HÖGSKOLAN DALARNA

Degree Project

Level: Master's

What it is that skilled young adults seek in their workplace

Declaration of Authorship:

We hereby declare the authorship of this thesis. The entirety of the research has been conducted by us, and not a third party. Any additional information that is mentioned in this work has been referenced in a proper manner, to eliminate possible accusations of plagiarism. This work is an original and has not been published prior to the thesis submission date.

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Abstract:

Problem- An increasingly globalized world is a cause for highly competitive job markets, making the attraction and retention of young talents increasingly important (Wallace et al., 2014). Additionally, current studies have not been able to successfully frame possible needs and wishes of this cohort towards their future workplaces (Deal et al., 2010).

Aim- Therefore, this study aims to contribute to the understanding of what these young talents, seek for from a workplace.

Method- This study applies a qualitative, and inductive approach, to explore and simultaneously allow new in-depth insights into the study area. Therefore, 13 fictive stories were collected from current, and former students in Sweden. The fictive stories were used to ease the participants into the distancing of themselves from current social structures, and to express their actual needs and wants.

Findings- With the findings five major dimensions could be identified, that concerns the study group when picturing a desirable workplace: Workplace structure & dynamics, Validation & acknowledgment, Acceptance and Freedom, Private & Work life balance, and Personal growth and the future. These dimensions further split into issues and seeking's that concern equality and flat leader style, as well as an inhibited insecurity and the wish for support and acceptance.

Limitations- This research is, as all qualitative studies greatly dependent on the researchers' interpretation of the underlying material. Also, other factors as for example national culture could have possible effects on the outcomes of this study, however efforts were made to discuss the potential influences.

Contribution- With the five dimension that were identified in our study, new knowledge on what it is that attracts and motivates young adults in Sweden to a certain company, could be collected. This knowledge might benefit businesses that regard these, when reaching out for new labor force.

Also, further studies can be built upon this research, as for example an inductive testing on the applicability in other contexts, or generalizability of the model.

Keywords: Young Talents, desired workplace, entering job market, attracting workforce

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1. Introduction

Contemporary society has due to modern advancements experienced an increasingly fast changing environment (YaleGlobal Online, 2017). Individuals, as well as businesses are forced to adapt to new circumstances on a regular base (YaleGlobal Online, 2017). This makes it important to try to understand how attitudes, opinions, and needs have changed (Latham, & Ernst, 2006).

The current market situation that organizations compete in, is a highly complex one, but it also provides the companies with numerous possibilities. With rapid improvements in transportation and the internet, even smaller companies can go multinational or even global (Hsieh, & Lin, 1998). Compared to a decade ago this can be accomplished with relative ease and limited monetary costs. The topic of the increasing development in technologies is of concern for many businesses as well as researchers and academics around the world (Chou, and Zolkiewski, 2010). Through the simplification of communication over long distances, as for example with face to face video conferences, or online work collaborations, a connectiveness comes into being that is supporting possibilities of outsourcing and expatriation (Stahl, Björkman, and Morris, 2012). This connectiveness spans across previous obstacles, however it also means that, for example a company in Stockholm Sweden can with ease produce a service that can be sold in Paris, and the vice versa also applies. Thus, it brings in an element of high competitiveness between organizations (Gregory, Karavdic, & Zou, 2007). Just as the price and the product is of immense importance for the company's success, so are also the skilled employees that working within the company (Wallace et al., 2014). Wallace et al. (2014) stated in their book on workforce development that "*In increasingly competitive labour markets, attracting and retaining talent has become a prime concern of organisations*" (Wallace et al., 2014, p.1). Because of this, employee branding has been growing rapidly in the last two decades (Theurer et al., 2016).

The increasing global talent shortage has made the attraction and retention of skilled workers an important topic for many organizations, which is why a lot of attention is being directed towards retention strategies and other HRM strategies (Theurer et al., 2016). Holland et al. (2007) highlighted how the lack of attention to the retention of skilled workers in Australian companies creates a struggle to compete both domestically and internationally. While the study by Kucherov and Zaryalora (sighted in Ahmad, & Daud, 2016) supports the argument that companies with a strong employer brand have a lower staff turnover and motivation,

resulting in an economic advantage compared to competitors with a weaker brand. Based on these arguments, it can be concluded that gaining the attention of skilled job seekers is a problem that should be paid more attention.

High skilled individuals are according to the Swedish Bureau of Statistics (from now on SCB) individuals that have finished further education, after the upper high school level, that is lasting three years or more (SCB, 2018a). This can be education such as special qualified training, specialist military/police education or university degrees (SCB, 2018a). SCB points out that the largest generators of these high skilled individuals are the universities (SCB, 2018a). It's at these universities that the majority of new high skilled individuals entering the labour market are generated from (SCB, 2018a). Therefore, it appears that looking at university students covers a great part of the future skilled job seekers population.

In a national study conducted by SCB for 2012/2013 it was concluded that 60% of all the people starting university studies in Sweden were 22 years or younger. It was also shown that the mean age of bachelor's degree graduation was at the age of 27 in 2012/2013 (SCB, 2018b). Considering that these studies were conducted merely 5 years ago, it can be expected that similar statistics apply today. Therefore, most of the university students in Sweden that graduate with a bachelor's degree this year, would have been born around 1991. These skilled individuals, and most of the ones that have graduated from universities in the last decade, as well as those that will graduate in the upcoming decade, can be regarded as so-called millennials. The term millennial refers to the population born between 1982 and 2000, or in other words, individuals currently between the age of 18 - 36, as corresponding to the definition of the term by Reis and Braga (2016). Based on these statistical findings, it appears to be of importance to understand how companies could reach out and attract this segment of talents as workers.

The division of people into generational cohorts is in large an attempt to simplify and categorize a vast selection of unique and complex individuals into something easier to understand. This simplification based on a birth year does naturally ensure that individuals will not fully fit the label of the generation since they are an independent individual, and derivations will always be found (Twenge & Conover, 2017).

The large timespans in a generation means that someone born early in a generational divide might be very different from someone that is born late within the same generation (Twenge & Conover, 2017). Twenge, who is a known author within generational studies, does to some

degree agree with this statement, by saying that the generational segments are not perfect (Twenge & Conover, 2017). It is true that a person born early in the millennial generation in the year 1983 will be culturally closer to a person from generation X that is born in 1981. While a millennial born in 1983 can differ greatly from one born in 1999 (Twenge & Conover, 2017).

The reason for the current segmentation is merely for simplicity reasons, as it is the most functional classification scheme developed so far (Twenge & Conover, 2017). It is true that the edges of a generational segment will be closely culturally connected to the generations they border. Though, collectively, they do show traits and characteristics that differentiate them aside from the other generations (Twenge & Conover, 2017). The generational segments might not be truly representative of everyone in the generation, but overall, they do represent general characteristics within the population (Twenge & Conover, 2017).

This chapter will continue by pointing out problems that exist in contemporary business studies, concerning the understanding of what kind of workplace future employees desire, leading into the aim of the study. Then, the chapter closes by reviewing previous research within the field, to further frame the topic.

1.1. Problem discussion

As discussed in the introduction the majority of skilled workforce entering the jobmarket are educated in universities. With a mean graduation age in their late 20s, meaning that the skilled young adults entering the labour market belong within the generational segment called millennials (SCB, 2018b). Therefore, issues that have been identified in generational studies are closely related to issues within the research of young adults at current times and will contribute to the understanding of why this study is of importance.

Because of the earlier described need to understand millennials, a great focus has been placed on research in the last decade by companies, academics and media. Alnıaçık et al. (2014) state that university students should be regarded as important future human resources for companies, considering their higher specialization as well as their in due time need to choose an employer. Carpenter and Charon (2014) add that also the technological know-how and the tendency to be innovative turn Millennials into corporate assets that are important for

businesses to survive in the fast-changing world. Aslop (2008, cited in Carpenter, and Charon, 2014) explained that it is crucial for the survival of a company to reach out to Millennials to have access to their talents, and to be able to compete with other companies.

So, how much do we already know about millennials that are entering the labor market?

To quote Deal et al. *"The relatively sparse empirical research published on Millennials is confusing at best and contradictory at worst."* (Deal et al., 2010, p.199). In the past two decades there has been a rise in literature, concerning generational issues as stated by Reis and Braga (2016). Articles such as Ansoorian, Good, and Samuelson (2003), on the management of differences between generations; Benson, and Brown, 2011, on the importance of generational differences in workforce; Costanza et al., 2012, on attitudes of different generational groups towards work; Ertas, 2015; Dokadia, Rai, and Chawla, 2015 on workplace motivation and Lyons and Kuron, 2014, on reviewing general generational differences in workforce. All the articles, to various degrees, touch on differences between the current dominating generation in the workforce, Gen X and the millennials that are entering the labor market (Reis & Braga 2016). Though, none of them aims at understanding just the millennial generation.

With the media wanting to be as quick as possible to explain the generation as it emerged on the political and labor market they often reported distorted or partly untrue information as facts (Twenge, 2010). These misconceptions can be extremely problematic for companies. If the company provides a service to the millennials and young adults, which they wrongfully believe their workforce wants. The company might be frustrated when it's not used, and the young adults are being experienced as ungrateful (Twenge, 2010). While on the other hand the young workforce becomes irritated that the company seems to have no idea what they want and that they are supposed to be happy with their workplace for services they do not want or use (Twenge, 2010). The reason for the medias and companies' misconception is often down to the fact that they want to understand a generation as quickly as possible. However, the generational research is in its nature often a tedious process spanning over several years (Twenge, 2010), which is why regular contributions to the field of generational studies help to create a better understanding.

Therefore, the aim of this thesis is to contribute to the understanding of what skilled young adults that are leaving university, and are entering the labor market, seek for when choosing a workplace.

Though, not just generational culture seems to be of importance for a company to take into consideration when working with young adults. Different cultural value constructs within social science have attained a lot of attention in the last decades within different sectors of business studies (Robertson et al., 2012). The most popular being the studies of the impact of national cultures on businesses (Robertson et al. 2012). Alnıaçık et al. (2014) found in their study of Millennials from two different cultural backgrounds, that even if they can be characterized a certain way, it is also depending on the cultural background. Therefore, based on their national culture they might also seek out other attributes in a company (Alnıaçık et al., 2014). This means that the company's employer brand should not only be aimed towards young adults but customized to the young adults of a certain cultural background in the country they operate in (Alnıaçık et al. 2014).

Thus, the objective is to fulfil the study aim by gaining an understanding on what skilled young adults within Sweden are looking for in a company, based on Students at a Swedish university or those that have recently graduated from higher education and have joined the Swedish labor market.

1.2. Previous research

As mentioned earlier in the introduction, most of the high skilled young adults in Sweden that this study focuses on can be described as belonging to the Millennial generation. Previous research has been conducted and was directed to collect knowledge on this generation. It was therefore decided to present some of the findings on the cohort to gain a first insight on what is already known.

1.2.1. Understanding Millennials

Some well-known articles in the field that have aimed at understanding millennials, showed in their writings that millennials tend to show several traits which are pictured as negative by society, as narcissism, laziness, or behaving entitled (Stein, 2013). Twenge (2013) support with their study the notion of a narcissistic behavior, and reason it to be linked to a higher self-esteem that millennials were taught to have. Though, in an article by Essig (2010), the

author contributes that there is a study running by Brent Roberts, that disputes the statement by Twenge et al., as it shows that narcissism levels have been declining over the years, leaving a very contradictory picture of what millennials are.

Other research on the other hand, could identify traits, that would be understood to be positive. In "Psychology today", Twenge (2013) published a text that highlights that for example equality has become a lot better within the last years. Also, she responds to the conception that millennials tend to show more interest in voluntary work than other generations (Twenge, 2013). This conception was prompting some employers to introduce paid volunteer work to attract and retain millennials by playing to their altruistic needs (Twenge, 2013; Twenge, 2010). But it has been shown that in quantitative studies the Millennial generation shows no signs of having higher altruistic motives when they search for a job than other generation (Twenge, 2010). Although, they do often mention volunteering in their recruitment letters or job interviews, which seems to have been a result of a societal pressure and not the wants and needs of the generation, since several colleges require volunteering for graduation and it's a meriting experience for university applications (Twenge, 2010).

One could go into more details on how millennials were depicted with positive or negative traits, but the question on how relevant these definitions are comes up, considering that different research provides vastly different results. Deal et al. (2010), point out that many of these studies are capturing not only the millennial generation by itself, but that they are always standing in a greater context that affects the outcome of how the millennials are depicted.

2. Research Design

The following chapter concerns how the research was approached. It will introduce the reader to conceptual considerations that set the right mindset and will help the understanding of the research design. Then, chapter 2 will further review methodological considerations, as viewing the researched matter from a qualitative perspective. Finally, the chosen methods that support and that allow a deeper understanding from a new perspective on the studied topic, as the use of fictive stories, and how these methods were implemented will be discussed.

