**

C2 is a Swedish based corporation which is active in the manufacturing industry. Due to a request of remaining anonymous in our work, they will not be presented further, and the corporation will be referred to as C2. C2 has offices located around the world, and established its Shanghai office in 2016. Today, the office consists of five employees, out of which three are female and two are males. All are local Chinese. The office has two managers, both female.

#### **4.1.3. Mannheimer Swartling (MSA)**

Mannheimer Swartling (MSA) is a Swedish based law firm. It is the largest law firm in the Nordic region and established its office in Shanghai in 2007. The purpose of their establishment was to support their home market clients who are active on the Chinese market. Apart from their Shanghai office, they have one additional in Hong Kong, both of which are referred to as their Chinese offices. However, for this study we will solely focus on the Shanghai office. Today, the office has a total of 12 employees, of which three are foreign and nine are local Chinese. Moreover, out of the 12 employees, three are male and nine are female. MSA managerial structure is quite different from other companies, and they seldom use the title manager at the Shanghai office. However, for simplification it can be said that they have one manager, who is male.

#### **4.1.4. Skandinaviska Enskilda Banken (SEB)**

Skandinaviska Enskilda Banken (SEB) is a Swedish based financial group for corporate customers, institutions and private individuals. SEB established their Shanghai branch in 2005 with the purpose of supporting their home market corporate clients who are active in China. Today, the office consists of a total of 40 employees, of which three are foreign and the rest local Chinese. The ratio between female and male employees are 65% - 35%, in favor of female. The office has seven managers in total, of which three are female and four are male.

#### **4.1.5. Table of Participating Corporations and Managers**

Table 1 (below) compiles and visualizes which manager/s that were interviewed from which corporation. In total we performed four semi-structured interviews. The table begins by specifying which interview occasion (1-4) the interviewee participated in, followed by which corporation (in its abbreviated form) the interviewee represented, followed by the title of the interviewee, the amount of work experience they had at the Shanghai office, ethnicity and lastly gender. Read the table from the left to the right.

To clarify, a total of four corporations participated in our study (HB, C2, MSA & SEB), where four semi-structured interviews were conducted with either one or two managers at their Shanghai office - totaling to six participating managers throughout the four semi-structured interviews.

Interview Occasion	Corporation	Professional Title of the Interviewee	Amount of time at the Shanghai Office	Ethnicity	Gender
1	HB	Head of Credit, Greater China	8 Months	Swedish	Male
1	HB	Senior Officer, Financial Risk and Risk Control	7 Years	Chinese	Female
2	C2	Branch Manager	3 Years	Chinese	Female
3	MSA	Partner	5 Years	Swedish	Male
3	MSA	Senior Associate	5 Months	Swedish	Male
4	SEB	Director, Head of Large Corporate Coverage, Shanghai	11 Years	Chinese	Male

*Table 1. A visual clarification of the participating interviewee's.*

## 4.2. Corporate Policies

All of our participating corporations stated that the policies they had implemented in their Shanghai office largely derived from their Swedish headquarters. For example, the Senior Officer HB explained that they follow a standard policy document that is compulsory for all their offices around the world, and that the same standard policies were implemented everywhere around the world. Similarly, the Director at SEB explained that their Shanghai branch is following group policies set by the Swedish headquarters. The same scenario was applicable for C2 and MSA as well. However, it was universally lifted that the policies by the Swedish head quarters were corrected or adapted to suit both Chinas legal regulations (this will be covered further in 4.2.1) as well as Chinese culture. The Director at SEB explained:

In general we follow the policies of the whole bank, we do not give any special exemption unless it is a particular issue related to the countries laws or regulations, but when it comes to policies for gender equality, sustainability - CSR, they are never exemptions, which means we always consider or adapt them into our local operations.

