Work or family?

A study about work-life balance and availability for work and family in China

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Foreword

Throughout this process we have worked, discussed and analysed the material together. This means that this thesis was written by both of us as a team.

We are very thankful to all of our respondents and all of our contacts in China who helped us during our stay. It’s been an adventure writing this thesis in China.

Since we encountered problems along the way with our visa applications, we want to say sorry to our families, whom we probably scared to death during this period and to thank them for their great support and love.

Last but not least we would like to say a huge thankyou to our fantastic supervisor at work life science Ann Bergman. We would not have been able to do this without your help and guidance. It did not matter what kinds of problems came along, you always gave us good advice and support.

Karlstad, Sweden - May 2016

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Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to gain a deeper understanding of how the Chinese prioritize between work and family and how the culture can affect it. Nowadays, availability and work-life balance are often mentioned in a Western context, in this thesis we want to bring it into a Chinese context instead. China has the largest population in the world but there is not so much previous research in this field. Thus, it was of interest to us to do our research on the work-life balance and availability in China.

Chinese culture is strong and plays an important role for the Chinese in their daily lives. In Chinese culture, family relations are important also it is not just the relationship with the core of the family that is important, but also with the parents or parents-in-law. In this thesis we will show how the Chinese strike a balance between work and family and how they prioritize these two spheres. Other questions that will be dealt with are whether or not the employees of private organizations prioritize differently to the employees of public organizations. We have used a qualitative method and have interviewed ten people from both public and private organizations to gain a deeper understanding. We interviewed both men and women with administrative jobs. Another criterion was that the respondents had to have a child. We used this criterion since we wanted a deeper understanding of how they prioritize when they have a child and are still active in working life. The respondents all had fairly much the same conditions when it came to their duties and family situations, but their opinions regarding their work-life balance were different depending on which organization they belonged to.

In the analysis and results chapter, you as a reader will notice different factors affecting the respondents priorities between work and family, for example their living situations, finances and ages of their children. Availability is often connected with the opportunity to have flexible working hours or working from home since it can help you to be available for family and work at the same time. One distinct difference that we noticed is that the respondents from different organizations had different opinions regarding this opportunity. People with flexible working hours seemed to have a much harder time separating family from work than those with fixed working hours.

Keywords
Availability, Work-life balance, China, Private organization, Public organization, Chinese Culture, Confucianism
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1. Introduction

This introduction will inform you as a reader about the topic of our thesis. We will present the background to this study and give a short introduction to what previous studies and theories say about work-life balance and availability for work and family. We will also describe the purpose of this thesis, our main questions, the outline of the thesis and, of course, what made us decide to study this topic.

1.1 Background

Our two main concepts in this thesis are work-life balance and availability for family and work. Work-life balance is a concept which describes that an employee should strike a balance between work and family (Noon & Blyton 2007), while availability is more about being available with regard to a certain time and space (Bergman & Gustafson 2007). Being available for work can require, for example, being at one’s workplace or working from home, while being available for one’s family can require spending actual family time, doing household chores and being reachable for family matters during office hours (Bergman & Gardiner, 2007).

Workers are often divided into two groups namely white-collar workers and blue-collar workers. These two terms dividing workers into different groups originate from an early classification. Blue-collar workers used to wear blue overalls since they often got dirty doing their jobs and did not want to ruin their own clothes or get the dirty. White-collar workers used to wear white shirts because they often worked in an office and did not have to worry about getting their clothes dirty in that environment (Scott, S. 2011). In this thesis, all of the respondents are white-collar workers and previous studies show that these are the ones who tend to have most problems finding a balance between work and family (Lewis & Gambles 2007).

Work-life balance is a well-known concept in Western countries and there are a lot of previous studies about it using different perspectives. This thesis will focus on this concept of work-life balance, but also of availability, although in a Chinese context. Since both of us, the authors of this thesis, had been studying and living in China for a short time, we found that country interesting and stimulating in different areas. We thought it would be interesting to see how employees in that country thought about the concepts work-life balance and availability for work and family. We were also interested in seeing if the organizations in China had done anything to support the employee’s balance between their work and family as in some Western countries such as Sweden.

There is not a lot of research in this area, from a Chinese perspective, which is why we think it is time. China is a huge country, with the world’s biggest population, and we think it is time for these concepts to be introduced and implemented there too. China also has a strong culture that is different from that of the Western countries. This affects the Chinese in their employee
roles and their family roles (Mijung & Chesla 2007). So, to gain a better understanding of and an insight in the Chinese way of thinking, we will also include some studies of and research into Chinese culture in this thesis, at a later stage in the analysis, we will connect it with our main concepts work-life balance and availability. We hope that it will give you as a reader a better understanding of work-life balance and availability for work and family in China and that you will be able see how culture can have such a strong effect on working and family life in China. So, after this background we will use the rest of this thesis to discuss work-life balance and availability and show how men and women in China priorities between work and family, in addition to what affects the priorities they make. We hope that you will enjoy reading this!