2.1. Conceptual considerations

The following conceptual considerations guided the conduct of the study. These concepts and ideas can be differentiated from theories that usually guide the analysis of empiric material. These concepts rather inflict the mindset of the reader when getting in contact with research on fictive narratives.

2.1.1. The principles Crane Model

Richard Normann (2001) also presents a mental tool that he calls the crane model (see Figure 1.). The principle of it is consisting of the two intersecting dimensions of "time" and "system levels". These two dimensions can be used in conjunction to remodel or reimagine the current system in a mental space (Normann 2001).
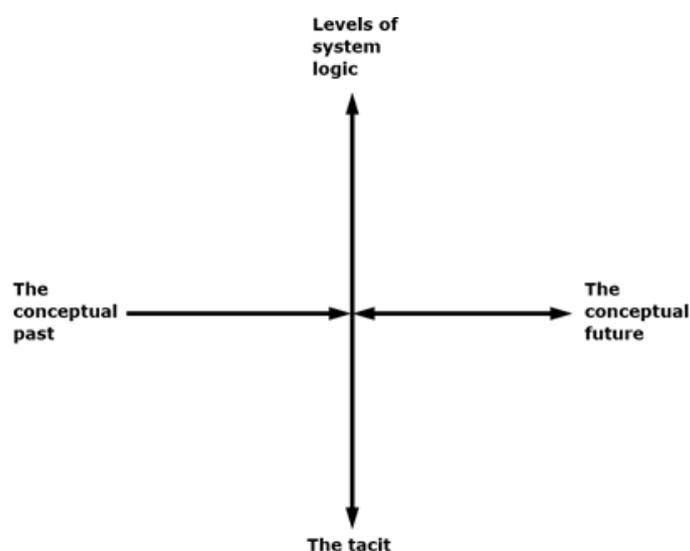
Figure 1 The Crane Model. Adapted from När kartan förändrar affärslandskapet (p. 247), by Normann, R. (2001), Malmö

Dimension 1: Time

The first dimensions in the crane model is time. Normann imagines time as most individuals as a linear progression. Time moves from the 'now' towards the 'future', thus turning the now into a past while the future becomes the new now in an endless cycle (Normann 2001).

Despite humans being fascinated with the idea of seeing into the future, the thought that anyone could do so is regarded as impossible. Though, to make predictions of the future based on the knowledge of the 'now' is different from telling the future and is something that is often used in politics and other areas, to act proactively instead of reactively (Normann, 2001).

However, the idea that the future is based upon the 'now' and can be changed depending on the actions taken, lead Norman to the conclusion that it should also work the other way around. Imagining a future in the now, can influence the actions taken to achieve the imagined future (Normann, 2001). This idea gives a figurative time flow in which not only the now influences the future but also vice versa.

Dimension 2: System levels

System levels can be explained as the scope of outlook in which the mental perspective is viewed. From a low level the scope of what we can see is small, but the detail is rich, while we have a big overview on the mental perspective from a high level, but no more details (Normann, 2001).

For an individual that starts from a low system level, it could be for example the existence of children or the level of education that affect and also restrict how they imagine their future (Normann, 2001). This is due to disregarding possible futures that don't seem to comply with for example children and are therefore in favour of a mental imagined future that fits better with such factors. This can make it difficult for a person to truly understand and explore what they want. Instead they create and adopt a view of what they should want and start to see it as what they want (Normann, 2001).

While the lower level can create a very logically driven imagination of the future, the higher level allows the individual to create free future scenarios. By using an approach of gathering

data that is operating in the higher system levels, it might be possible to get a better understanding of what the individual wants, as he/she can disconnect from factors in the now.

2.1.2. The mental map and its scenarios: Imagineering

With the crane model Norrman (2001) established nine scenarios that represent the degree of interaction between the two dimensions. These scenarios were given the name "**The current established mental map**" (Normann, 2001).

	The conceptual past	The present	The conceptual future
The consciously abstracted domain	Reconstructed theories	Upframing and creative induction	Artefact scenarios
The domain of everyday discourse	History as "objectively" recorded	The current established mental map	Projections Plans Goals
The non-conscious domain	Archetypes Collective unconscious Landscapes	Sensory perceptions Unconscious simulations	Non-conscious scenarios

Table 1 The current established mental map, Adapted from När kartan förändrar affärslandskapet (p. 247), by Normann, R. (2001), Malmö

In Table 1 the nine different scenarios are shown, arranged around the current mental map, which represents the now. For this thesis, the focus will be on the scenario in the top right corner of the table. Here the "*The consciously abstracted domain*" and the "*The conceptual future*" meet and results in the "*Artefact scenarios*" (Normann, 2001). This dimension of the table encompasses the human minds ability for visualizing a potential attainable future with minimal mentally constructed limitations.

By using the "*Artefact scenarios*" the method of fictive stories is used to peer into a future that has not yet been established. This idea has shown applicability in reimagining processes

where the goal is to find what an individual truly wants, and authors such as Czarniawska (2014) and Kostera (2006) demonstrate the value of the ideas in Normann´s model.

2.2. Methodological considerations

When aiming to get an insight on aspirations and wishes of a subject, one tries to get an understanding on a person's or group of people's own worldview. Such insights can be regarded as unique and exclusive to the subjects (Czarniawska, 2014). Although, ideas and thoughts can be expressed in for example words or images, the interpretation of these can alter the initial meaning (Tracy, 2013). The insights that this research is aiming to provide, concern the capturing of implicit knowledge, which requires a careful and in-depth handling of the material to gain an understanding (Czarniawska, 2014). A qualitative approach is considered as the best approach to capture such information, as it allows the researcher to get a deeper and better understanding than trying to quantify something that is unique (Tracy, 2012).

Alvesson and Deetz (2000) mention qualitative research typically to be the search to understand a social phenomenon, often without the questioning of the structures that led to it. Simultaneously, they call out to a more critical approach of qualitative studies that question the influence of existing structures on the occurring phenomenon (Alvesson, and Deetz, 2000). In previous studies that were aimed to gain an understanding of Millennials, such structures were not met with special attention. Methods as surveys that ask for previous determined societal trends (Reis, and Braga, 2016; Eddy, Schweitzer, and Lyons, 2010), and interviews with managers that describe what they think of Millennials (Carpenter, and Charon, 2014) were applied.

Though, some studies regard the issue that cohorts can't be globally generalized (Alnıaçık et al., 2014) and that they should be understood independently from one another. Still, limitations to their wishes and aspirations are not only posed by the comparison to other individuals (Alnıaçık et al., 2014), but also possibly by the interviewers' world view (in an interview situation), or their understanding of what is expected from society (Normann, 2001).

Which leads us to an approach that aims to distance the participants from existing structures, by letting them write fictive stories that are detached from the current reality. Collecting

fictive stories is a qualitative method that allows subjects to emerge in a fictive reality without the limitations of their environment to imagine and explore their own feelings of what they seek for (Kostera, 2006).

Jebb, Parrigon, and Woo (2017) criticise that nowadays the research that is based on already existing theory dominates over the research that aims to explore. Looking at work aspiration of young adults while distancing them from mental limitations as for example societal structures that impede on them, is an exploration of their mind and a possible future (Normann, 2001). Thus, the research is approached inductively, to first gain an insight on the phenomenon, and to formulate conclusions and theories based on them (Bengtsson, 2016).

2.3. Data collection method

As previously mentioned, the means of data collection for this research will be through the collection of fictive stories. These stories are composed by young Swedish adults enrolled in university studies, that are about to graduate or that have recently graduated. From here forward these students will be referred to as 'story authors'.

The story authors will be provided with a short paragraph that will lead them into a fictive setting, which stands in connection to the research topic (Kostera, 2006) of understanding what skilled young adults within Sweden seek for when choosing a Company to work in.

For the purpose of determining a suitable story beginning, three possible paragraphs were created, and tested in a pilot study. A pilot study is a tool for researchers to get acquainted to new, previously not often used research methods, as well as to determine possible issues with the research design and to allow researchers to make adjustments (Kim, 2017; Duignan, 2016).

In this case to single out the most appropriate beginning of a story to trigger valuable responses by the participants. In a pilot study, it is not advised to use the sample population of the main study, as this might have effects on the later research and consume valuable participants already in the trial (Kim, 2017). Instead, the pilot study is conducted with a sample group similar to the one of the main study (Kim, 2017). Therefore, three international young adults, that are currently studying or have graduated from a bachelor level or higher at a Swedish university were chosen for the pilot, as they were expected to be to a certain

degree similar to the sample group of the main study. The following three beginnings of stories were send out to the pilot study participants:

1."That's it, my last week before retirement. It was such a fulfilling time in this company. Thinking back, I really enjoy how the company..."

2."The year is 2025 and I have reached the education level I desire. After receiving several job offers for the position I wanted, I chose the company that..."

3."After working in several companies that I didn't like, I decided to find a company that..."

Based on the length of the created stories, getting acquainted and evaluating the content of the stories and collecting reviews by the pilot-study participants, about the story beginnings, one option was chosen. In all three cases of the pilot study the participants stated that the first story beginning was the one that gave them the most ideas to write about. This was also reflected in the output stories they created. The stories resulting from the first story-beginning were about twice as long (approximately one page), then the stories resulting from the other two story-beginnings (approximately half a page). Although this result might also be due to other reasons, as a possible loss of motivation to write more after completing the first story. Though, based on the outcomes of the pilot study, the first story beginning was selected for the main study.

For the main research the researchers were not present when the story authors wrote the stories. In fact, the story authors were given the possibility to write the fictive stories in their own time (max. 1 week) in their own surrounding, and to hand the stories to the researchers as they have been completed. This is crucial, so that the story authors do not feel pressured and can be comfortable while writing, which is understood to increase creativity and could ease the development of ideas for stories and will not miss out on aspects that they might have overlooked in a time pressured setting (Riessman, 2008). Also, the absence of the researcher during the writing process of the story adds that no influence of the story outcome could have been exerted on the authors.

Kostera (2006) points out that these fictive stories are aimed to detach from the current reality and therefore rather reflect on what the author imagines that could be, but not necessarily will

be. As Czarniawska (2014) states, stories are not only a momentarily burst of creativity, but they are anchored in previous stories that were told to a person, in the lives and believes of the person creating it, and that stories to a certain degree are shared in groups of people that are for example of the same age. Thus, exploring these stories, and finding cultural similarities in the imagination of the future can potentially provide great insights into a future labor market that is being shaped by the skilled young adults entering or about to enter it (Normann, 2001).

2.3.1. Considerations on language

Prior to conducting the study some dilemmas regarding the collection of the fictive stories were discussed that potentially could have a significant impact on the trustworthiness of the results. This problematic area could simply be described as language barriers and was potentially an issue on both, the side of the researchers and the story authors. The problem stems from the fact that the story authors are Swedish, but the study is written in English and only one out of the two authors is native Swedish. Though, the second author has studied Swedish and is reasonably proficient in the language.

The first reason for why this might be problematic is as the non-native speaker may have issues with identifying and noticing nuances within the text. An example of this could be how a "sign" or one of the two building blocks of a word can take on multiple meanings according to semiology, as discussed by Roland Barthes (1983). Barthes (1983) illustrated how the sign for a lion can mean both the large cat strolling the savanna, but for many of the western countries it is also synonymous with kings because of historical and cultural connection. In this study, the researchers will have to interpret the fictive stories composed by the story authors in depth, not just to find what they are explicitly saying but also to interpreted signs of subconscious desires that might be built into the text (Izak, Kostera, & Zawadzki, 2017). For this exact reason, the fact that one of the researchers is not native to Sweden may create a dilemma.

This leads into a new discussion; If the story authors should be asked to write their stories in English to reduce the mentioned problems. At first it seemed sense full to conduct the research in English, since there would no longer be an issue with a language barrier in analyzing the data. Although none of the researchers are native English speakers, they have been studying the language since an early age and have sufficient language skills. Though,

forcing the story authors to write in English could also have implication. It could possibly complicate their ability to convey what they genuinely want.

On the other hand, there are also positive implications when writing in their non-native language. Studies have reported findings that show that the usage of a second language can affect an individual's emotional perception of a situation (Keysar et al., 2012). In the study by Keysar et al. (2012), a relationship between thinking in a second language and the emotional response that is being evoked could be determined. The authors argue that this might make an individual more acceptant of taking risks or thinking more freely. Choices with gain and loss scenarios become more comparable and bias are reduced due to the emotional detachment (Keysar et al. 2012). This break with normative rules, when using a second language, could arguably help the writers of the fictive story to be released from even more 'breakers' as discussed by Normanns crane model (2001). The usage of a second language according to work published by Ogunnaike et al. (2010) indicates that the usage of a second language could influence cultural preferences, where individuals seem more open to distance themselves from their "core" culture when talking in a second language and have a more open attitude.