In another example, MSA stated that they strive to build their foreign offices with the same 'main core' regardless of geographical location, which includes the establishment of the same policy documents and corporate culture at the office. However, they also stated that reality can be said to be a truth with modification. In other words, the policies are the same world wide, but in order to make them successful at, for example, the Chinese office some parts are regarded with more importance than others.

#### **4.2.1. Government Regulations**

In our interviews we observed a clear pattern: Swedish polices face different obstacles when entering China. A universal theme amongst all included corporations was that they had to adapt to local legal regulations for policies regarding parental leave. Many of our participants stated that Swedish standards are not possible to establish in Shanghai, since Sweden's parental leave regulations are more generous in comparison with Chinese regulations. Still, some of the corporations stated that they did exceeded the legal regulations of parental leave, and offered their employees a parental leave which was more in line with Swedish standards but still within the legal prerequisites of China.

It was also understood that the employees at each company must sign a labor contract that is specific for the Shanghai region, and Swedish policies are not able to affect that. The labor contract covers aspects such as regulations for parental leave, Chinese holidays and social security. Therefore, Swedish policies must adapt to these local regulations. However, as previously stated, some corporations stated that they have the legal right to offer more holidays and a longer parental leave, as long as they do not replace or remove Chinese holidays.

However, apart the few aspects mentioned above, our interviewee's stated that there were no government regulations or local laws prohibiting or impeding the establishment of policies of any kind, particularly not in regards to gender equality. The Partner at MSA described that transferring Swedish polices to Shanghai is more linked to commercial barriers than formal ones:

There are no formal obstacles for us to implement Swedish policies, but there could be some commercial ones. If one stands out in the crowd too much, either positive or negative, the result could be hard to handle in practice.

#### **4.2.2. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Policies**

All of our participating corporations stated that CSR polices and policies related to CSR are very important for their Shanghai office. It was understood during the interviews that CSR and related policies were always transferred from Sweden and implemented in the Shanghai branch. According to the Director of SEB, the Chinese government does not have any regulations or laws enforcing Chinese companies to implement or work with questions related to sustainability and CSR. The Head of Large Corporate Coverage at SEB explained: "Sustainability and CSR is not mandatory from the government or from the law, but of course the government is encouraging it more now".

According to several of our participating corporations, CSR is becoming an increasingly important topic and measures encouraging the implementation of such policies are increasing. However, according to the Director at SEB, many Chinese corporations still do not care or consider such questions. The Chinese companies were said to still follow the traditional Chinese business culture. However, according to our interviews, a shift can be seen in China, and it was stated that public pressure on corporations to act sustainable had increased during the past five years. All the participating corporations in this study confirms that their respective headquarters are demanding them to follow the Swedish established polices related to sustainability and CSR. The Branch Manager at C2 explained:

We have six offices in the world, and all of us obey those [group policies regarding sustainability and CSR] policies. Of course, we need to adapt it a bit to fit the culture in each country, but mainly the polices are made by our HQ in Sweden.

One organization stated that CSR now constitutes a commercial value as well. In other words, in their view, large corporations - Chinese or foreign - that do not consider or implement CSR related policies risk losing their standing on the market. This was explained by that customers care about these aspects to a greater extent as Shanghai and China is becoming increasingly more international.

All the participating companies stated that they continuously work to improve their sustainability and CSR policies in line with the growing demand from society. In other words, they stated that they must alter and evolve their policies over time as the world around them is changing. The Senior Associate at MSA explained that policies are a reflection of the time period, and that policies age. Thus, the policies that are established today were argued to risk irrelevance in the future. The Senior Associate at MSA explained:

One has to work with policies all the time and it is hard to say what is controlling that, the only thing we can say is that we are constantly working to improve and make regularly adjustment in the policies. Depending on how the world looks like and how people value certain things at the moment.