1.2 Purpose

The purpose of this thesis is to see how work-life balance and availability for work and family are experienced, handled and how the ancient Chinese culture affects in contemporary China. We want to know if the respondents regard their work-life balance and demands for availability as a concern, in that case, how they handle these demands and how they prioritise in order to strike a balance between work and family. Since there have not been many previous studies of the topic in a Chinese context, we hope that this thesis can act as a basis for further research.

1.3 Research questions

In order to fulfil the purpose our main questions are:

- How do men and women in China experience demands regarding work and family and how do they prioritize these demands?

- What affects the priorities they make?

We hope that these questions will bring us closer to gaining a deeper understanding of our main concepts.

1.4 Outline

After the introduction, where we have given a brief background and stated our purpose with this thesis and our main questions we will continue by presenting three other chapters: theory, method and, finally, analysis and results.

In the theory chapter, we will present some relevant theories that provide a deeper understanding of the topic, also acting as a basis for the analysis part. The theory chapter is divided into three sections, namely, work-life balance, availability and Confucianism and the Chinese family. The subheading Confucianism and the Chinese family concerns the Chinese culture part. After each section, there is a short summary.
In the method chapter, you will be able to read which method we have been using while writing this thesis, our selection of respondents and what we did when processing the material etc.

Our analysis and results chapter is our biggest chapter since it contains, as the title suggests, our analysis and results. Our last chapter is our final summary but, interwoven with this, you will also find our discussion and conclusion.
2. Theoretical framework

In this chapter, we will present some theories about availability for work and family, work-life balance and the culture that has influenced family and work in China today. These theories will form a basis so that later on in the thesis together with collected data, we can answer our main questions, which is “How do men and women in China experience demands regarding work and family and how do they prioritize these demands?” and “What affects the priorities they do?”. We will use work-life balance and availability as our two main concepts. Neither of these concepts has been studied very much from a Chinese perspective and this is why we are using both of them in order to gain a deeper understanding. We will start with a brief introduction of the concept work-life balance. After that, we will look at and explain the concept of availability, in order to discuss the differences and similarities between work-life balance and availability. Work-life balance and availability are going to be key concepts in our thesis and thus we have chosen to divide up this chapter in order to write about both work-life balance and availability in order to gain a deeper understanding of the main subject.

The concept flexibility will not play an important role in our thesis since the respondents have regular working hours and standard contracts. Even if the concept will be mentioned in our analysis chapter we think that the concept availability is a better match.

Under the subheading "Confucianism and the Chinese family", we will account for how a regular family looks in China, and how this country’s heritage still affects the make-up of the Chinese family. For example, there will be a brief introduction of the ancient philosophy of Confucianism, which is a central part of Chinese culture. We will also declare for the one child policy, as well as how this works and affects the Chinese family and their attitude to work. The Chinese government recently changed its one child policy into a two child policy. There is not a lot of information about it, but we will try to explain, using the resources we got obtained, the change is going to be implemented in China.

2.1 Work-life balance

In this section, we provide a brief introduction of the concept of work-life balance. This concept is important for our study, both as a theoretical framework that guides our interviews and as a tool for analysing our data. When using the concept work-life balance in this chapter, we will use the abbreviation WLB. This is because we think that this will help us to achieve a better flow in the text and make it easier for the reader to keep up with the arguments and theories. WLB is a part of our thesis because it is a well-known concept in the Western world and there has been a lot of research into it. This will help to also adapt the concept availability. In the part where we show some of the critics to WLB, you will be able to see why we do not choose to only use WLB as a key concept in our thesis. In the chapter you will also be able to read about the five main models of WLB. We have chosen to write about these five models since we think this will show that there are a lot of
different views as regards striking a balance between work and family and how different factors can affect each other in different ways.

2.1.1 Five main WLB models

The concept work-life balance, as the name might suggest, is about striking a balance between work and family (Noon & Blyton, 2007). This might be harder than it seems, O’Driscoll (1996) argues that there are five main models explaining working life and life outside work. The first one is the segmentation model which means that work and non-work are not connected with each other but two different aspects of life. The problem with this model is that it is more theoretical than empirical. It is difficult to find empirical evidence for being able to separate work and non-work. In this thesis, we will look at non-work such as spare time, family time or household chores. The second model is called the spillover model and it hypothesizes that the two spheres can affect each other in a positive or negative way. One’s job could, for example have a bad influence on one’s family or one’s family will have a positive effect and encourage one to go to work. O’Driscoll (1996) is of the opinion that this model needs to be further researched in order to of value and functional. The third model is a compensation model, meaning that what you lack in your job sphere, you can find in your spare time sphere. For example, if one misses the appreciation one gets at work and by that we mean not being seen or having one’s voice heard, one instead obtains this appreciation in one’s spare time sphere. If, for example, you get appreciation in one sphere, this might not be something that one misses or demands in the other sphere. The instrumental model is the fourth model. This involves the things you do in the job sphere possibly helping you in the other sphere. For example, if you earn money from your job, this can help you buy a house or a car for your family, and if you have the support of your family, then maybe you will be able to achieve more at work. The fifth and final model that O’Driscoll argues for is the conflict model. If you experience great demands in all spheres of your life, then it is possible that you might have to make a few difficult choices, and some individual conflicts might occur (Guest 2002). A typical conflict could rise when one has to work late and then have to pick up one’s children late from the day centre. This cause a guilty conscience, with the parent in question has to make different choices every time the boss needs someone to work late. We think that these five WLB models are important to include and it can be good to bear them in mind when gathering material and analysing.