Even though Swedish nationals have a very high English proficiency rating judged by the standards of the English proficiency index (EF, 2017), some of the individuals asked to provide stories for the assignment expressed discomfort over using a non-native language. It was therefore decided and instructed that the writers of the fictive stories are free to choose between using their native language or English to write their stories. However, they are encouraged to use English if they feel that they have the proficiency to do so.

2.3.2. Sampling

Qualitative studies, as this one, do not concern with the generalizability of the outcomes on a population (Paik, and Shahani-Denning, 2017). It is concerned with the deeper understanding of a phenomenon or occurrence; thus, a probability sampling does not add to the quality of the study (Paik, and Shahani-Denning, 2017). Instead, a form of non-probability sampling, strategic sampling, would fulfil the sampling needs of this research, as the researcher can make sure that the story authors fulfil all criteria: first, to be a Swedish young adult; second, to currently live in Sweden; third, to be a university student or to have graduated within the past two years.

A question that has to be asked and answered at this point is: How does the study define Swedish skilled young adults? The definition of skilled young adults has already been addressed in the previous section 1. "Introduction", in which it states that the majority of skilled workers entering the workforce are university graduates. These individuals mainly in their mid to late 20s at the time of graduation and is falling into the generational category of millennials, individuals that are between 18 and 36 years old (Reis and Braga 2016). However, the question how to define what it means to be Swedish is a more complex question to answer. Yet, it is an important question, as the culture of a person is reflected in their mental processes and stories (Kostera, 2006). Thus, researching students with a similar culture can uncover linkages in how they imagine the future (Normann, 2001). Though, a ´correct answer´ on what it is that determines the Swedish culture is impossible to find since the question can be approached from several angles such as from a political perspective: Are you a swede when you get your citizenship, even if you may not have adopted the Swedish culture? Or from a philosophical perspective: Are you truly a swede when you yourself have adopted the culture and identify as a Swede? It should be questioned, how does one approach children who arrived in Sweden at a young age but have spent most their lives in Sweden, being influenced by the Swedish culture?

This is a very complex question since the family of the child that moved to Sweden may retain a lot of the culture from their country of origin and might still practice it at home or in social groups in Sweden, which might influence the child. Simultaneously, the child would also get strong influences from the events in its local, national and global surroundings just like any other person born in Sweden. Also, it can be hard to establish if a Swedish born citizen has for some reason left the country at a youthful age and lived abroad gaining cultural values from another country and then returned to Sweden. Could this emigrated person then still be truly Swedish, or have they picked up values of another culture which would lead to different wants and needs from their future employer? Because of this it is almost impossible to answer what being Swedish truly is, which might be unsatisfactory.

However, for this very reason the authors felt that the previous section was important just to address the potential issues of what being "Swedish" may have on the sampling process and the impact it might have on the trustworthiness of the end results. For this study, the authors have decided to establish Swedish as citizens that were born in Sweden or immigrated or got adopted at an early stage of their life and that have spent at least ¾ of their lives in Sweden.

This would mean that they have spent most of their lives in Sweden amalgamating to the Swedish culture and being influenced by events in their surroundings during their growth to adulthood adopting or growing the mindset of a Swedish young adult.

As previously mentioned the study focuses on segment of skilled young adults. University students fall into the category of skilled young adults, which is why the researchers reached out to several students from two Swedish Universities (Dalarna University, and Lund University). To determine the number of stories in qualitative studies it is often aimed for a point of data saturation, where additional material would not contribute new insights (Fusch and Ness, 2015). For this study, the researchers collected at first 9 fictive stories from selected students. Then, after a process of getting acquainted with the Material, a first analysis of its contents, and a discussion between the researchers, it appeared that saturation had not been reached. Therefore, more students were contacted, until 13 stories were collected. After another analysis of the content, no new themes could be determined. Thus, the decision was made that data saturation was reached.

In Table 2, an overview was created on the story authors, including their age, the university degree they are working towards or they have achieved, and when they are expected to graduate or when they have graduated. The story author names shown in Table 2 and also later in this thesis are aliases that have been given, as some did not want their stories to be published in their real name.

Name	Age	Education level	Graduation status
Florence	23	Bachelor	To graduate 2018
Camilla	24	Bachelor	Graduated 2017
Elias	23	Bachelor	Graduated 2017
Mia	28	Bachelor	Graduated 2017
Marc	25	Bachelor	Graduated 2017
Ben	23	Bachelor	To graduate 2019
Tobias	24	Bachelor	To graduate 2018
Vincent	25	Bachelor	To graduate 2019
Susan	28	Bachelor	To graduate 2018
Jim	24	Master	To graduate 2018
Kai	25	Bachelor	Graduated 2017
Sarah	21	Master	To graduate 2020
Fiona	24	Bachelor	Graduated 2016

Table 2 Overview on Story authors

2.4. Data analysis method

As previously mentioned stories are anchored in, and are shared in groups of people (Czarniawska, 2014). Thus, analyzing the fictive stories in-depth could not only give an insight into the story author, but also the society that he or she is part of (Martinengo, 2012).

The 'hermeneutic triad' by Hernadi (1987, cited in Czarniawska, 2014) is being described by Czarniawska (2014) as an appropriate way to approach a story. As the name 'triad' indicates, it concerns three main questions that the reader of a text should ask: "*What does the text say?*", "*Why (how) does this text say what it does?*", and "*What do I, the reader think of all this?*" (Czarniawska, 2014, p.61). Kostera describes the last step of this triad in the context of narrative collages and depicts this method as the narration of the readers interpretation- so yet another story or other expressive text (Kostera, 2006). However, in her own work, Kostera applied her own threefold method to encounter fictive stories by first looking for the stories narration, then to find meaning, and finally to point out and discuss metaphors (Izak, Kostera & Zawadzki, 2017).

For the purpose of this study, the researcher will as well go through three stages when approaching the stories. However, these stages will not take place on the exact same levels as those mentioned before but are oriented along the methods by Czarniawska (2014) and Kostera (Izak, Kostera & Zawadzki, 2017). In the upcoming analysis of the collected stories, the following layers will be presented to the reader: the story content, meaning (the obvious and the hidden), and the researchers reaction to the stories in form of a critical discussion.

Displaying the story content is the first step in presenting the analysis of the fictive stories, and precedes the thorough reading, and discussion of the stories by the researchers. The story content may reflect the pure empirics of the research, without interpretation. Each story will be presented singularly, in a summarized form. Even though, on an interpretive level some stories might be very similar, in their pure version they are yet very different from each other. A summarizing of several stories into one similar plot, as in comparison to Kostera's study in her book chapter "*2021: A Campus Odyssey*" in Izak, Kostera, and Zawadzki (2017), where she groups several stories together, is in this case not possible.

Then, the stage of presenting the meaning follows, which is based on an in-depth analysis. Both researchers, individually, identify in the stories direct statements of what the

protagonists needs or seeks for; how the protagonist is positioned in the stories in comparison to other characters or the company; and metaphors that may have been built in. The positioning of the protagonist in the story, reflects on how the story author creates his/her own identity (Mo, & Shen, 2003), and other identities as for example the identity of the company, coming into live by standing in contrast to the protagonist (Moses, 2014). The use of metaphors is of interest, as metaphors are replacing meanings through a vivid description of something else (Pickover, 2017). The use of such a linguistic tool as a metaphor, can carry more meaning then other text as it is used to convey more complex emotions or ideas (Pickover, 2017). Following the individual analysis of the text, the researchers discussed their analysis results and came to a joint idea formulation of what skilled young adults in Sweden seek for in a Workplace.

As earlier established, Alvesson and Deetz (2000), suggest that qualitative research should regard the social structures that surround the studied phenomena. Therefore, an additional aspect will be added to the research. After the conduct of the analysis, and the determination of the research outcomes, the researcher review concepts that stand in relation to the findings. Then a discussion follows, in which the possible relationship of our research outcomes and the selected concepts will be investigated.

2.5. Data limitations and problem considerations

Because of the studies qualitative nature we can't talk about the concepts of validity and reliability in the same way as in quantitative studies. Ali and Yusof (2011), state that there are various terms in qualitative studies that aim to replace the concepts of reliability and validity, while all of them simply refer to the quality of the study (Ali & Yusof, 2011). Malterud (2001) suggested several concepts for quality control in qualitative studies, as 'reflexivity' and 'transferability'. Reflexivity refers to the researchers' ability and openness to reflect on possible issues, and how these were addressed. Thereby, Malterud (2001) emphasizes that there is no study that is free of influential factors and a certain degree of subjectivity. To address that reflexivity has been considered, in this research the collected primary data was being analyzed to reveal what is meaningful to the participants. To reduce a too strong influence of the researchers own interpretation, the two researchers analyzed and interpreted the material separately, and only later joint their findings to a conclusion. Also, other issues

were addressed throughout the thesis, as the reasoning to consider national and social culture (see 1.1.), considerations of the use of language in the conduct of the research (see 2.3.1.), or the regard towards the influences that societal structures might have on the stories of the participants (see 2.1.), and the aim to reduce these effects with the use of the fictive story method (see 2.3.), and a pilot study that contributed to the trustworthiness of the method construct (see 2.3.).

Transferability on the other hand, refers not to the degree the researchers reflect on possible issues, but to the degree the chosen participants suit the research (Malterud, 2001). Although, generalizability is not an issue that is to be considered for qualitative research, the choice of sampling should be relevant for the studied phenomenon (Malterud, 2001). The provision of a certain degree of transferability is given in this study, as participants were strategically chosen, to suit the studied phenomenon (see 2.3.2.). However, it should be mentioned that even though that the story authors were chosen strategically, the outcomes of the study do not necessarily apply for all students in Sweden. Nor does it mean, that the outcomes of the study exclusively mention all needs and wants a skilled young adult in Sweden could seek from their workplace, as there is a possibility that other students that would have fit the description could seek for other things. Though, it does provide insights into the phenomenon and could be followed up with a quantitative study, to show how representative these findings are for the entire population.

Finally, some considerations should be given concerning possible issues that might occur throughout the research. No one of the story authors is obliged to hand in the story on time, or to put great efforts into writing it. Therefore, it is aimed to reach out to a greater number of people to take part in this study so that, even if some stories don't get written or only poorly, there will be others to choose from. Also, before receiving the story the researchers have no influence on how the stories are written (movies, books or else might be used as source for ideas). Thus, it should be considered that further elimination of some stories might occur, as they might appear to be biased. To limit such biases to a minimum, participants were instructed to avoid copying other stories, and to hand in on time. However, for ethical reasons they were also instructed that participation is on a voluntary base, and that written stories can be taken out of the study at any time, until the final date.

3. Fictive stories

In the following section, an overview on the collected empirics will be given, by introducing the reader to the different narratives of the story authors and providing a first review. A total of 13 narrative contributions were collected. Each narrative is between approximately half a page, up to two pages long. Each story author was given an alias (see Table 2, in 2.3.2.). Some of the narratives are originally written and Swedish but will in the following chapter be presented in a summarized and translated form. The original collected stories, in their entirety can be found in Appendix 1. Each story will shortly be described, apart from each other, each time followed by a first evaluation on what kind of information is being shown.

Story 1 by Florence

Florences' narrative is more of an invitation, aimed at people working in the company that she is retiring from. She starts by stating how the company has shaped and developed her through good and bad times. This is followed by the statement that she has decided for herself to retire from that work now. Coming next, she changes the focus from herself to address the employees of the company, saying that she wishes them to continue developing as they have done under her. She wants to remind them of their friendship, and to let them know that she is proud of them. She says that she believes in her workers to handle the changes that are to come. Finally, she moves on to inform the people from the company that she arranged a 'goodbye celebration' to conclude the time at the company on a good note, and that she hopes that everyone will be able to make it.

Story 2 by Camilla

Camilla's' story was simply describing the company that she is retiring from. In the beginning of her narrative, she starts off with first mentioning that she felt listened to. Not just she was respected and listened to, but every individual in the company, and that this acceptance to difference is the key to this company's success. Something that was already mentioned in the first part of her narrative, but that gains attention several times throughout the story are the leaders. Camilla, or the protagonist of the story is not part of the company leaders, however, the leaders are reason for most of the positive occurrences in the company: equality, transparency, good atmosphere, and teamwork. In only one case Camilla refers to a leader as a boss. When she explains that such don't exist in this company, as these kinds of leaders see themselves as something better than their employees. Finally, she adds that also

the provided possibility to spent some of the time on personal health as through exercise, was a strong point of the company, and what lead the employees to work better.

Story 3 by Elias

Elias's story shows some similarities to Camilla's' story, as also he chooses to mention that he felt cared for and listened to as the first thing that made this company a good one. He also mentions leaders as upper management, and that they did let everyone make contributions, and that they did not rule over the employees. The second section of Elias's narrative is devoted to what it was that kept him motivated: the possibility to leave a legacy, to create something good for others which makes him passionate for his job. Following, he describes how new employees were treated well in the company and given attention to find their place. He stresses thereby that they were given a feeling of value. Then, he goes over describing the freedom he enjoyed in the company, as the outcome of his work was more important than how he was doing it, which kept the work more interesting for him, as he could decide himself how to do it. Finally, he states that any work is more than just receiving money for your services. That it is the work environment and friendships at the workplace that are important to like one's job, and that his company did their best to support this.