#### **4.2.2.1. Gender Equality Policies**

Policies addressing gender equality were widely adopted by all participating corporations. This means that every organization have policies addressing gender equality in line with CSR standards. The backbone of the gender equality policies were summarized by our interviewee's into that all employees should be treated equally and with respect; everyone should be given the same opportunities for professional development; and harassment's and discrimination based on gender are strictly forbidden.

It could be understood that there were no legal regulations impeding the establishment of gender equality policies. However, as mentioned in chapter 4.2.1, it was argued that there are commercial and cultural ones. Moreover, there were legal regulations dictating holidays and maternity leave. However, apart from these deviations there were no other restrictions, and it was universally believed that it would be easy for the Shanghai offices to establish more policies regarding gender equality autonomously - if they so wished. Furthermore, we also understood that three of the corporations published annual sustainability reports, where gender equality is tracked over time and often presented in several KPI's<sup>1</sup>.

### **4.3. Cross-Cultural Management**

From the aspect of cross-cultural management, several interesting phenomena were observed. As established in the previous chapters, corporate culture differs a lot between China and Sweden. During our empirical collection, we found the most notable differences to be the low level of hierarchy in the Swedish corporate culture and the high focus on equality, which deviated a lot compared to Chinese equivalents. This chapter seeks to describe how our participating corporations approach the cross-cultural aspects, and how management was adapted to suit the Chinese culture while not compromising the native Swedish corporate culture. Such aspects are important to understand in order to grasp how the corporations manage gender equality policies with the cross-cultural aspects in mind.

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<sup>1</sup> KPI: A quantifiable measure used to evaluate the success of an organization, employee, etc. in meeting objectives for performance (Oxford University Press, 2019).

### **4.3.1. Corporate Hierarchy**

It was universally agreed that the Swedish corporations in Shanghai had a lower hierarchy than their Chinese equivalents. When asked how the Chinese employees responded to the low level of hierarchy, we achieved a variety of answers. All participants agreed that the flat organizations were regarded positively by the employees. However, it was stated by several participants that the flat organizational structure in some contexts is a problem. The Director at SEB described:

Sweden is kind of famous in China for meeting everyone, for including everyone and checking everyone's opinion... But in China, we say that you should follow the boss, you should respect seniors and parents, and that is just the way the culture is, which means to some extent that open discussions in China become tricky... I remember our first branch manager, he was Swedish... and in some meetings he was very Swedish, and the Chinese employees did not recognize, or misunderstand, the situation. They thought "why do we waste hours just to ask opinions, we are sitting here ready to write down what the big boss wants us to do"... this is because of lack of previous experience, they never had this opportunity before, and we are taught differently by the family, school and society... That was an issue, something that is natural in Sweden became a bit strange for the Chinese.

It was added by several of the other corporations who had experienced similar situations that this cultural focus on hierarchical structures affected superior-subordinate relations within the branch. I.e. to some extent, the managers that were interviewed believed that this affected how they were treated and approached by subordinates, who were argued to sometimes be a bit more reserved - despite the prevailing flat organizational structure. The Director at SEB added:

It needs to take time, not weeks or days. If we hire one new employee and tell them "this is a Swedish bank, everyone is equal" they'll probably just sit there like "okay, yep sure". What I mean is that it does not matter, people do not really pay too high attention for such things. So something that is very important for Swedes might not be that important for Chinese. In China, it is more like "what is my salary, what is my job, how much work will I have to do", and so on. They see you as the boss, and that you should decide. It takes time to change that mindset.

However, despite that, it was still agreed that the employees in the branches adapted to the low level of hierarchy over time, and that it ultimately resulted in open discussion between the managers and the employees. On the topic of time and adaptation, the Branch Manager at C2 stated: "...Chinese are not so open... For example, at first we were not as good at team work, but now everyone likes teamwork. We needed time to adapt to that".