WLB is a contested concept, which is one of the reasons that we do not only use it as our sole key concept. One of the critiques of WLB is that there are two discernible WLB discourses (Lewis & Gambles, 2007). One of these is white-collar workers, a description that more or less matches our respondents. A white-collar worker is often an office worker, or someone who does not need to get his/her clothes dirty when working. These white-collar workers, whom Lewis & Gambles (2007) talk about in their critique, are the ones who especially experience problems finding the time for a private life because of their work. This part, which is referred to as the personal control of time focus on the personal and house -holding responsibilities needed to get the balance right. As you can tell, this part is on the
individual/family level instead of the organizational level. The second part is more focused on the flexibility of organizations, for example a workplace. WLB is seen as a characteristic of the workplace and thus there is some WLB policy that indicates this. This part is thus directed more at work than family life. Both these discourses have dimensions that have defects on the approach that WLB has. The language that is used regarding how an individual combines his/hers work life with family life is essential to both policy development and to the day-to-day practice. One problem with this is if you solve a situation using a solution that you come up with very quickly, that you forget about what sort of problems the “quick-fix” may result in. Maybe the underlying problem is not solved even though you may have solved it for the moment (Gambles et al., 2006; Smithson and Stokoe, 2005). If you do quick-fixes this can lead you into a linguistic/conceptual trap (Nicolini & Mezner 1995) which prevents a deeper understanding of the concept WLB and of the questions and visions that accompany it (Lewis, Gambles & Rapoport 2007).

2.2 Availability for work and family

One solution regarding the critiques of WLB is to use the concept availability as a complementary concept (Bergman & Gardiner 2007), as we have done in our thesis. In this chapter, we will introduce it a bit more, both the concept of availability and availability for family and work. When you talk about availability for work and family, the concept work-life balance is often used (Bergman & Gardiner 2007). In our thesis, we are going to use the concept of availability together with WLB since this is easier for us to adapt in China. It can be easier to adapt in China because the availability concept can be used to study how employees temporally and spatially meet demands regarding work and family (Bergman & Gustafson 2007). In China, there are certain demands and patterns as regards how one should be available for work and family. There are, for example, five relationships regarding this which are important to the Chinese, these five, you will be able to read more about in the next section on Chinese culture (Mijung & Chesla, 2007). The work- life balance concept can also be very subjective and thus there is a risk of the individual creating his/her own “balance” between work and family life, with his/her interpretation ignoring the conflicts that may exist between the two spheres (Bergman & Gardiner 2007). This section is arranged in such a way that you, as a reader, can gain a deeper understanding of availability. It starts with a description of the concept, continuing with a description of availability for work and ending with availability for family.

2.2.1 The concept of availability

“By the concept of availability we mean the ability of an individual or group to be available in relation to someone or something” (Bergman, A. 2011: 106.). Availability is thought of as a tool that be can used when studying how people are available for their jobs and families. It can also be studied how their availability is when it comes to their individual motivation and choices on the one hand, and their social limitations and opportunities on the other. We have
not found any studies that only concern availability. Most of the resources we have found conflate availability and WLB, just as we have done in this thesis. We do not mean that we will combine the concepts together, just that we will use them both to gain a deeper understanding of the topic. Availability can be conscious, unconscious, voluntary or forced. Whichever one of these is relevant will depend on the situation when/where the availability is required (Bergman & Gustafson, 2007). The concept is quite strictly defined, but people’s experiences can be blurry, for example, when do you become available and when do you stop being available. This is also one of the reasons why we have chosen to use this concept in our thesis. Since there are not many previous studies of availability for work and family in China, we need to keep an open mind. This is because we cannot keep ourselves locked into a certain balanced concept since we are not the ones deciding where the balance is or where it can be found.

Work life makes different demands on the employee’s availability. The employer needs employees who are available in different places and at different times. When it comes to time, this means that different employees have a fixed number of hours they should work per week, while some others have a more flexible rota, for example overtime. By different places is meant being at your workplace, working from home or taking your work with you wherever you go (Bergman & Gardiner 2007). Work life has become more global these days. Businesses are conducted between different countries with different time zones, something which can require uncomfortable working hours. Also, technology has evolved and thus it is more normal to have your email connected to your phone so that you can be available for work no matter where you are in the world. Both family life and work life can be affected by availability requirements. Employees can be affected, not just by their employers, but also among the other employees sight at availability. Family life also requires availability for households chores, taking care of children, washing clothes and so on (Bergman & Gustafson 2007). As a result of global and technological developments the lines between availability for work and family are becoming more blurred. One moment you are answering an email on your phone and the next you are playing with your child. In our analysis, we will discuss availability more on the basis of our results drawn from the interviews.