Story 4 by Mia

Mia's story also shows some similarities to previous mentioned stories, as the first thing she mentions, as Emil, is that she was taken care of by the company. She states that if needed, she didn't have to worry that she wouldn't be given free room as for example through some days off work. Following, she stresses how the company appreciated their employees, and made this explicit by giving them gifts for special occasions as well as other support that is not being provided by every company as: pension talks, reductions, as well as things for personal wellbeing as for example gym memberships or wellness. Also similar as Emil, Mia mentions how she values the friendships she has made. Finally, she emphasizes that leaving the company for her means leave something behind as she names it to be her second home or family.

Story 5 by Marc

Marc's story again picks up several topics that other stories have covered previously. Uniquely in comparison to the others is that he doesn't describe him as much as a part of the company, but more as someone that is outside the company and admires it. He starts by mentioning, like most stories as the very first thing that the company cares for their employees. This caring, according to Marc, the company shows by providing security, as well as by investing in the health of their employees. Especially the health and wellbeing aspect appears to be of utmost importance to Marc, as he goes into details how these can be provided: physical health by providing opportunities to exercise and to relax, by using the Swedish 'Friskvårdsbidrag' (health grant) accordingly; mental health by making sure that workload and stress level don't exceed what the employee can handle. But besides showing that the company is invested in the health of their employees, Marc goes on admiring how this company supports their employees in self-development through professional training, as well as personal development by letting employees work within fields that they are interested in, provides international opportunities for those that are interested and also giving them enough freedom for a private life, by regarding that some employees also have a family to take care of. In the final part of Marc's narrative, he starts talking about himself in the company, and not just as an observer. He states how the company has given him the opportunity to develop and to improve so he could also rise in rank.

Story 6 by Ben

Bens' narrative differs from most other stories in more than one way. Not only is his story a lot shorter than most others, it is full of metaphors and comparisons. He starts the narration with a sentence that has to a certain degree a sarcastic undertone. He says that he was treated "*like a moron*" (Ben), but still managed to achieve a high rank within the company. It is interesting that he contrasts these two sides, the negative perception the company seems to have of him, and the positive outcome it still has for him. He goes on by pointing out that the company compares him to a little child, and to have the same competency. Following, he is not denying that he is a child, but that he has "*a mind of gold*" (Ben) that other just not always understand. He describes that treating others as if he is above them, by screaming at them, has always led him to get what he wants, as for example his higher position in the company.

Story 7 by Tobias

In Tobias' story similarities to previous stories can be found but also new nuances. He states how the company gave him a chance and made him become what he is now. They taught him his crafts, and he became great in what he was doing. That well, that he got to teach it at some point to co-workers. He then moves on describing how the market that the company is working on has gained in importance over the years, and how complex his work is. He ends his story with the statement "Memes is art, Memes is lyfez".

Story 8 by Vincent

In Vincent's narration, in the beginning, he mentions that the possibility to continue learning in his field, while also getting paid is something he really appreciates the company for. He states that he otherwise would not have been able to continue his education. Then, he mentions the factor of time usage, and that the company provides administrative help so that he can use his full working time on his actual job, and not the paperwork that comes with it. Shortly, he then mentions that he and his co-workers were able to use some of the time and the company's resources to do their own research. Finally, he states that despite all these positive facets, he is grateful that work time and salary support his family and allow his lifestyle. He says if this would not be the case, he would have looked for a different place to work at.

Story 9 by Susan

In Susan's story the protagonist Scarlett O'Hara remembers the time back at work, and how her workplace felt like one big family. She goes on, and with that remembers her first day at work, as well as her first case that she worked on. When she started working in the company, she was nervous that she wouldn't be good enough, and tried different things to calm her mind. She remembers how she met Jack, the one that was to show her around. They greeted each other, and she asked him to take care of her. When being shown around, she recalls that she saw how her co-workers had their workplaces decorated, and she already then started dreaming of how she could express herself in her decorations. The memory of her first workday ends with a conversation with Jack, in which she expresses how excited she is to start working, and he tells her that he really appreciates her motivation.

She goes on stating how the company was relatively new, yet successful as they already took on prestigious cases that gave them a name. In her first project, she says she helped a young

family to plan a dream wedding. After a short conversation with then about how they met, and what they like, O'Hara comes forward with her first suggestion for a wedding theme. The clients react excited about the idea: "*I love it!*", and also agree to the other suggestions of O'Hara. Her story ends with her recalling that the clients were very satisfied with the wedding, and even recommended her to others. She says that she is grateful for the support that she has gotten from everyone in the company.

Story 10 by Jim

In Jim's story, many factors that have been mentioned in other stories appeared, as for example that he felt supported, that he was able to develop his skills but mainly also as a person. He points out that he has started to work his way up in the company since he was young, and that he has created a net of connections. He doesn't deny that there were hard times as well, but that he was being supported by his family as well as his co-workers. In fact, human relationships were often mentioned throughout Jim's story. An entire paragraph is dedicated to his childhood friend, that helped him to get into this company, and that thereby has helped him to get the live he now has.

Story 11 by Kai

In Kai's story the first thing he mentions is how the company has changed, from being a very small one, to one that now has 100 times more employees and has not stopped growing yet. Then he moves on talking about the people that came in to the company (and left), and the friendships he has made with these. He says that he enjoys remembering the pranks and the parties that he and his working colleagues made, especially the celebrations after big deals. He then goes over talking about his boss, that supported him and the other employees as well as kept them motivated in his own fun way. He feels like he owes a lot to his boss.

Story 12 by Sarah

Sarah talks in her story about how the company helped her develop herself, as person, and as employee. She says that she felt seen. She and her co-workers could be open about anything, as communication with the managers was great. Even constructive criticism wasn't a one-way road but could also be aimed openly to the management, which made it very easy to talk and express one self. She points out in the end, that it is the small things that the company mastered to integrate, and that make the difference.

Story 13 by Fiona

Fiona starts her story by showcasing that she likes the company she worked in as they even let her choose her own way to retire. She says she has been gradually decreasing her workload, until she is now able to let go of the workplace and the colleagues that she grew to love. But working with these colleagues, which she calls her team, was even the best part in this company, as helping each other and working together was stressed very much, and everyone was taken as an important member. She then points out that she not only liked her work, but also what the company she worked for stood for. Showing that you are working hard, and individually but also jointly can exceed people's expectations. She then goes on for another two paragraphs, how much she is looking forward to her pension time, and how she will make the best out of this next stage in her life, together with her family now.

4. Findings

When analyzing the collected Material towards the identity of the characters, direct statements of what they seek for, and metaphors that were used, the following topics became evident to be important for the story authors: Identity, confidence, and their lifestyle away and at from work. Following, each of these topics will be highlighted in regard of what the authors had to say about them.

4.1. Identity

When looking at the identities represented in the stories five different identities were mentioned throughout them. There is a protagonist, or first-person narrator talking about his/her life, which is regarded as a representation of the story author (Mo & Shen, 2001). Often the character of a leader or manager is mentioned, and even a central character in the stories. Then, co-workers but also Family members are being mentioned. And last, sometimes a character that is being described as something other, something that is not present in the company is mentioned and will also be reviewed in this analysis. These identities that are being mentioned throughout the stories are not always exclusive and might overlap in some stories.

4.1.1. The story Author

Despite being the protagonist of the story, as Scarlett O'Hara in Susan's story, or a first-person narrator as in all the other stories, the story authors describe how they would be positioned in this ideal workplace that they are imagining. One of the most obvious distinctions is whether they see themselves as a leading position in the company or not. Only two of the thirteen story writers, wrote themselves to be clearly in a leading position: "[…] *but they still promoted me as their CEO*." (Ben); "*I am proud of all my workers, and I know that you will handle your new rolls in the company*." (Florence, translated from Swedish). Though, Tobias, Marc, and Jim could also to some degree be seen as a form of leader, as they describe how they have ranked in position over time "[…] *I have as a young man worked up my way in the company structures and moved myself to the position that fit me perfectly in the end*." (Jim, translated from Swedish). Tobias states that he has become that good in what he was doing, that he became the teacher of the new employees.

Other story authors as Vincent, and Susan, but also Elias, Camilla, Kai, and Sarah, did not see themselves within the position of a leader: "*Because the leaders believed in the same thing I believed in […].*" (Camilla); "*but all of this wouldn´t have been possible if it weren´t [for]our boss […].*" (Kai). Mia and Fiona also didn't mention themselves to be in a leading position, however, in their stories the topic of leadership has not explicitly been mentioned. Instead, everyone in the company is being described as equal.

4.1.2. The leader

Even though, as discussed in the previous section, the leader position was in some cases equal to the story author, most of the stories have mentioned the leader as another entity and further described how the ideal leader would be (Vincent, Susan, Elias, Camilla, Kai, and Sarah). The most often stated attribute of a good leader that was brought up is that they are good listeners (Elias, Kai, and Sarah). Not only does the leader listen to the employees, but he/she is also easy to approach "*The boss has never been invisible or out of reach for me […]*" (Sarah), and takes the employees serious with their issues "*But issues that employees did bring up were rarely, if ever, outright dismissed by upper management.*" (Elias).

Also, it seemed to be of importance that the leader is constructive and pushes his employees to improve themselves (Sarah). One could maybe say that pushing the employee to do their best, is also a form of showing that they care and support their employees. Susan showed in her story that O'Hara experienced a lot of support from her supervisor. Kai stated that his boss really cared for the employees, and that it was such a good boss that he felt like he owed him a lot. Camilla states very straight forward that the leader is besides his rank just another member of the team, which is to some degree confirmed by the others as they want a leader that is open, or even one that is fun (Kai).

Fiona, that didn't mention leadership at all in her story, still contributes to the suggestion that leaders are seen as ideally equal to the other employees, as she stated that "*every single one of us is just as important for the company to achieve its goals*" (Fiona). These ideas, of leaders not being majorly different (Fiona), or that they are also friends with their employees and enjoy jokes and parties with them (Florence, and Kai), show a seeking for a flat structure. Such a structure could allow employees not to be treated lesser just because they are not in a leader position.

When looking on the other side, at the story authors that describe themselves as the leader, Florence describes herself to be a leader that is friends with everyone else, yet she also positions herself as somewhat of a motherly figure that cares of her employees and is proud

of them. Ben on the other hand does not depict himself as a listening and caring leader but as a leader that is "*Screaming at adults* […]" (Ben). The way he is formulating his journey to becoming a leader shows a lot of ridicule, towards how he, the person with "*the mind of a six-year-old*" (Ben) has gotten a high position, by criticizing and making fun of a system that supports such behavior.

4.1.3. Co-workers, Family & Friends

One might argue that co-workers and family and friends should be mentioned separately, but the stories show that the story authors in several occasions have compared the one to the other: "*I enjoy how the company feels like one big family.*" (Susan); "*All of us here in the office, have created friendships and memories together.*" (Florence, translated from Swedish). Susan continues her description of the family like company and states that it is like a family, because people have cared for each other. Even though the feeling of being with a family, being felt cared for is a very common feeling appearing the stories of the story authors (Elias, Mia, Marc, Susan, Jim, Kai, and Sarah).

On the other hand, even though the company has been mentioned to care, as in Elias' story the co-workers have been described as some comrades, inducing that he is in a good relationship with them but not specifically close. Camilla even avoided mentioning her relationship with other employees at all. In her story, most positive parts of the company have been mainly a result of the leadership and not necessarily of the workers.

In yet some stories the co-workers and the family have been mentioned separate from each other as well. Fiona made a distinction and said that even though her co-workers have become lifelong friends, now in her pension she will focus more on her family "[…] *or experience life in a new way through my family and watching my grandchildren grow up*" (Fiona). Vincent called his job at the company out to be a mean to support his family, making with this statement a clear distinction between his co-workers and his family away from work. His work doesn't have a central position in his life as in contrast to Jim for whom the work became a 'lifeline'. For Vincent his work is disposable besides all the good sides of it, if it wouldn't allow him a fulfilling off work time with his real family.

Summarizing these outcomes, for most of the story authors the company and the co-workers and managers working in them are a family like surrounding, that cares for each other and

makes working times pleasant. For some, these people have given them a greater meaning (Jim, and Kai), and for some they were just pleasant to be around while working for the real family (Vincent).

4.1.4. The other

The other is an entity different to those mentioned above, and therefore often something that is outside of the company. The other is being defined each time that the self is being defined, as it stands in contrast to the self (Moses, 2014). Therefore, whenever the story author described his own position, or the company as part of him or herself, everything outside the company is being described as well. An example is that Marc mentions that the company "*provided them with social security*", therefore he states that other companies do not necessarily do this, or else he would not have pointed it out as distinctive about this company. Though, the goal is not to find out how the 'other' is, based on what is being said about the company, but what we learn about the company as it stands in contrast to the other.