### **4.3.2. Cultural Differences**

During our empirical gathering, it could be concluded that gender equality was universally agreed to be an important topic and that policies addressing the issue were widely implemented by all corporations. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the vast majority of all gender equality policies derived from the Swedish headquarters. However, when asked how these relatively "Swedish" policies were met and received by the employees in China, we received varying answers. In all instances, we were presented with the conclusion that the policies were received well and that

attitudes towards a greater focus on gender equality is met positively by the employees - but in three instances, it was also added that gender equality overall is not something that is particularly reflected upon by the Chinese employees. In other words, the policies were regarded positively, but also with a certain degree of unconcern. The Partner at MSA described:

To some extent, the topic of gender equality is still a bit unripe in China... it is seldom talked about and discussed in China in general, and that is true for this office as well, our employees do not really think about these questions... I even dare to say that we sort of introduce them to these kind of questions, whereafter we may have discussion about them... so to be honest, even if the policies are received well, they are also met with a bit of unconcern or uninterest.

As this phenomena was explained by the three corporations, we observed two distinct and common themes: the first one was that the offices already had a vast majority of female employees as well as an even spread of the two binary genders in management positions (often in favor of women), and the second was attributed by Chinese cultural factors. The Director at SEB encapsulated these two themes and described them as follows:

We have a lot of females in the bank, well here in Shanghai at least... So I do not think gender equality has become a too big concern or issue for most of my colleges, based on my personal observations. So we do not talk about it that much... But in the whole of China, I think it [gender equality] is improving a lot, but it is still not good enough... I think in Sweden you might be at the very top level in terms of gender equality, but in Asia or in China... it is an issue, it is still a social problem and from a European perspective the gender equality is not that good. I would however say that it has become better than compared 10 years ago, not only from a legal perspective, but from a cultural, societal and business environmental perspective as well...

Furthermore, on the topic of cultural factors, the Partner at MSA stated:

Women [in China] in general, if I am free to generalize, do not really fight for these kinds of questions the same way we do in Sweden. They live in a culture that has looked the same for a very long time, and they do not really expect or believe that they are able to affect it all that much, and that is why they do not spend a lot of time and energy doing so. The mindset is a bit like "This is China, and that's the way it is". That is a huge difference compared to in Sweden, where have a lot more practical activity surrounding equality.

#### **4.3.3. Corporate Culture, Policies and Foreign Managers**

All participating corporations regarded the Swedish corporate culture (with the values and norms that it inhabits) at their particular branch to be very important. It was for example described as the foundation on which the corporation exists, i.e. that the corporate culture should be the same no matter in which office around the world you are, and that it is the corporate culture that links the organization across boarders. The corporations further added that a certain need for adaption was necessary, and that cultural factors are important to consider, but that the core culture should remain the same. Three corporations stated that policies played a large role in establishing the corporate culture. I.e, they believed that policies shaped the corporate culture via establishing guidelines for

behavior and values. On the contrary, one corporation stated that it was a "chicken or the egg" type of scenario, and ultimately they agreed on that it in fact was the corporate culture that affected which policies that were implemented. Nevertheless, corporate culture was regarded as a very important aspect.

However, all participating organization agreed that it was necessary for a Swedish manager to initially set the tone for- and manage the corporate culture. The Partner at MSA explained:

The most important roll we have as Swedes is almsot to be culture bearers, to ensure that the corporate culture lives and is reflected in the work that we do for our clients... Because for the locals, this is not a given.

Continuing on this theme, the Branch Manager at C2 stated:

We are a Swedish company, so almost everything is according to Swedish corporate culture... we had a Swedish manager here initially, and he helped us build this office with policies and culture from the head quarters.

The Director at SEB stated:

Integration has worked pretty good as a branch from a Swedish bank... the [first] general manager or head of the branch was always regarded kind of as our colleague... I think from this perspective, it is good when a senior comes from the head office, who knows these things much better, because for us Chinese, I mean we can read it [in the policies], but how do we implement it? How do we create the atmosphere? That is why I think it is very important that the management comes from the home site; who brings the culture not on paper - but in action, in real life.