2.2.2 Availability for work

It is important to bear in mind that availability for work is something that can enforced to varying degrees. The availability not only reveals itself in how available one are during working hours, but also in how flexible one are as regards taking the work home, or along on business trips. This type of loyalty to one’s employer is a type of availability. Showing how willing one is to work at home or away from ones work place, shows that one want to advance within the company or develop their job. Research has shown that the level of availability for work is higher in those who are on a higher level within the workplace hierarchy(Bergman & Ivarsson 2010). When one is in a higher position they often have more people below them. Therefore more people are dependent on their availability. People in these high positions are subject to the invisible demand that they need to be more available than their colleagues. This is to make sure business never stops and the employees below them are able to keep working
all the time. Some people can choose their availability. Choosing means that if they are not in a fulltime employment, one will be able to choose when, and if, they want to take on some extra working hours. They are not forced to work nights or weekends. This is most common in the retail area, but can of course, occur in other sectors too (Bergman & Ivarsson 2010).

2.2.3 Availability for family

Availability for family is quite similar to availability for work, just change the key factor from work to family. One way that one can be available for family during working hours is by being reachable, either on the phone or in person. This is also something that is more acceptable than if one want to leave their work for a private matter (Bergman & Ivarsson 2010). Another way of being available for family is being on maternity leave or working from home. It is not possible, in every job, to work from home, this will depend on what kind of duties you have. For example, if one is a nurse, it will be difficult to take the patients home. However if one works at a company, taking care of administration, it may be easier to bring their work home with them. Availability for family does not just include actual time spent with one’s family, but also being available to do household chores. Society is constantly being characterised by gender norms and values. This also affects how men and women make themselves available for their families and homes. An example of this is women putting more effort into household chores than men do, even though both are able to do this work (Bergman 2011).

2.3 Summary

In these two first sections, we have discussed the concepts of WLB and availability. WLB gives a good insight into what we are going to study because it gives us a good understanding for our further studies. But, as you were able to read in the theory chapters above, we think that the concept of availability together with WLB, is more suitable since not much previous research has been done about it in China. Our preconceptions say that, because of Chinese culture, grandparents are often responsible for household chores, thus making it easier for parents to focus more on their jobs. On the basis of this, we believe that one part of being available for family disappears and the main focus is on spending time with family and without doing any household chores. In broad terms, these two concepts are complementary and thus we did not want to exclude either of them from our thesis. The previous research that we have found into this subject in China only concerns the concept of WLB (He, 2014). Since not so much has been written about this in general terms in China, it would not make any difference if we used the concept of availability as well as WLB. When the Western World writes about these concepts we have found some differences between the two, one of these is that WLB is more subjective than availability. Another difference is that availability seems to be a broader concept than WLB. Availability seems broader because it has not that strict frames and you can be available in different terms. With terms, we refer, for example to opportunities to be available for work through flexible hours and by working from home (Bergman & Gardiner 2007). Availability includes more than WLB does because availability refers to demands and how these are met as regards family and work. WLB is more about
how the person experiences his/her balance between work and family (Noon & Blyton, 2007). Supported by theories of WLB and availability for work and family, together with our interview results, we think that we will be able to make a better analysis in the end. We hope that this thesis will make fruitful use of the concepts and give us a deeper understanding of how men and women in China experience demands regarding work and family and how do they prioritize and what affects the priorities they make.

2.4 Work and family in China

There is not much previous research into either WLB or availability for family and work in China. But the studies that exist are most studies in Chinese than in English and thus we are going to cross-reference a literature review that Song Bing (2015) has done. In her review she has translated some Chinese studies into English containing previous research into WLB in China. The concept and considerations of WLB are not as developed in China as they are in the Western World. Most of the research available does not have much depth, with He (2014) saying that it only scratches on the surface. Developed studies of WLB in Europe have, however, created some interest in the subject in China. Even though it is a relative new phenomenon in China, this does not mean that it does not exist. China, like the rest of the world, is also confronting these upcoming problems regarding the balance between work and family (Yue & Yan 2013). The researchers Yue and Yan (2013) think that it is very important for China to look at the Western World. It can learn a lot from how the Western World has implemented the concept, and faced up to the problems of WLB (Yue & Yan 2013). Hong Kong is a Chinese city that used be a British Dependent Territory until 1997 and is now one of the Chinese cities focusing the most on WLB. Maybe this is because Hong Kong still is influenced by the Western way of thinking. Chou & Cheung (2013) write that the special administrative regional government in Hong Kong has understood how important the balance between work and family is. It has thus advanced a family-friendly policy which could, for example, include flexible working hours, a five- day working week and career breaks (Chou & Cheung 2013).