Cecilia describes the other, when talking about leadership. She mentions that the leaders in the company are not bosses, and that a boss would have "*worked like he/she was on the top and demanded the workers to do things*" and uses "*master suppression techniques*" (Camilla). Such a depiction of a boss as something other to the leaders in the company, shows once more that leaders in the company are not above the employees, and that they are fair and don't suppress their workers. In Susan's and Kai's story the company is depicted as something successful and fast growing, defining the company as something better and more prestigious then the other.

4.2. Confidence

After pointing out the different characters in the stories and how these are being depicted, certain topics arose to seem more significant to the story authors than others. In many of the stories a certain degree of missing confidence can be spotted, as some point out how grateful they are to be taken into care "*Please take care of me.*" (Susan), to be believed in "*the company took a chance on me* […]" (Tobias), or to be given a chance "*I got a lifeline thrown, that helped me to become the man that I now am* […]" (Jim, translated from Swedish).
These different versions of confidence, the missing confidence in some areas, but also the pride and existence of confidence in other areas show in the topics of the authors seeking for

support from their company, wanting to exceed expectations and doing so, and not being invisible but to be able to be the true self.

4.2.1. Seek for support

As established already earlier, several of the authors were seeking out to be taken care of, as they would be from a family (Elias, Mia, Marc, Susan, Jim, Kai, and Sarah). Especially when they describe how the newly got into the firm, authors describe an insecurity "*What if I screw up or don't live up to the expectation set for me?"* (Susan); "*took a chance on me, when I just graduated from university, with no plans for the future*" (Tobias); "*I, that didn't have anything, and him that had the future in his hands.*" (Jim, translated from Swedish).

Though, by being taken into the company the authors describe that they felt like they were being given an opportunity to prove themselves (Susan, Tobias, Jim, Kai, Sarah). Some, as for example Susan and Elias just needed a stage to prove themselves, while others show that they really want to be of use for the company by developing themselves and educating themselves more (Florence, Marc, Tobias, Vincent, and Sarah).

4.2.2. Exceeding expectations

Once they had been given the chance, the authors describe how it was possible to give something back to the company. One possibility of giving back, but also to have pride in for themselves is to create a legacy, as Florence has created and now with her retirement entrusts her workers that she is so proud of; or Tobias that has become the master of his work and has been teaching the 'new ones'. Susan has with her excellent work not only made a name for herself, but also provided a good reputation for the company. Elias has not only contributed to the company but even beyond that: "*I felt that my contribution really made a difference and was something that made the world a better place.*" (Elias). Excelling in what they are doing, they don't only prove to the company and other people of their worth, it gives them more meaning for their life's (Vincent, Elias, Tobias, Fiona), "[…] *Memes is lyfez*" (Tobias). Ben in his story that is critical and ridiculing the system didn't find any use in exceeding other people's expectation. He described how they had low expectations of him, but how he exceeded them for himself, became CEO and continues to stay in the role of a 'six-year old'. Fiona summarizes the feeling as: "[…] *you watch everyone around you do their best and exceeding the expectations of the company, but most importantly their own expectations.*"

4.2.3. Showing one true self

Another issue with confidence that the story authors show in their stories is that they don't feel like they are allowed to be themselves (at least they are not sure about it), but that they seek out to be able to be themselves (Camilla, Marc, Ben, Vincent, and Susan). The best picture to showcase this feeling of wanting to express themselves but not being sure how to do so is in Susan's story, where O'Hara realises that every employee has their personalised working space. By saying that "*I was already planning on how to decorate my working space, taking inspiration from the people around me.*" (Susan) she shows that she really wants to express herself, but instead of thinking of herself she bases her ideas on her co-workers. Such a behaviour shows again a low esteem, to stand for who she is, but to rather just fit into the bigger picture. Ben, in his story on the other hand shows his true self and is proud of it *"[…] the mind of a six-year-old but this mind is gold […]". Yet, he doesn't feel like his true self is being accepted. Instead he is being treated like a 'moron' (Ben).*

4.3. Lifestyle

Another, yet very central idea that was being discussed in the stories is the lifestyle of the story authors. Thinking about how worktime is being spend (Sarah and Susan), as well as after work free time (Kai, Elias, and Vincent). How, the lifestyle is going to be all these years while still employed (Elias, Mia, Marc, and Vincent), and how it is going to be once retired (Florence and Fiona).

4.3.1. Seeking for freedom

The story authors have brought forward that they value to have certain freedoms granted from their companies. Marc for example seeks for a company that grants their employees the freedom to move to a company subsidiary or partner abroad, and even supports their employees when deciding to do so. He doesn't solely wish for the freedom but also the security that this freedom doesn't come with drawbacks.

Mia mentions that she is grateful that she had the freedom to take time off work whenever she needed. Elias takes this kind of freedom even a step further, as he describes that he could decide his own schedule, as long as he got all his tasks done. This way, it wouldn't just allow him to plan his days the way he needed, it would also keep his work more interesting and challenging (Elias). Also, Fiona mentions that in her story her company allowed her to finish her time as an employee in her own way, by decreasing her worktime gradually.

Vincent is not interested in the freedom of changing his working times, but instead in having the freedom to use his work time in a way that he feels is the most appropriate "so I could spend more time with patients and what I have actually been studying for" (Vincent). Also, he mentions that the company provided him with the freedom to use any resource he needs to do testing's and new research.

What is distinctive is that most of these forms of freedom that the story authors mention is not purely for the improvement of their own life's but aimed to be more productive and helpful for the company, as by being able to apply their expertise more effectively, or to use the time more effectively.

4.3.2. Extracurricular Activities

Florence, Elias, Kai and Sarah mentioned in their stories certain extracurricular activities to be of importance. Elias mentioned that after work times, the company should include activities that aim to improve the bonds between the employees, to in turn improve the atmosphere also during work and make it more pleasant. Florence, and Kai also mention after work activities as parties, to celebrate and have a good time with everyone from work.

The connection of the company, to not only be responsible for the work time, but also the time the employees spent afterwards together might blur the line between personal life at work, and their private, and turn their work life into a part of their private life.

4.3.3. Looking out for the future

Finally, a topic that has been regarded in many stories are the thoughts of the story authors for future planning's. Camilla, Mia, and Marc talked about the importance of looking out for one's health, and that the company should take part in this by providing possibilities for physical exercise, as well as caring for the mental health of the employees. Camilla mentioned exercising not only in a connection to staying healthy but also as a motivational factor for work.

A good plan for the health of their employees, would support a good plan for the retirement of the employees. Other plans that the authors expect the company to regard are pension consultancy (Mia) or possibly even a private pension (Marc). Florence expects herself not to have much time for herself throughout the time that she will be occupied with working for the company, and therefore is looking forward to enjoying her pension. Fiona has similar thoughts, wanting to "experience life in a new way through my family and watching my grandchildren grow up." (Fiona), and by trying out things she hasn't done before.

4.4. Summary of findings

Based on the findings, a collection of ideas could be made about what it is that Swedish young adults that are University or post graduate students, seek for from their future workplace. Ideas on how different characters in a company should be like, ideas on what the company can regard to make the employees feel more confident in their workplace, and ideas on what they expect the company to contribute to their lifestyle.

About themselves, the story authors did not necessarily see themselves in a leading position. If they did, they still thought of themselves more of an equal to other employees. From their leaders, they wish to experience an equal that listens to them, but also is not afraid to instigate performance. Co-workers they tend to seek out to take a friend or family like position. To support this, they want the company to provide lifestyle possibilities that allow bonding with their co-workers, as for example parties. Compared to other companies, the story authors wish that their workplace performs better. Though, they expressed a struggle with confidence about being able to express themselves, and to be able to find a place in the company. They seek therefore for a company, that makes them feels cared for, so that they don't need to worry about these issues. In their work capabilities on the other hand, they show high confidence, and wish to be able to express them. This even has influence on lifestyle choices that they wish for, as a bigger freedom at the workplace could allow them to use their abilities more effectively. Finally, the story authors also very much care about their future, and therefore want possibilities provided that allows them to stay healthy, and also to have a good retirement after their work life.

5. Theoretical Framework

Following the rules of inductive research (Jebb, Parrigon, and Woo, 2017), the following part presents theories that were chosen, based on the previous research findings. These theories will prepare a base for a deeper discussion of some of the central phenomenon that can be observed, in connection to previous ideas.

As one can see in the findings, the story authors have requested several times to be cared for, or they expressed how thankful they are for being taken into the company. These feelings were expressed mainly, when the characters describe the beginning of their careers. This finding suggests that the characters seek validation that they are accepted into their new work place. To further investigate their request for validation and comfort, the theory of feedback seeking will be reviewed, which will allow us to further discuss the findings later on.

Although, the seeking for feedback from leaders as well as co-workers has been mentioned by the participants, a transformation of the characters could be observed, in which they on the one hand show their insecurities, but on the other hand also show a confidence in their work capabilities. Most of the characters have lived through a fast metamorphosis, in which they have become a valuable part of the workforce, or society. Such a change from how they first depict themselves, to how they depict themselves once they have spent some time in the company, gives the notion that the characters picture of themselves changes throughout their stories. Therefore, the theory of the perception of 'Self' will be reviewed in this chapter, to allow, also for this phenomenon, a deeper discussion in chapter 6.

5.1 Theory of feedback seeking

Information that is perceived as of high value for the correction, validation and adaptation of behaviour for attaining goals is what is commonly known as feedback (Ashford and Cumming, 1983). Feedback seeking is a core characteristic of our human nature which can fulfil several different functions. It can serve as a validation of the current behaviour or action and thusly act as a reward that motivates performance (Payne, & Hauth, 1955). It can also serve as a tool for regulation and guidance of behaviour or action in an unsure situation based on the feedback (Payne & Hauth, 1955).

Feedback loops that fulfil, validate or regulate behaviour can take two different forms, indirect or direct (Ashford, 1986). The indirect loop is based on observations of the surroundings. When an action is taken, or a behaviour is expressed, the individual then monitors the situation for social queues by observing other individuals in their surrounding and their reaction or response to the acted behaviours (Ashford, 1986). From this the individual infers how well they are performing, based on the reaction around them giving them validation or referral sentiment for the action or behaviours showcased (Ashford, 1986).

The more direct method of feedback seeking is through direct inquiry's where an individual voice an inquiry to their action and get a similar emotional payoff or deterrent based on the vocalized answer of the queried individual, group or institution (Ashford, 1986).

The two different methods are often used in tandem of each other with both, direct and indirect feedback being used to read a situation (Ashford, 1986). Different situations and social/cultural context may also have an influence on the usage of direct and indirect method of feedback seeking, and to the extent one has used over the other (Ashford, 1986). Confidence also plays a role in the seeking of validation, where more self-confident individuals seek less validation from their environment and instead trusted their own abilities (Ashford, 1986).

The value of the feedback given seems to be a useful resource in a new environment defined by a specific job or series of actions. But, as the individual settles and gains experience with its job or function, the feedback regarding the job is perceived as less valuable. However, the feedback on their performance within the organization still seems to hold value and does not degrade as the individual settles in its role (Ashford, 1986).

Feedback should therefore take different forms as the environment or task becomes known. The value of feedback will therefore fluctuate as an individual receives different jobs within the organization (Ashford, 1986). Feldman and Brett (cited in Ashford, 1983) suggests that an individual that is new to the organization will need support and feedback on social aspects to learn the job and settle in to the organization. But is a settled employee familiar with the organization, he/she transfers to a new task feedback that focuses on the performance of the task (Ashford, 1986).

5.2 Theory on the perception of "Self"

When discussing the self and the true self Strohminger et al. (2017) explains the idea of 'self', proclaimed by the renowned psychologist Carl Rogers as "*It is a body and a mind, organs and thoughts, desires and intentions, whims and dispositions.*" (Strohminger et al. 2017 p.551).

Strohminger et al. (2017), continues by explaining how the understanding of the 'self' is a rather superficial persona, that can be altered with the environment, while the 'true self' is something that is a constant, that will hide under the surface even if the 'self' adapts to its surroundings. This idea is built on the work of Carl Rogers, who express's the 'self' as a false front that is masking the 'true self' (Rogers, 1961). Strohminger et al. (2017), illustrates the difference with the 'self' and the 'true self' with the movie *Grease,* where the female lead Sandy transforms from a stereotypical "good girl" to a more outspoken and expressionist "bad girl". Strohminger et al. (2017) argues, that if the later person is not part of the 'true self', but the transformation that was caused because of outside pressure. The core values of the 'true self' would still be present and seek to express the 'true self' (Strohminger et al., 2017). Another analogy used to present the opposite, is the transformation of the fictive character Ebenezer Scrooge in "*A Christmas carol",* where he figures out through his journey with the spirits that his true self is a caring and loving individual, contradicting his previous behaviour early in the book. Table 4 is illustrating the key differences between the self and true self according to Strohminger et al. (2017).