#### **4.3.4. Managing Policies in Practice**

The policies were regarded as a framework which set the tone for ethical considerations in the office. However, the universal agreement was that the employees do not really care about the policies all that much in general. They were considered a very important tool for establishing guidelines, norms and values - but in the end, it was agreed that it was up to the managers and employees to set the tone and transfer the values from the policy documents into practical action. Thus, it was argued that it was via the corporate culture that the policies were managed in practice.

From the conducted interviews it was also found that Swedish polices are encouraging people to be open and voice their opinions if they experience hardships or concerns. However, some corporations explained that such scenarios are not always common in practice. Primarily, this had to do with difficulties to get honest opinions from the local employees, which was explained via the traditional Chinese corporate climate that has a strict hierarchy and relatively locked superior and subordinate relations (this will be discussed further in 4.4.1). Thus, despite the implementation of the relatively flat Swedish corporate culture, the traditional Chinese hierarchical view was considered to still prevail to some extent. The Partner at MSA explained:

We work as a flat organization but can still feel a stricter hierarchy here, it is clearer who is the boss compare to Sweden where people considered themselves to be colleagues in a different way form here.

## **5. Discussion**

*In this fifth chapter, the empirical findings are related to the theoretical framework. Discussions based on themes that are related to the purpose and research question of this report will be presented.*

### **5.1. Swedish Gender Equality Policies**

From our empirical gathering we could understand that all participating corporations implemented Swedish gender equality policies, primarily as a part of their CSR framework, into their Shanghai branch without any particular adaption. I.e. all policies were said to be established by the Swedish headquarters and transferred to Shanghai, China. It was regarded by the participants that there were no obstacles impeding the establishment of new gender equality policies for their particular Shanghai branch. However, as stated in the empirics, there were two exceptions to this statement: the first one was legal regulations which affects the prerequisites for maternity and paternity leave as well as holidays, and the second were commercial / cultural obstacles. For the latter exception, it was argued that a too large deviation from cultural and commercial norms (both positively and negatively) may have consequences on the Shanghai branch. This aspect will be covered more thoroughly in the next chapter (5.1.1). Despite this, no organization stated that their branch was affected by gender inequalities, rather the opposite was regarded to be true. Across all organizations, there were more female employees than male, and the spread of females and males in management positions was relatively equal. It was also discussed by some corporations that equal pay for equal work was prevalent in their Shanghai branch. Moreover, it could be understood that gender equality policies were managed similarly as they would be in Sweden - but that there was an adaption to fit Chinese cultural and legal prerequisites.

#### **5.1.1. Cultural Differences**

In our theoretical presentation of Hofstede Insights (2019) dimensions, there are clear cultural differences between China and Sweden. As previously covered, China scores high in masculinity, and power distance - while Sweden scores very low in masculinity and power distance. In theory, this creates two culturally distant actors when it comes to how gender equality is regarded - and according to our findings, reality coincides with what the theory suggests.

It was believed by three corporations that the issue of gender equality was seldom regarded or thought of by the employees at the Shanghai branch. It was also added that most employees regarded the corporate focus on gender equality positively, but with a relatively high disinterest or neglect. This was explained by that the branches already were relatively gender equal and had a surplus of female employees (and often; managers as well), and thus the working environment was not said to spark questions or reflections about the topic. However, perhaps most notable was the belief that the lack of focus on gender equality followed as a consequence of Chinese cultural and societal factors. It was argued by several managers that females in China seldom consider such questions since it is not a natural part of the Chinese culture and society. This coincides with Hofstede's model of cultural dimensions. The high level of masculinity and power distance in Hofstede Insights (2019) model infers that the Chinese society is not one that naturally questions the patriarchal structures. Instead, hierarchy and gender differences is expected. As the Director at SEB stated in the empirical collection, this translates to that concerns or questions about the topic are rarely voiced. This can arguably explain the phenomena expressed by the participating managers, i.e. the apparent disinterest in gender equality policies by the employees. This phenomena will be discussed further in chapter 5.2.2.