2.5 Introducing Confucianism and the Chinese family

To gain a better understanding of how Chinese men and women use their time to be available for both work and family, our third section of the theory chapter is about the Chinese family and Confucianism. We think that it is important to have a basic knowledge of this when reading the rest of our thesis since China is an old country, with a history and a culture that differ from other countries, and thus it will be helpful to know a bit about its heritage. Confucianism is a kind of belief that is a major part of ancient China, but still exerts a major influence on how the Chinese think about their families and how they live their lives today. In this section you will, for example, be able to read about five important relationships that Confucius brought to China. These relationships are typically Chinese and we think that it is rather the same as in Sweden, but in a much bigger way. In Sweden, we have these kinds of relationships, but we think that we take them for granted and do not look at them in the same way as people do in China. We only had a brief knowledge of the Chinese way of life before
embarking on this project. Therefore we had to read and learn more about how a regular family situation looks and how Chinese heritage has affected the way in which Chinese society looks today (Rosemont & Ames 2007). This knowledge has helped us during our research and we hope it will give you, as a reader, a better understanding of the Chinese way of life. It is also interesting to know more about the one child policy and the pros and cons this brought. Recently, the government changed its one child policy into a two child policy, which means that a couple can now have two children instead of one (Catholic news agency 2015). We want this to be a part of our thesis since we think it can give us some interesting points of view and we can see how the respondents think the new policy will affect their working and family lives. The one child policy has certainly affected the Chinese family situation and that is why we also think it is important to bring this to the table even though the policy was recently changed.

Confucius, one of China’s greatest philosophers lived between 722 and 481 BCE (Before Common Era). Unfortunately, Confucius never got the chance to see what he had created since people did not start believing and appreciating his philosophy until after his death (Mijung & Chesla 2007). Even today, after so many years, you can still see how Confucius philosophy, which is called Confucianism, is making an impact on the Chinese way of living and behaving. Confucius’s philosophy is very widespread and, to gain a brief insight, we will just mention this philosophy’s three best known facts, which is the core that is divided into three, the five virtues and the five types of relationships (Mijung & Chesla 2007). We hope that this brief introduction to Confucius will help the reader with no previous knowledge of China to understand how this philosophy still affects both working and family life in China today.

2.5.1 The core of Confucianism

In broad terms Confucianism is about achieving wisdom and being a good person during one’s life. Thus, there are three parts of the core of Confucianism when it comes to achieving goodness and wisdom in one’s life (Mijung & Chesla 2007). The first part of the core, Confucius had reviewed a so-called social chaos where the chaos is seen as the failure of the good. Confucius maintained that a certain pattern regarding one’s way of life and decency was needed by people with different circumstances so that they would be able to live meaningful lives. The second part of the core was that Confucius thought that a high interaction culture would only be possible with a certain pattern. Basically, if you wanted to find harmony with yourself, and with others, would have to use certain rituals to guide you to harmony and social interaction. The last part of the core, and the part that Confucius thought to be the most important one, achieving goodness and wisdom, is all about competence. Confucius believed that education was the key to goodness (Mijung & Chesla 2007).

2.5.2 Five virtues of Confucianism

Confucius often used the word virtue (Mijung & Chesla 2007). This is an old-fashioned word, but also a word that it is hard to replace it with something else. Confucius speaks about five
virtues, called, ren, yi, li, chi and shin which are their Chinese names and which are not often translated into English (Mijung & Chesla 2007). Ren stands for humanity and being warm-hearted towards other humans. Confucius acted in a way that we know to be the golden rule, “treat others as you would want to be treated yourself”. There are different types of love, but one important type of love is for one’s home and family, more about that later in the section about the five relationships. The second virtue, Yi, is often referred to as Ren since they jointly make up the most important part of Confucius’s virtues. The concepts are strong together since Ren stands for warm-heartedness while Yi represent the sense of rightness. In other words the meaning of Yi is that, when a human acts in a special way, then his/her basic intentions should only be good. This is something that is often taken for granted. Li has received the most attention from previous rulers, since these took advantage of this virtue to strengthen their politics. Example by strengthened the right to inheriting from their firstborn son. Li also means that one’s position within the family is important, that one lives up to one’s place in the family tree. The older members of the family should act as role models for the younger ones, and teach them about Li’s boundaries regarding proper behaviour. Proper behaviour together with social interaction, education, self-cultivation and ritual propriety, come under, according to Confucius the concept of etiquette. Continuing to honour the dead and one’s ancestors is also a key in Li and it just shows how important once again, love for one’s family is. Chih represents one’s capacity to separate the bad from the good, which is a step in self-education. Chih can be described as one kind of moral wisdom. The last virtue in Confucianism is Shin. Shin stands for trust and can refer to different types of trust and can thus be combined with the other virtues. Without trust, it is difficult to show love of others, treat people in a good way, and be dedicated to one’s education (Mijung & Chesla 2007).