The Self	The True Self
Encompasses entire range of personal features	Emphasizes moral features
Valence-independent; can be positive or negative	Valence-dependent; positive by default
Perspective (first- or third-person) dependent	Perspective-independent
Cross-culturally variable	Cross-culturally stable

Table 3 Key differences between self and true self according to Carl Rogers theory as presented by Strohminger et al. (2017)

Though, the understanding of the 'true self' as proposed by Carl Rogers is contested. The post structuralist writer Foucault called the followers of the ideas of Carl Rogers "*the Californian cult of self* "(as cited in Strohminger et al., 2017, p.552). Still, Foucault could not offer an own theory or explanation of the concept (Strohminger et al., 2017). Other criticism raised by Strohminger et al. (2017) is, that the belief that an authentic 'self' is hidden beneath

the surface of a personality, borders on superstition. However, the idea of the 'true self' within psychology is something that is still debated wildly in the field and has been a theme for a long time, which is evident from Carl Jung's work with the ego and the shadow (Diamond, 2012).

6. Analysis & Discussion

Based on the findings, after categorizing the fictive stories, resonating responses and themes were identified. Five dimensions of interest were established, showcasing what the story authors highlighted in their stories as attracting, retaining and motivating factors in an organization. Each dimension had several driving factors, that were mentioned or hinted at, as important for the story authors happiness and fulfillment within the company. According to the data collected, these were the dimensions that were of interest for the Swedish skilled young adults participating in the study.

The five dimensions below, are listed after their overarching reoccurrence within the stories, with the strongest voiced dimension for satisfaction being listed first.

The dimensions are as followed: 1. Workplace structure dynamic 2. Validation and acknowledgment 3. Acceptance and freedom 4. Private and work life balance 5. Personal growth and the future. Each dimension was represented throughout most of the stories, with stories often containing several driving factors that support the occurring dimension.

The five dimensions along with driving factors and a sample texts are combined in Table 4.

Dimensions	Sample text	Driving factors
Workplace structure and dynamics *Organization/Management/ Co-workers dynamic* The organizational dynamic. How the hierarchical structure, leadership style, decision-making process and co-worker dynamic function within the institution.	*"We have all here in the office developed close friendships and have many memories together" (Florence, translated)* *"Another good thing with the company was the clear and transparent leadership" (Camilla)* *"I felt that this led to a very open work environment where open communication, innovation and creativity was heavily encouraged in solving work related issues" (Elias)* *"In the company we have developed to a closely connected group of peoples…" (Jim, translated)* *Those were the good days, but all of this wouldn´t have been possible if it weren´t our boss, who cared for his employees, the time he listened to our ideas, or*	Drivers: • Decentralized management structure • Pragmatic and trustworthy leadership • Decisions based on consensus and/or knowledge • Strong co-worker dynamics

	when he remembered peoples' birthdays or when he sometimes made jokes/ pranks, nothing wouldn´t have been possible if it weren´t for him (Kai) "I've wonderful colleagues even better friends" (Kai) "The atmosphere among the co-workers and managers has always been open and good which made it fun to go to work" (Sarah)	
Validation & acknowledgment *Organizational support/Work performance/Promotion opportunities/Organizational success* Organizational Support structures and validation structures set within the institutional environment. And Validation through association Enables building of validation and acknowledgment inside and outside work structure.	*"I hope that you'll all keep the company on the same track and develop it towards more success" (Florence, translated)* *"I love my work, and my coworkers and chief have always been there to support and guide me." (Susan)* *". I remember the first day I started here, the building was not bigger than a house and we were 5 people. Now… now we have a skyscraper, 500 employees and we are still growing." (Kai)* *"…wanted me the grow as a person and as an employee by offering internal education for example." (Sarah)*	Drivers: • Supportive leadership and organization • Acknowledgment of skills • Possibility for Advancement • Investing in the employees • Being a part of a successful organization • Meaningful work with a legacy
Acceptance and Freedom *Time flexibility/movement within organization/Acceptance* The organizations and leaders' reactions to unexpected personal events Working to live not living to work	*"Everyone had their personal working space which they were free to decorate how they wanted to reflect their personality."(Susan)* *"… and have moved until I found the position fitting for me" (Jim, translated)* *"he saw through the façade and helped me…" (Jim, translated)* *"Letting me gradually decrease my workload and finish up everything I need to feel finished" (Fiona)* *"Also, what's important is that an employee has the possibility to work at partner companies, which are owned by the same (within the same) organisation."(Marc)*	Drivers: • Free expression of self • Understanding of private problems • Flexible workload • Flexible with time off • Possible movement within organization

Private & Work life balance *Outside workhours: Family/Co-workers* Balance, understanding and respecting peoples personal space. Creating bonding activates both in and outside workhours.	*"I remember the time we made pranks on the interns and every company parties that got out of hands" (sic.) (Kai)* *"I'm going to miss going in to work to see all my lovely co-workers, who have become lifelong friends, and the possibility to contribute to the team" (Fiona)* *"I want to thank my co-workers and family that have supported me when times were hard" (Jim, translated)* *"But work is not everything! Having a decent salary made it possible not to work full time and still support myself and family. Because having a life outside of work is important for me," (Vincent)*	Drivers: • Facilitates bonding with co-workers • Creation long-lasting and meaningful connection with co-workers • Connected work and private life • Work life balance
Personal growth and the future *Personal development/Long-term planning* Provided healthcare, pension planning, strong bonds and socialization with former colleagues after retirement	*"It really felt like they saw me and that they wanted me the grow as a person" (Sarah)* *"In terms of health, I mentioned physical and mental health, I appreciate how the firm takes care of the physical health through providing a, as we in Sweden have:" Friskvårdsbidrag"." (Marc)* *"... I really appreciate how the company has been an important part of my life and helped me grow the person I am today" (Jim, translated)*	Drivers: • The pension • Personal development • Health • Lasting relations

Table 4 The five dimensions on what skilled young adults seek from a workplace

6.1. Workplace structure and dynamics

The suggested implications of the collected data are, that the Swedish skilled young adults of the sample prefer a decentralized hierarchy within the organization. Expressing a wish for transparent leadership that is operating on the same level as the workers, and that includes them in the decision-making process. The story authors see themselves and their colleagues, including their leader/manager as part of a close knitted group. They don't want their coworkers to be unknown individuals that perform a job within the same organization, but as individuals with strong ties to one another, as friends and equals.

In these findings, it can be seen that the story authors, to a certain degree, reject the traditional structure of a company. Positions as the one of a leader that is placed above other employees are being ridiculed (Ben), or pictured to be not significantly different from any other employee (Sarah). This rejection of previously known structures might lead to the idea that skilled young adults in Sweden are critical about the environment that they live in, and don't necessarily take old structures as a given.

It is possible that this critical view comes as a part of their education. As they are still part of the educational system, or have only recently left university, one could argue that they are very influenced by what they have been taught. Being critical about their surroundings, about information they read, and of how things they know might change with new knowledge, might be a part of what they are being taught in their higher education at the universities.

However, the opposite might be the case as well. As these young adults have spent several years, starting from childhood, in the educational system, there is a possibility that they have not experienced this system to be suitable. One might argue that the school system and for example a company structure are different, yet a teacher could be experienced as a form of leader. Thus, our findings might suggest that the young adults might not want to follow this structure anymore in which they have grown up. Yet alone, as they are no longer children anymore but transforming into adulthood, and maybe want to see themselves as equals.

Yet another idea, on why the Swedish young adults might reject strong hierarchical structures, could be based on their culture. As stated on Hofstede Insights (2018), the Swedish culture is one with a low power distance (see Appendix 2), meaning that less emphasis is given to the power a person has as for example through their ranking, and more emphasis is given to their abilities (Hofstede Insights, 2018).

Also, it should be mentioned that the critical assessment of traditional structures could also be observed in other examples in the stories, as through the preference for loosened work time rules, to promote effectivity at the workplace. Workforce that questions the sense behind the existing work structures, can both, provide a positive development for the company, but also spread a feeling of frustration when the conversation between employee and company is not successful.

6.2. Validation & acknowledgment

The dimension of validation and acknowledgment received the second strongest response from the story authors. The participants expressed the desire for a supportive atmosphere in the company, by being taken care of (Susan) or being acknowledged for skills (Elias). Such acknowledgement, they suggest, can take place by being given the chance to advance in their field, or when resources are being invested to further develop the employee. Additionally, they mentioned that being part of something bigger, as being part of a known company, or being able to leave a legacy, provides them with the feeling of being acknowledged.

A possible reason for these young adults to seek out that someone else tells them or shows them that they are being valued could be based on a low self-confidence in how they perform, or on how others think they perform. Earlier writings on millennials on the other hand have depicted this generational group that are now young adults as 'lazy and entitled' (Stein, 2013), as well as the carriers of a high self-esteem (Twenge, 2013). It is possible that this negative picture of this group, that the media, and finally also the society at large created, could be partly reason for why the group shows insecurities about contributing enough to the company, or not being able to fit in. Thus, they would seek out acknowledgement to show that they care, and want to be a valuable members, but also that others are able to see that too.

The desire for validation can also be sighted to be central to the theory of feedback seeking behavior (see 5.1.). In the stories the characters have been seeking validation towards being accepted, or fitting in, when they described the time of starting in a company; but changed towards seeking a different kind of acknowledgement in a later point of time in their work lifespan, as through being given higher responsibilities, or leaving a legacy. The story authors expressed that they wanted support in the beginning of their work placement, though the theory of feedback seeking behavior suggest that this is a normal behavior for individuals newly entering a company (Ashford, 1986). Further on in the work-life of an individual, acknowledgement is only expected for deserved representation of abilities (Ashford, 1986). In fact, earlier research makes it seem as if millennials (Aslop, 2008, cited in Carpenter, and Charon, 2014) try to elevate themselves above other employees, by wanting to be acknowledged. However, the findings of this study, as earlier discussed show that equality is preferred, and elevation is only accepted if its represented in an individual's abilities. Therefore, we suggest that this group of young adults don't seek for acknowledgement and

validation in order to rank up and gain more power in the company, but purely for the improvement of their own esteem.

6.3. Acceptance and Freedom

The dimension of acceptance and freedom refers, besides other drivers, to the story authors wish to be able to express themselves freely, without being judged for who they are. This finding is also closely connected to the wish that the company understands that there is more to a person then just being a workforce. As the following dimension will go into more detail of, the young adults seek to turn their work situation into a part of their private life, which makes it important for them to express who they are as a person. If issues from after work hours arise, they wish for a certain degree of freedom given by their workplace, to be able to handle other parts of their life. Even the wish that the company should support international assignments, if this is something that corresponds to the employees' private life.

Referring back to the theory of the 'self' and the 'true self'(see 5.2.), the employee is troubled by the idea of having to pretend of being a different 'self'. When joining the company in the stories, often it was expressed that they wanted to be taken care of, as they showed a degree of insecurity if they fit into the new workplace, as they haven't been acknowledged there yet (linking back to validation & acknowledgement). Simultaneously, this insecurity is caused, as the employees have not yet been able to experience if the 'self' is being accepted, or before understanding what kind of 'self' is being expected. Growing up in a time, when social media is constantly influencing the individual, these young adults grow up, experiencing a constant pressure in how they are seen by others, how they want to be seen by others, and who they really are (Thompson, 2011). Therefore, the expressing of the young adults in this case that they wish to be able to be themselves might be due to contemporary pressures from the society that surrounds them at all times. The seek for a place where they can be themselves, and not having to change oneself too much just to fit in.

6.4. Private & Work life balance

According to the participants of this study it is important for them that the company provides a balance between the work load and the employees private life. By that they don't only refer to the traditional work-life balance, which refers to an individual having enough free time

after work, to be able to have a satisfying private life as well; in this case balancing work and the private refers to the wish of the skilled young adults to combine working time and private life. Suggestions on how this can be accomplished are, that the company could provide an adequate amount of possibilities to socialize with co-workers, during work, as well as during extracurricular activities. Many of the participants have expressed the wish to be friends with their co-workers, or even to feel like in a family.

A possibility for such a seeking might be that they are looking for this supportive, family like environment, due to a more often occurrence of disrupted families, as the number of for example single parenthood has been increasing (Noble, Haytko, & Phillips, 2009, sighted in Duh, 2016). Thus, it is possible that the young adults that grew up in times of instable family structures, seek to extend their family or at least friend circles.

However, the findings that the Swedish young adults seek to transform their work into part of their private life can also be related to something that Hofstede describes as something typical for the Swedish culture. The low power distance partially explains why the researched group seeks to create Friendships with other employees, as of the equal positioning of them to each other (Hofstede Insights, 2018). However, even more so intercepts the notions of the two dimensions of femininity and indulgence. People from the Swedish culture therefore are expected to emphasize enjoying their time and to spent time with for example friends (Hofstede Insights, 2018). One could argue that this indulgent culture, seeks out friendships at work to make working time more pleasurable.