### **5.1.1.2. Cultural Imperialism**

Despite the obvious cultural differences mentioned in the previous chapter, it is essential to note that the majority of the managers stated that the rather Swedish corporate culture and its values regarding gender equality had been positively received by the employees at the Shanghai branch. This was, however, argued to not be attributed by the corporate policies addressing gender equality per se. Instead, it was argued that it came as a result of the corporate culture, other managers and co-workers in the Shanghai office. It was stated numerous times in our empirical collection that even though the policy documents create a good and important foundation for what values, beliefs and restrictions the branch should inhabit - it was in the end of the day 'just a document'. It was argued that if such a document would have been transferred to the Shanghai offices without a proper manager manifesting the policies in practice, it would be hard for the Chinese employees to create the 'Swedish corporate culture' that the offices now inhabit. This coincides with Danis's (2003) findings, which states that corporate culture (i.e. the beliefs, norms and values that influence the thoughts and behavior of the employees and managers within an organization) is largely dependent on the manager. Thus, it can be argued that the corporate policy documents per se are not what ultimately affects the office in practice. Instead it is suitable managers who does this as they translate the policies into practical action and corporate culture. This phenomena will be discussed further in chapter 5.2.1.

Furthermore, the willingness to adapt to Swedish corporate values and norms regarding gender equality arguably clashes (at least in the context of this study) with Simpson (2017) statements on that the Chinese relation to cultural imperialism is sensitive and restricted. The sort of 'corporate cultural imperialism' (i.e. the transferring of Swedish corporate values to the offices in Shanghai) is, according to our findings, well received by the offices in Shanghai. We found nothing that suggests that the Shanghai branches were negative or hesitant towards implementing the Swedish values and norms, rather the opposite was true. It was however stated that it takes time to adapt to it. The deviation from Simpson's (2017) findings is arguably attributed by the increasing international pressure surrounding the topic of gender equality. As stated in our theoretical chapter, our global and connected world pressures multinational corporations to take action and responsibility for their behavior. This coincided with our empirical findings, where some corporations stated that it is important to work with these questions in order to achieve external validity and a good commercial standing. This is also what makes it so important for corporations to evolve and adapt their gender equality policies over time, since new time periods set new standards.

### **5.1.2. Government Regulations**

In order to answer our research question properly, the aspect of government regulations needs to be addressed. It was found in our empirical gathering that there were no laws or regulations that prohibited the establishment of gender equality policies. This meant that the corporations faced no legal restrictions that impeded the establishment of such policies. Rather, the opposite was argued to be true by some of the participating organizations. It was argued that the Chinese government is in its inception of promoting such activities, but that they still have a very long way to go. However, it was stated in our empirical chapter that the Swedish corporations had to comply with legal regulations concerning employment conditions. This ment that the minimum level of maternity leave and holidays were decided by the Chinese government. However, It was also found that the Swedish corporations had the power to surpass the legal minimum, and one corporation stated that they offered a generous maternity leave that can be considered well above the general Chinese standard.

In our theoretical chapter, it was understood that the Chinese government is pushing a rather aggressive narrative that advocates that women should focus on child bearing duties rather than a career. However, in our empirical gathering we found no traces of such behavior by the government, and the few participants in our study who had kids did not find that they had to choose between having kids or a career. This arguably infers that the Swedish based corporations manages to promote a healthy relation between career development and family life.

## **5.2. Managing Swedish Gender Equality Policies Cross-Culturally**

Flamholtz & Randle (2011) stated in chapter 2.1.3 that corporate culture can contribute to a successful business if managed correctly. This includes, among other things, how gender equality policies are being managed in practice at the office. The theory suggests that managers act as a form of cultural bearers, which was also stated by one of our included corporations in the empirical collection. As the cultural bearers, the responsibility arguably lies on the manager to translate the policy document into practical action - which in turn will shape values and norms in the office.