2.5.3 Five relationships of Confucianism

In Confucianism there are five types of relationships namely the relationship between, husband and wife, parent and child, older and younger sibling, friend and friend and between government and citizen (Mijung & Chesla 2007). We think that these relationships are one of the biggest parts that will affect our results regarding how the Chinese culture influents the priorities men and women make regarding their work and family today. We have chosen to write about these relationships since we believe that they can help us to see a clear pattern in our respondent’s answers. These different relationships are founded on everyone being able to know his/her place in society. This reminds of the virtue where Confucius talked about the importance of knowing one’s position in the family tree in order to achieve harmony (Mijung & Chesla 2007). Below, we provide the reader with a brief presentation of the five relationships, something which will hopefully give us a deeper understanding of relationships in present-day China. Husband and wife - reciprocity is the keyword in this relationship, as regards Confucius’s philosophy. Most married couples have a child and here comes the next relationship of Confucianism. If the couple have a child together the woman should set her role as a wife aside so that her role as a mother would be the main one. Closeness and love between parents and children are important to a Chinese family. Parents should be able to give their children affection and guidance and to raise them well. Children should, in return, respect their parents, especially their grandparents. Children should not talk loudly, brawl,
smoke or drink alcoholic beverages in their parent’s presence. The older siblings, who have attained more knowledge of life, are supposed to act as role models and, in some ways as extra parents to their younger siblings. The younger ones will, in return, treat their older siblings with respect. When older siblings are leaving for school etc. or college, they should be representatives of their families, now, it will be the younger siblings turn to step up and assume responsibility as the oldest child still living at home. The relationship between ruler (government) and citizen is a bit special. Confucius talks about the best quality of the ideal leader being his sense of justice, while Confucianism has received much criticism regarding the promotion of the dictatorship. Responsibility to obey the government lies with all citizens and the government should, in return, ensure its citizens well-being by, for example, protecting them and setting a good example as regards how to act. In the relationship between friends, age is not important. In friendship, no one is higher than anyone else within the hierarchy. Friends share kindness towards each other (Mijung & Chesla 2007).

Of the five different relationships of Confucius’s philosophy, three of them are family-related, which proves that the family is to be considered as a basis for society. If one does not live up to the responsibility existing within family relationships, then one will not be able to do well in other relationships, such as friendships. In all five relationships there must be respect between partners and for friends, mutuality is very important (Mijung & Chesla 2007).

2.6 China’s one-child policy, its changes and challenges

Chinas one-child policy, which we will henceforth abbreviate using OCP, is very well known all over the world. This policy was implemented in 1979, when China was facing an immediate problem, the population was increasing considerably and the country needed to slow this down (Feng, Poston & Wang 2014). The rules governing this policy differed depending on which part of China you lived in. This kind of policy needs time in order to bring about a change in the population, however in 1990, 90 percent of all births were to a one child family. So after all these years of this policy, it has become the norm to have one child in every family (Feng, Poston & Wang 2014). The OCP rewards families adhering to it with higher wages, better employment and schooling for the child and loans. Families not adhering to the OCP face sanctions like fines and the termination of employment (Rosenberg, 2015). Families who are allowed to have another child are those with a child who has a major health problem or birth defect. Also the Han (an ethnic group) Chinese living in urban areas district can apply to have another child if their first child is a girl (Rosenberg, 2015).

One clear turn that is also a consequence of the OCP is who the main role in the family belongs to nowadays. As Confucianism can teach us the older generations have been very important to the whole family. It was the older people who should be treated with respect and receive most attention in the household, especially the paternal grandparents (Feng, Poston & Wang 2014). After the implementation of the OCP, the older generation would still be treated with huge respect but the centre of the family now belonged to the only child. Chinese children could be seen as “small emperors”, but being the only child also brings a lot of pressure. All hope is on the child to achieve well in life and to be able to pass on the family's
reputation and at a future stage support the family (Feng, Poston & Wang 2014).

When the child is grown up, married and starting up his/her own family the living situation could change. In China, it is most usual to live with the husband’s family, but it is becoming more usual for the married couple to live by themselves or with the wife’s family (Feng, Poston & Wang 2014). Previous research has shown that it is possible to find a pattern in the choice of living situation when couples get married. If both the husband and the wife have siblings the couple will tend to follow the traditional pattern of living with the husband’s family, however if only one of the partners is from a one child family the newly married couple will tend to move in with the one child partners family. If both partners are the only child in their respective families, they will actually tend to make a decision not to live with any of their families and start their own household instead (Feng, Poston & Wang 2014).

There could be some prejudice against China regarding its view of gender since according to the OCP, a couple can have more children if the first-born is a daughter. In China, with its ancient culture, patriarchy is still considered to be important but the OCP has made a major breakthrough in reducing the gap between gender rights and opportunities. Research shows that families today give their only child, even if this child is a daughter a lot of focus and love (Feng, Poston & Wang 2014).

One big problem with the OCP is that it is talked about in a way with many aspects, one is the old-age security for the parents with only one child (Feng, Poston & Wang 2014). In pace with the OCP, there are fewer children being born, this increases the gap the between old and young generations. There are, in other words, a lot more elderly people than young ones. This could be a problem since it is the children who are supposed to take care of the older ones when they cannot do it by themselves. It is a lot of pressure on the children if they cannot be around when their parents grow old, or if they do not have enough money to support their parents. To take this problem a step further, we can talk about what happens if a child dies and the mother is too old, or she just cannot have any more children. Things might feel hopeless for the parents, not just because of losing a child but also because children are their parent’s hope and future (Feng, Poston & Wang 2014).