6.5. Personal growth and the future

The fifth dimension that we identified to be of importance for the young adults was the dimension on personal growth and the future. In their stories, the story authors have shown a high degree of thoughts about the future, to picture it, and to prepare for it. For example, several have mentioned that they care about keeping healthy and wanting the company to support that (Marc), or to be prepared for the pension (Mia). Though, they also discuss the wish to improve themselves, to be better in the future even as a person (Florence, & Jim).

These thoughts were not expected from individuals that are still in an early stage of their life. Yet, they start planning on what it is that might be an issue in the future and to prepare for it. A possibility that they are actively thinking about it might be based on current expectations that society projects on them. In Sweden, but also many other western countries a demographic shift has been observed, which shows that the population becomes older

(Börsch-Supan, Ludwig, & Winter, 2006). Simultaneously, as this part of the population becomes more pension systems fail more often to cover those that retire from work (Börsch-Supan, Ludwig, & Winter, 2006). The current young adults grow up being aware of this issue, and not being sure how they will be able to retire one day.

Also, the educational system that they are just about to leave have prepared them for a long-term way of thinking. At current times, it seems to be important that a person already knows at a young age what they want to become later on, as choices in educational specialization for example have to be made early. Even when searching for a job to enter the work market, the young adults are often expected to already bring several years of experience in the work field, as well as a good education. From the age of 15 Swedish teenagers are expected to make their first decision about the future with specialized programs on "gymnasium" level which will decide what university studies they will be able to attend. Then those that aim for higher positions will probably spend three years or more to gain their bachelor's or higher degree. If they did an incorrect choice in their bachelor they might have to add an additional year on university level to attain the level of knowledge needed to attend the program they desire for the future job they want to attain. Then, leaving the university they have the educational skill to apply for a job however they do not have the labor experience requested by many companies which often seems to range from two to five years depending on the position. This means that young Swedish adults have to plan a large part of their early life from a young age. Which might lead them to follow this habit of planning ahead of time, as it feels like a necessity. But also, in relation to why they feel such a strong need for validation and support. They want to have validation that they are on the right track and that the huge decision taken from a young age is "correct.

7. Conclusion

This study was conducted with the aim to contribute to the understanding of what skilled young adults that are leaving university, and are entering the labor market, seek for when choosing a workplace. The findings, that resulted after the collection of 13 fictive stories from Swedish university students, or those that have recently graduated, showed that there are common topics and thoughts by the researched individuals, that contribute to the aimed for understanding. Based on these findings it was possible to identify five major dimensions, that the young adults of this study cared about when thinking of an ideal work-place: 1. Workplace structure & dynamics, 2. Validation & acknowledgment, 3. Acceptance and Freedom, 4. Private & Work life balance, and 5. Personal growth and the future.

Considering the outcomes of this study, we would like to stress the importance of not only what the companies can do to reach and attract their future workforce, but also what should be considered about current societal structures that have possibly shaped these individuals. We think it might be time to rethink how we prepare the young adults for their professional life. The current system seems to try and shape individuals to fit the common hierarchical corporate structure, while living in a changing and more globalized world that is often in need of a new order. This could be observed in their view of management, preferring a low hierarchical structure with a less autocratic management structure then the current standard. This seems to put a pressure on the skilled young adults to balance these contrasting ideas, making them feel lost and uncertain, creating a need to express and be accepted for their true self in a close connected ingroup environment.

The stories showed that the individuals are driven and wanting to provide the corporation with their expertise, that they collected throughout the years of education. At the same time, they did not feel comfortable to do so until a managerial position confirmed and acknowledges the worth of their initial actions within the company, and guided them into the new corporate structure by metaphorically holding them by the hand and giving them validation. This strong sentiment of "Take care of me" found in the stories could potentially be destructive. This expressed insecurity in it themselves and their skills, could possible lead to inaction in situations when action is needed.

However, this hesitation of action should not be mistaken for not wanting to take an action, or laziness. Contrary the stories collected showed a fervent desire from the story authors to

show the skills they have acquired from their studies. They want to contribute to the corporate, coworker and personal development, and together with their coworkers' skills, push the company to excel. From a corporate perspective, change within the company and its structure might seem like a difficult task. With a changing workforce, so must also the company evolve with it.

We think, the findings of the paper might help to outline what young skilled adults in Sweden want from their workplaces. Also, we hope that it will further stimulate the discussion on the wants and needs that these young skilled adults hold, as they are not necessarily aligning with the current corporate structure; And that steps may have to be taken to create a business environment in which all parts of the organization can find fulfilment.

However, with the five dimension that were identified in our study, new knowledge on what it is that attracts and motivates skilled young adults in Sweden to a certain company, could be collected. This new knowledge provided from the findings of this study, might benefit businesses that regard these, when reaching out for new labor force.

Also, further studies can be built upon this research, as for example an inductive testing on the applicability of the findings of this study in other contexts, as for example a different national culture. Or, to determine if generalizability of the model on the entire population of skilled young adults in Sweden applies. There is also the possibility to explore how young skilled adults and more established adults respond to the result to establish differences or similarities between the age groups.

8. Limitations

The conducted study on what skilled young adults that are leaving university seek from their Workplace, does have some limitations.

It is possible that the study will have some smaller flaws, as the research method, although academically solid, was unknown to the authors before starting the study. Limited previous studies with the method, although very informative were complex, and an approach of learning while doing was adopted. Though, the approach of using a method that is underrepresented in contemporary research, and that shows great potential for future studies, is also considered as a possible contribution to spread awareness or to develop it further.

This research is also, as all qualitative studies greatly dependent on the researchers' interpretation of the underlying material, which can have implications for the studies trustworthiness if unknown biases are applied. Therefore, the paper was created to be as transparent about the process as possible. All original stories were attached in the appendix.

Another limitation is, that it is not known how other factors as national culture, or generational culture, influenced the data that was collected. The size and complication of a study that simultaneously grasps other influencing factors as national culture, would have been out of scope for the timeframe given and could therefore not be done.

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Appendix 1

Story 1: Author Florence

Så är det över, min sista vecka innan pensionen. Att arbeta inom detta

företaget har varit så upplyftande. När jag tänker tillbaka så uppskattar jag

verkligen hur företaget…

…..har utvecklat mig inte bara inom mitt yrke utan också som människa. Under

min tid här på företag har jag mött framgång och motgång och nu bestämt mig för

att ta tid till mig själv och dra mig tillbaka till pensionen.

Jag hoppas att ni kommer att fortsätta i samma spår och utveckla företaget mot

mer framgång. Vi har alla här på kontoret skapat vänskaper och minnen ihop. Jag

är stolt över alla mina arbetare som jag vet att ni alla kommer axla nya roller inom

företaget.

Jag har ordnat en fest nu på fredag för att fira min pension där jag kan bjuda er

alla på företaget på ett riktigt härligt avslut. Jag hoppas att ni alla kan komma och

ge mig ett bra avslut efter alla dessa år.

Translated version of Florence story

That's it, my last week before retirement. It was such a fulfilling time in this company.

Thinking back, I really enjoy how the company…

Have evolved me not just in my profession but as a human being. During my time within the

company I was met with both success and adversity, and now I have decided to take time for

myself and retire.

I hope that you'll all keep the company on the same track and develop it towards more

success. We have all here in the office developed close friendships and have many memories

together. I'm proud of all my colleges and I know that you will all rise to new roles within the

company. I have an arrange for a party this Friday to celebrate my retirement, where all of

you are invited to a give me a spectacular send off. I hope you all can come and give me a

nice closure after all these years.

Story 2: Author Camilla

That's it, my last week before retirement. It was such a fulfilling time in this company.

Thinking back, I really enjoy how the company…

listened to me. How they encouraged every unique thing in every person. Because the leaders believed in the same thing I believed in, that it is the difference and diversity in every group that makes success.

Another good thing with the company was the clear and transparent leadership. That the workers knew about, for example, changes that would be in the near future. Nothing was a secret except personal things of course. The most important good thing about the company was the atmosphere among the people. I think that depends a lot on how the leaders were. No trash talk and no master suppression techniques. Not a boss who worked like he/she was on the top and demanded the workers to do things but a leader who worked together with her/his team.

The thing with time for recreation and exercise was also a good thing. We could take time every day for exercise and I strongly believe that it made the workers motivated to work harder and better and in the end, it made the company more successful.

Story 3: Author Elias

That's it, my last week before retirement. It was such a fulfilling time in this company. Thinking back, I really enjoy how the company…

Really seemed to care for their employees by listening to feedback about potential issues in the workplace. Especially how open upper management was regarding letting everyone have their say. I felt that this led to a very open work environment where open communication, innovation and creativity was heavily encouraged in solving work related issues. Of course, they couldn't always handle all issues immediately since more pressing matters had to take priority. But issues that employees did bring up were rarely, if ever, outright dismissed by upper management.

The work itself was something that I really enjoyed since I felt that my contribution really made a difference and was something that made the world a better place. That itself made me happy about where I was working, since the results of my work are what really drives me to perform. If I am not passionate about what I am doing and the results from that work, the amount of motivation that I have really plummets. But to have been able to work at the same place for as long as I did, there were several aspects that affected my decision to stay with the company even when times were rough, and the workload got heavier.

One aspect that I felt was important was how they handled new hires. If someone was struggling with getting settled into their new role, the resources and coaching available to that

person was excellent. This made us as employees feel valued by the company, instead of simply being expendable.

But I also really enjoyed the other perks of the job like the ability to set your own schedule, the freedom gained from that was very liberating since I had the ability to plan my own day. The reasoning behind this was that the most important part was that deadlines were met, how I achieved this deadline was not relevant. This of course led to times where the workload was heavier since the amount of work needed was never constant, but I felt that it only kept things interesting and motivated me to always give it my best. Moreover, this results-oriented approach made me feel that everything I did was impactful since I decided how I would plan my time and therefore any downtime meant that I could take it easier when the job didn't require as much time from me to meet my deadlines.

But a workplace should be so much more than just somewhere you go to get paid. The afterwork activities that were organized yearly by the company were good at fostering a camaraderie among the employees. This led in turn to a pleasant work environment since we all got along very well. Which I felt was an important part of enjoying my job. This positive environment led to the team performing even when times were stressful and motivated me further.

Story 4: Author Mia

That's it, my last week before retirement. It was such a fulfilling time in this company. Thinking back, I really enjoy how the company...

took care of me during all these years. It was never a problem to get time of if I experienced personal problems.

They made sure to show appreciation for my work by giving out summer, winter and birthday gifts (not every year but big numbers as 30, 40, 50..).

They provided pension talks with an auditor once a year, lunch benefits and other social perks as discounts at coffee shops, gym-membership, hairdresser and massages.

Looking back, it was more of a group of friends doing work together. I still have contact with most of my colleagues and will probably still keep the contact for the rest of my life.

It will feel empty not to be going there every day since this has been like my second home/family.

Story 5: Author Marc

That's it, my last week before retirement. It was such a fulfilling time in this company. Thinking back, I really enjoy how the company…

Took care of its employees, provided them with social security. In terms of offering health care, in terms of offering good pension, a private pension. And also making sure that the wellbeing of the staff and the employees was at a good level, that everyone was feeling healthy. Both, physically and mentally. And that no one ever had to feel that they were overworked, or overstressed.

Also, I appreciate how the company takes care of its employees in terms of education, in terms of offering training. Both, internal and external. And I appreciate how the company attempts to match the professional work with [people]. And realises how people are people and also have a private life. And how they try to offer both, work and education, so that it suits the individual employee, I think that is very important.

Also, what's important is that an employee has the possibility to work at partner companies, which are owned by the same (within the same) organisation. And which allows them to work both in Sweden but also internationally and gives them an opportunity. And not only to travel alone, but also to travel with the family. And basically, gives the employee an opportunity to explore the world, despite having a family to take care of.

In terms of health, I mentioned physical and mental health, I appreciate how the firm takes care of the physical health through providing a, as we in Sweden have:" Friskvårdsbidrag". Where you basically have a possibility of using a set sum, which in this case is 3000 crowns per year, in order to pay for some form of health care or activity in order to keep you healthy. This can be a massage, this can be a gym membership, this can be a spa membership as long as its within 3000 crowns. And I think this really helps the employee feel at ease, and work more efficiently.

Last but not least, I'd like to say that I feel like this company has, during the years, offered me potential to rise in the rank internally. And as I have mentioned previously with training and education, [the company] also has given me the opportunity to get positions which have challenged me, but also developed me. And were there excellent communication within the firm, which basically creates an effectiveness, which I think most companies should strive for, in developing great products through great organizational skills.