### **5.2.1. Managing Gender Equality Policies Via Corporate Culture**

The link between managing gender equality policies in practice and corporate culture has already been vaguely covered in the discussion, but this chapter seeks to describe it more in detail. As already established, the empirical collection suggests that the policies are managed via the corporate culture. In other words, the policy documents provide guidelines for values and restrictions, such as values regarding gender equality. An example of these values that was mentioned in the empirical collection was for example anti-discrimination based on gender. As these policy values are translated into practice, they become intertwined with the corporate culture. This is also something that the empirical gathering stressed: the policy document in itself is not that important in practice, instead it is the co-workers, managers and corporate culture that is important. This is why we believe that it is essential to understand cultural differences in order to adequately adapt foreign policies in another country, because the policies translate into corporate culture in practice.

This further emphasizes the importance of a good manager. As discussed by Khan & Shahriar (2016) in chapter 2.2, there are currently no good or grand theories addressing how successful policy implementation should be performed. However, the authors explain that there are hypotheses. One such hypotheses suggests that successful policy implementation is largely dependent on the leader, i.e. the manager. This hypotheses would coincide with our empirical findings. The theory by Flamholtz & Randle (2011) in chapter 2.1.3 suggests that corporate culture is largely dependent on the manager. It is further stressed by Vasile & Nicolescu (2016) in chapter 2.1.3 that the role of the manager becomes extra important for the corporate culture in foreign branches. Therefore, one can consider the following trail of thought: policies are managed in practice via the corporate culture; the success of the corporate culture (particularly in foreign branches) is largely dependent on the manager; thus, the manager bares the responsibility for the success of practical policy implementation and management.

### **5.2.2. Corporate Hierarchy**

In our empirical collection, it was found that managers must consider the cultural differences as they manage gender equality policies in practice. One theme that was continuously brought up was that the level of hierarchy is much higher in China in comparison with Sweden. This coincides with the respective countries score in the power distance dimension, as mentioned by Hofstede (2001) in chapter 2.1.1. The empirical study confirms that some employees have difficulties with working in flat organizations due to their traditional norms and values that are encouraging hierarchic structures. This situation infers that some employees might not speak up about their opinions

regarding topics such as gender equality, since they (despite the flat organization) are held back by a hierarchical mindset, and thus are hesitant to voice their concerns. As the theory by Vasile & Nicolescu (2016) in chapter 2.1.3 suggests, this phenomena further strengthens the need for managers to adapt to local cultural prerequisites when managing gender equality policies.

## **6. Conclusion**

*In this final chapter, the conclusion to this study will be presented, together with the answer to the research question. Lastly, suggestions for future research will be given.*

### **6.1. Managing Swedish gender equality policies in Shanghai**

From our empirical gathering we could understand that all the Swedish based corporations in our study implemented gender equality policies to their Shanghai branch, primarily as a part of their CSR framework, without any particular adaption. All policies were said to be established by the Swedish headquarters and transferred to the Shanghai office directly. However, we found that even though no adaption was done to the policy documents per se, the Swedish corporations did adapt to how they manage the policies in practice in Shanghai. This followed as a consequence of a wish to respectfully adapt to- and meet Chinese legal and cultural prerequisites.

Legal prerequisites were found to affect policies addressing, for example, maternity leave and Swedish policies could not affect China's legal prerequisites. In those instances, the policy documents were trumped by local legal employment regulations. Cultural prerequisites affected how the managers in the shanghai offices dealt with the policy documents in practice. We found that as the policies were managed in practice, they became intertwined with the corporate culture. Thus, we found that the gender equality policies were managed largely via the corporate culture. This was done by using the gender equality policies as guidelines for values, norms and restrictions, which in turn shaped the corporate culture. The Shanghai offices consequently inhabited a largely Swedish corporate culture, and due to the distinct cultural differences between China and Sweden, we understood that the practical translation of gender equality policies were managed with cross-cultural aspect in mind.