2.7 The Chinese family today

After almost 35 years of the one child policy, China faced a problem (Feng, Poston & Wang 2014). The number people of working age have fallen, resulting in a less productive labour market. During 2013, China changed its one child policy. Couples would now be allowed to have two children, but only if at least one of the parents is the only child in his/her family. This change was supposed to bring more balanced development in China regarding its population. At the end of 2015, the Chinese government decided to change this policy again, families would now be allowed to have two children even if they were from families where they not were the only children (Catholic News Agency 2015). Since this change is relatively new, we have unfortunately experienced problems finding out facts about it. We hope that our interviews will give us some more information about this topic.
Some of the changes made in 2013 included making it easier for families to move around the country while still being able to study in their new cities. There used to be problems registering as a resident, and for children to get an education in their new cities (Reuters 2013). This change is a good one since education in China is very valuable, and a key part of daily life. The Chinese believe that education is the key to social mobility; those with an education will become leaders. This had led to lots of people getting an education, but perhaps, not all of them being able to become leaders, however, they all can contribute towards society. According to what most of the Chinese believe and think, education is just not education, it also helps you to get a better job and a spouse. Consider this as the Chinese parent’s way of pushing their children into education, and that is does not prioritize their children's interests in the same way (Huang 2015).

In China, both the government and regular homes are characterised by Confucianism, and this can clearly be seen when you look at family structure (Rosemont & Ames 2007). The family has a hierarchically structure and is imbued with filial piety between the younger and elder family members. Respecting one’s elders is the start of becoming a good citizen and thus the elders have hidden authority. If a child is do not respect one’s elders he/she will be punished and this rebellious act is seen as a serious betrayal of one’s family. Confucianism indicates harmony within the family and this harmony cannot be achieved if the children do not have filial piety towards their elders. Since Chinese families have this cultural heritage that characterises their daily lives, Asian children have more knowledge of behavioural rules more and respect for their elders, than for instance, children from Europe (Huang 2015).

2.8 Summary

In this chapter, we have offered, you as a reader, a understanding of the theories we have used in this thesis. We have focused on two main concepts, WLB and availability but also about the Chinese culture. We have used both concepts and the culture in order to gain a deeper understanding. We offered an introduction to Confucius, as well as how the Chinese family looks and how it applies its culture to family life since we can see a connection with our purpose with this thesis. For further analysis, we used a qualitative method based on interviews with the employees from both a Chinese company and a Chinese university. Why we chose to conduct interviews will be explained in the upcoming method chapter.
3. Method

Since our main question concerns how men and women in China meet demands regarding work and family, how they prioritise and what affects the priorities they make we have chosen to use a qualitative method. In this chapter we will present, describe and argue in relation why we have chosen to use the qualitative method in our study. To gain a better understanding of how we conducted our study, we have divided the steps we took into different subheadings so that you as a reader can gain a better insight. You will be able to follow our journey from choosing a method that matched our study to seeing how we analysed the material. We will also present how we selected our respondents, formulated the interview guide and performed the interviews. Since we used interpreters during our interviews we will discuss why this was necessary and whether or not there were any consequences of using interpreters.

3.1 Choice of method

We have chosen to use a qualitative method in our research in order to study the patterns of availability for work and family that exist in today’s China. A qualitative method is a good way of getting closer and connecting with the respondents (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). We feel that this method will help us to understand how men and women make priorities between work and their spare time. In this study, we do not rely on statistics since this will not give us a deeper understanding of the topic. Instead, we analyse the material that we get from the respondents by focusing on their points of view and experiences. We think it is important to gain a holistic understanding of this topic since it concerns people’s everyday lives and choices.

3.1.1 Qualitative method

A qualitative method can help to gain a deeper knowledge since one can ask supplementary questions during interviews (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2014). But, as with everything else, there are both pros and cons to using a qualitative method. The cons of using the qualitative method are that it can bring up a lot of details and that it will be difficult for us to consider what is most important. So with this in our minds, it is important not to get too flexible and curious, but to try to keep the topic in focus. When using face-to-face interviews one will be able to see how the respondents express themselves (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2014). There is not much protection for the respondents, they cannot hide when we are sitting face-to-face with them. Since we asked them questions about both their working and private lives, we had to think about how we expressed ourselves. Some ethical problems can arise when you dealing with private life questions during a survey (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2014). We also had to make sure that the respondents felt safe regards confidentiality and that they dared to say everything that came into their minds. The interaction between interviewer and respondent is supposed to be based on free will and communication (Lantz, 2007). Together with the previous facts in the theory chapter, our interviews will serve as a basis for further analysis.
3.2 The seven steps

When we planned our interview survey, we decided to use Kvale and Brinkmanns (2014) seven step model, which is recommended for the beginner in interview surveys. We used that to keep a linear development. The seven steps start off by defining the surveys purpose before one embarks on the interviews. One should know why and what the survey is supposed to be before continuing how one are going to achieve it (Kvale & Brinkmann 2014). The next step is to plan the survey, with some help from this seven step guide. The third step is to accomplish the interviews by following an interview guide which is designed using a reflective approach. The fourth step is to transcribe the data from the interviews so that one can move on to step five, which contains analysis of the material. In the sixth step, one is supposed to define the results of the interviews by watching the reliability, validity and generalizability in the study. The seventh and final step is to make a report containing the results and the methods that were used to obtain the finished product (Kvale & Brinkmann 2014).