Story 6: Author Ben

That's it, my last week before retirement. It was such a fulfilling time in this company. Thinking back, I really enjoy how the company treated me like a moron, but they still promoted me as their CEO. Guess the thought that if a kid could run the company so could I. But then again, I have always had the mind of a six-year-old but this mind is gold because it leads me to be unpredictable. Screaming at adults always lead to me getting what i want and maybe that's why the promoted me!!

Story 7: Author Tobias

That's it, my last week before retirement. It was such a fulfilling time in this company. Thinking back, I really enjoy how the company took a chance on me, when I just graduated from university, with no plans for the future. Step by step the company educated me, also step by step I got better at what I do, and then it was my turn to teach the young one. The way of making memes. Some may argue that making memes are easy, may be the easiest job ever. But it takes education, times and efforts to become a master at making memes.

For each year that pass by memes become more popular and new memes are always on the market. Therefore, it is most important that the company is the first that make the meme. Memes may not be for everybody. Some may find it offensive etc. Therefore, there are memes for every age. And while making a meme, it is most important to understand the target group the memes are for. As was mention earlier memes are not for everybody.

To end this message, the only thing I want to say is that

" *Memes is art, Memes is lyfez"*

Story 8: Author Vincent

That's it, my last week before retirement. It was such a fulfilling time in this company. Thinking back, I really enjoy how the company gave me opportunities to continue learning and develop myself as a nurse. Having had the opportunity to get a paid education too become a specialised nurse in my field, is something I am grateful for. Because I probably wouldn't have done that if I would have been forced to take more student loans for that.

I also enjoy that this place invested in secretaries which stood for a lot of the administrative things so I could spend more time with patients and what I have actually been studying for. Something I also appreciate is that I have had opportunities too work on improving and testing things with my colleges and having the resources for that.

But work is not everything! Having a decent salary made it possible not to work full time and still support myself and family. Because having a life outside of work is important for me, so if the salary would have been lower i would have picked another company.

Story 9: Author Susan

That's it, my last week before retirement. It was such a fulfilling time in this company. Thinking back, I enjoy how the company feels like one big family. Everyone is always looking out for each other and doing their best to bring a positive atmosphere to the office. I can still remember my first project like it happened yesterday…

'This is it, my first day at Kurama Corporation.' I entered the office shortly before my shift started and I couldn't help but feel both nervous and excited. 'What if I screw up or don't live up to the expectation set for me? Stop it. It's going to be okay, just breath.' I took up my phone to once again check the name of the one supposed to guide me in the beginning. Finding my way towards the staff room, I took a deep breath before entering.

- Hello, my name is Scarlett O'Hara, and I'm looking for a Mr. Jonathan O'Neill
- That's me, and please call me Jack, you must be the new girl.
- Indeed, I am. It's a pleasure to meet you. Please take care of me.

After the introduction and some greetings towards the rest of the coworkers present, we headed out for a tour around the office. Everyone had their personal working space which they were free to decorate how they wanted to reflect their personality. I was already planning on how to decorate my working space, taking inspiration from the people around me.

- I believe this is the end of the tour, if you have any questions, please don't hesitate to ask me or any of your other coworkers for help.
- Thank you, I'm already looking forward to beginning work on my first project.
- Haha, I like your work ethic already, please don't exhaust yourself.
- I won't, I promise.

Kurama Corporation was a somewhat new company specializing in weddings. They had organized a few highly successful celebrity weddings and had because of that quickly significantly become sought after, and thus the company was able to expand and grow. My first wedding project was a young couple that had been together for almost ten years and had decided that it was time to thigh the knot with each other. They had two small children together, so they wanted the wedding to be, and with a theme, the question was what kind of theme? It was my job to find out and help the couple create the wedding of their dreams.

- When did the two of you meet?
- Freshman year of college. I felt nostalgic one day and decided to play Pokémon Yellow on my Gameboy, and it ended up with me taking it with me to school to play between lectures.
- Ah, I remember that day. I had just started playing Pokémon X on my Nintendo 3DS XL when I saw you playing during lunch break. I walked up to you to ask what you were playing, and we ended up talking about Pokémon and other video games.
- So, one can say that you bounded over Pokémon?
- Yes, you could say that.
- We even watched all the anime episodes together.

The conversation got me thinking. The couple seemed to enjoy playing video games in their spare time, and it was something that they had bounded over. Maybe we could create a theme based on that.

- What about a Pokémon themed wedding?
- I love it!
- Me too! Oh, we could dress up as Ash and Misty, wouldn't that be fun!?
- I agree, but I want our children to be a part of the bridal party.
- I wish that too. We are family, and this celebration is for all of us.
- May I suggest that the children are dressed up as Pokémon? They are both young, and I think it would be pretty cute, but the decision is all up to you, it's your wedding.
- That's an excellent idea.
- Yeah, they can be Pikachu and Togepi! What do you think honey?
- I agree with you darling.

We had a couple more consult meetings to work everything out and to make sure the wedding would run smoothly during the ceremony and the party afterward. The wedding was a success, and the couple recommended both the company and me to their family and friends. I love my work, and my coworkers and chief have always been there to support and guide me.

Story 10:Author Jim

Så är det över, min sista vecka innan pensionen. Att arbeta inom detta företaget har varit så upplyftande. När jag tänker tillbaka så uppskattar jag verkligen hur företaget har varit en viktig del av mitt liv och hjälpt mig bli den person jag är idag. Med den utveckling jag har fått av företaget kan jag nu i mina äldre dagar känna att jag har blivit en man som kan skryta om sin utökade erfarenhet och kunskap.

Min tid i företaget är av en nostalgisk historia för mig med många fina och roliga stunder. Självklart kan jag inte säga att det har gått helt fläckfritt att jobba och det har funnits stunder som har gjort att jag känt mig allt för nere och sliten. Därför vill jag börja med att tacka mina medarbetare och min familj som har stöttat mig under de stunder när det har varit svårt och tillsammans med företaget har vi utvecklats till en nära krets av människor som har kunnat åstadkomma något större.

Min position är en liten historia som har ändrats under mitt liv på företaget där jag har som en ung man arbetat mig upp i kretsarna och förflyttat mig till den position som till slutet nu har passat mig perfekt. Denna del av historien är där jag kommer att skryta mest för här har jag kämpat tappert för att få den krets av medmänniskor som jag har idag.

Jag kommer ihåg såväl hur jag fick denna möjlighet att ta del av detta företag. En nära vän till mig som nu inte finns vid livet något mer. En vän jag delat livet med som gav mig denna möjlighet som jag aldrig kommer glömma. En vän som jag nu vid mina första steg ut i pensionärslivet hade velat fira denna dag med. Han var bara några år äldre än mig och hade jobbat på detta företag i flera år innan mig. Detta var en man som till skillnad från mig hade en klass som var för sig själv. Vi träffades som barn och sen av olika anledningar förlorade vi kontakten och sågs inte mer.

Det var av en slump att vi möttes igen på en på ett ställe som bara kan beskrivas som ödet. Jag som inte hade något och han en man som hade framtiden i hans hand. Utav vårt intresse från barn kunde vi genomskåda varandra och så fick jag en livlina i livet som hjälpte mig till den man jag nu är och kommer fortsätta vara.

Translated Version of Jim

That's it, my last week before retirement. It was such a fulfilling time in this company. Thinking back, I really enjoy how the company…

… has been an important part of my life and helped me shape me into the person I am today. With the personal development I got through the company I feel that I have become a man that can brag about my extended knowledge and skills.

My time in the company is a nostalgic story for me with many enjoyable and funny moments. Of course, I can't say that my time at the company has been without rough patches and there have been times when I have felt down and haggard. I would therefore like to take a moment to thank my coworkers and my family that supported me when times was hard, and together with the company we developed to a close group of people that together was able to achieve something bigger. My position within the company is a story that have gone from me starting as a young man within the company, working myself up through the company structure to a position I'm satisfied with, and that fits me perfectly. The most important part of my story within the company is the connection to the people I have created. I remember well how I first got the possibility to work for the company, through a close friend who unfortunately is no longer alive. A friend which I shared my life with giving me this opportunity which I will never forget. And on the day now that I step out into retirement, I wished we could have shared it together. He was just a few years older than me and had worked at company for a few years before I started. Compared to me he was a man with style. We meet as children but for different reasons lost contact. And then by chance we meet later in life which I can only describe as fate. I had nothing while he had the future in his hand. And through our close childhood connection we could see through the facade and he helped me build up my life and become the man I am today and will continue to be.

Story 11: Author Kai

That's it, my last week before retirement. It was such a fulfilling time in this company. Thinking back, I really enjoy how the company…

Changed through the years I've been here. I remember the first day I started here, the building was not bigger than a house and we were 5 people. Now… now we have a skyscraper, 500 employees and we are still growing.

I´ve seen people come and go in this company, I've wonderful colleagues even better friends, I remember the time we made pranks on the interns and every company parties that got out of hands, or when we got big contracts.

Those were the good days, but all of this wouldn´t have been possible if it weren´t our boss, who cared for his employees, the time he listened to our ideas, or when he remembered peoples' birthdays or when he sometimes made jokes/ pranks, nothing wouldn´t have been possible if it weren´t for him, and his way of motivating people to do their work while having fun.

I owe a lot to my boss, for giving me the opportunity to be a part of this company and making it grow, my office is now cleaned, I've packed my last thing, all there´s left is to close the door and go the celebration party.

Story 12: Author Sarah

That's it, my last week before retirement. It was such a fulfilling time in this company. Thinking back, I really enjoy how the company…

Made me develop myself during my time here. It really felt like they saw me and that they wanted me the grow as a person and as an employee by offering internal education for example. The atmosphere among the co-workers and managers has always been open and good which made it fun to go to work. By putting up goals and rewards the managers pushed me to work better and harder to reach my full potential. The boss has never been invisible or out of reach for me, it has been easy to talk about for example constructive criticism both ways. It is the small things that make the biggest difference and the company has understood that and worked hard to give and be that little extra.

Story 13: Author Fiona

That's it, my last week before retirement. It was such a fulfilling time in this company. Thinking back, I really enjoy how the company has been so forthcoming and letting me go through this process in my own way. Letting me gradually decrease my workload and finish up everything I need to feel finished and not get such an abrupt ending to this chapter of my life.

Even though I'm looking forward to retirement and to be able to enjoy my well-deserved free time, I'm going to miss going in to work to see all my lovely co-workers, who have become lifelong friends, and the possibility to contribute to the team as we call it at the company. I've

always enjoyed that aspect of this company, that they are so teamwork oriented. That it's not about you and yourself as an individual but that you work for each other as a team and that every single one of us is just as important for the company to achieve its goals and please the customers.

I have really enjoyed working for the company and what it stands for. Doing your best through good times and bad times and being encouraged to thrive as you watch everyone around you do their best and exceeding the expectations of the company, but most importantly their own expectations. That's probably one of the things I'm going to miss most about working for the company.

Now I'm going to have to find new ways in order to grow as a person and thrive in my day to day life. However, I am going to have all the time in the world to experience new things and evolve as a person whether that is through trying out new things, getting new hobbies, traveling the world to places I've never been but always wanted to go or experience life in a new way through my family and watching my grandchildren grow up.

I am going to take it day by day and experience by experience and just enjoy my life, sleeping in on weekdays, not having a set schedule for every day that one has to follow to the letter. Now is when the new chapter of my life will begin, and I am going to grab it with both hands and an open mind, and never let go wherever life will take me next.
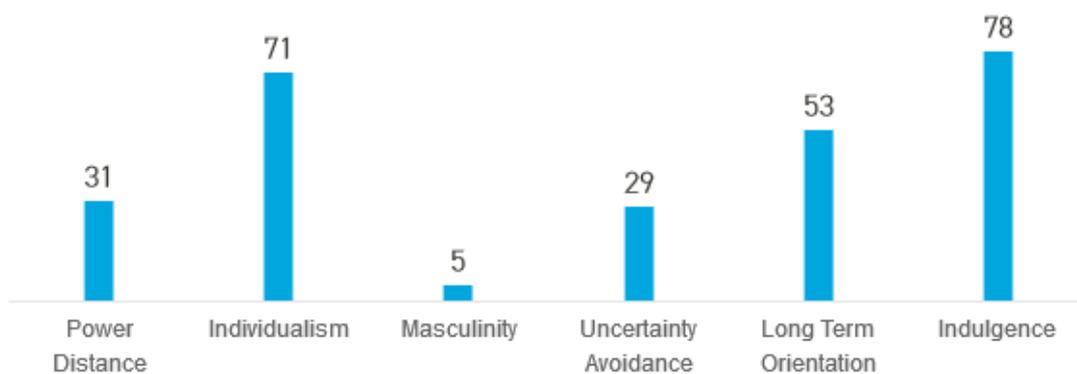
Appendix 2

Figure 2 The Swedish national culture according to Hofstede´s six dimensions Source: Hofsted-insight 2018