Moreover, since we live in an ever-changing world, we found that corporate culture and its gender equality policies must evolve over time. Managing gender equality policies is thus a continuous work, and without suitable managers who manifest the policies in the corporate culture, it can be hard for the local employees to adequately adapt and embrace the Swedish corporate culture and its policies.

To summarize, this study can conclude that the Swedish based corporations that participated in this study adapt how they manage their Swedish gender equality policies towards cultural and legal prerequisites. As the policies were translated into practical action, they became intertwined with the corporate culture, and consequently managed via the corporate culture as well. Thus, the participating corporations in this study were found to manage their gender equality policies in practice with great conscientiousness and respect to the cultural differences between China and Sweden without compromising the core values of the Swedish corporate culture.

### **6.2. Future research**

This study covers how Swedish based corporations manage their gender equality policies cross-culturally. The conclusion is that corporations adapt to cultural differences, with the ambition to influence the foreign office while also preserving the Swedish corporate culture and the values and norms it is associated with. We feel that it would be interesting to conduct a study related to how the Swedish corporate culture is being received by local employees in the Shanghai branch. In other words, to profoundly research local employee's attitudes towards the Swedish corporate culture.

Lastly, it would be of great interest with a study that compares how attitudes and values towards gender equality differs between local employees who are employed at a Swedish based corporations

vs. employed at local Chinese corporations. In other words, to find out to what extent local employees are affected by working in at a Swedish corporation with a Swedish corporate culture.

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# Appendix - Interview Guide

## General

1. Provide a brief general description of the company.
  - 1.1. What does the company do?
  - 1.2. Why did it set up office(s) in Shanghai?
2. Can you briefly tell us about yourself and your role in the company?
  - 2.1 Position, duties, education, earlier work experience?
3. What is the ratio between foreign and local (Chinese) employees?
4. How many employees at the office are male vs. female?
  - 4.1. How many managers are male vs. female?

## Policies

5. Does the company work with CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) and policies related to CSR?
6. Does the company have policies addressing gender equality?
  - 6.1. Do those policies originate from Sweden or are they adapted to suit the Chinese work domain? If so, how are they adapted?  
  
6.2. If the policies originate from Sweden, how are they met by the employees in China  
Have you experienced any reactions (positive/negative) towards the policies?
7. How long has the office worked with policies addressing gender equality?
8. Does the Swedish head quarters demand gender equality policies in their foreign affiliations? If so, has this affected the Shanghai office in any way?
9. More concretely, in what way do the policies address gender equality?
  - 9.1. For example, policies regarding hiring practices, anti-discrimination, equal opportunities for career development, maternity / paternity leave, etc. ?
6. How do you manage gender equality policies in practice?
7. Do you have someone who is responsible for enforcing and monitoring gender equality policies? Who? how?
8. How often do you update the policies?
9. Are there any obstacles impeding the establishment of gender equality policies?
  - 9.1 Are there any incentives for establishing gender equality policies?
10. Would you like to see any changes in the current policies?

## Values

11. How would you define gender equality?

12. Do you think that your values towards gender equality has been affected by the policies at your company?
13. How would you rate China's level of gender equality?
  - 13.1. Why do you think that is the case?
14. How would you describe attitudes towards female managers? Both amongst your employees at the office, and in China in general (you are free to generalize).
15. (If applicable) Have you noticed any differences/similarities in values towards gender equality at the office in Shanghai in comparison with the office in Sweden?
16. Are you working to promote and increase gender equality attitudes at the office? How?

**Conclusion**

17. To conclude, how would you say the Swedish based corporation that you are working for manages gender equality policies? Do you think that Swedish values and norms regarding gender equality are transferred via corporate policies and culture?



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