3.3 Selection of respondents

Since we wanted to study the pattern of availability for work and family which exists in China, we contacted one of the most successful companies in the event/tourism business in China. In this thesis we will not use that company’s real name, instead, we will call it Chengdu Events. Thanks to previous contact with the owner of the company, she was able to help us to find respondents and a supervisor at the company. After that, Chengdu Events agreed to let us do our research at the company. We decided to make our selection based on the people who work there and who have a child. It turned out that they had 11 employees who met our requirements but, unfortunately only six people had the time to do the interviews. Since only six employees were available, who had a child, we also felt pleased about our choice of using a qualitative method so that we could take our time and listen carefully to every one of them. We interviewed three men and three women from the company, they were aged between 29 and 43 and most of them had young children aged between 1 and 7. There was only one employee who had a child aged 18 and who did not live at home on weekdays because he was at boarding school. But, since he was home during the weekends we still thought that this respondent met our requirements. After we had transcribed the initial interviews, we found that our results would be better with more respondents. We contacted four teachers at a University who did not mind volunteering for an interview. These four respondents also do some office work and administration. The respondents from the university were one man and three women aged between 32 and 47, and their children aged between 2 and 20. Here, we also faced a problem with the question of whether or not to interview the respondents whose child had already moved away from home. We decided to add them to our study since they have had their child living at home and still have some opinions about it. We thought they could help us to imbue the research with more quality and knowledge of the subject.
3.4 Different kinds of interviews

There are four kinds of interviews, called the open, the targeted open, the semi-structured and the structured. All of these have different characteristics and the choice of which one is the most suitable for one’s research depends on which kinds of interviews or results, you would like (Lantz, 2007). In this study we chose to do the targeted open interview since we think it matches our research questions best.

The targeted open interview can be described as a model which uses special concepts together with the respondent’s own experience of a phenomenon. The interview should include broad questions connected to the chosen concepts. The respondents will be asked deeper- and follow-up questions in the areas that the interviewer finds interesting (Lantz, 2007). Their answers will reveal their own view of reality and give the interviewer a clearer picture and understanding of what these respondents view look like. The interviews are based on unknown knowledge and include questions like “how come?” or “what does this mean to you?”. Since not all people think the same way, these questions can produce different results which at a later stage can be analysed (Lantz, 2007).

We believed that the targeted opened interview would help us to gain a better insight into the topic if we could share in the respondents experiences of their WLB and their availability for work and family. In order to capture their experiences of work-life balance, which is not so well known in China, we had to ask questions similar to the previous description above, “how come?” and “what does this mean to you?”.

3.5 Our interviews

Since five of our respondents did not speak English we had to hire an interpreter to help us over the language problems during the interviews. The interpreter were two Chinese girls who are studying to become English teachers, so this was a great opportunity for them to practise their English, it was for us since we got the help that we needed. We were aware of the problems of using an interpreter. We knew that our study could lose some reliability because of the risk of untruthful answers. The interpreters might miss some details that we might find important during the interpreting process, however this was our only option.

Reliability is connected in a way, with validity; we can not exclude one or the other. Validity comes from examining the thing you are supposed to examine while reliability comes from examining it in a trustful way (Patel & Davidson 2011). In qualitative research the concepts reliability and validity are also applicable, but not in the same way as when you use them in quantitative research. The concept of validity in qualitative research covers the entire proves, and is not a way of checking that we are examining the things we are supposed to examine, as in quantitative research (Patel & Davidson 2011).

Some of the respondents at Chengdu Events knew just a bit of English and thus wanted to answer us in English, but we still had the interpreters as a backup in case we had some follow-
up questions that they could not understand. Our respondents had the opportunity to read our questions one day before the actual interview, so they had time to think about their answers. We do not think that this had a bad effect on our results since we asked about family and work. We do not see any point in making up answers about that.

Our initial interviews at Chengdu Events lasted about 15 -25 minutes, at first, we thought that this would be too short. Each interview with the university teachers lasted about 30-40 minutes. Since the teacher’s English knowledge was very good, we did not use an interpreter and we felt that the interview flowed better when the respondent was able to speak English fluently. It was easier to ask follow-up questions and we obtained more detailed answers than from the respondents whom we had to use an interpreter with. We noticed that the respondents from the public organization, the university, found it easier to express themselves during the interviews. They explained their answers better than the employees who worked in the private sector did, this could affect our results and we will bring it up in the results and analysis chapter again. Another factor that separated the respondents from the different organizations as regards their answers was that three out of four respondents from the public organizations had some experience off Western countries. Since they had had the opportunity to work abroad, they also had the opportunity to see some other cultures that might have affected their view of work and family. We do not know if their knowledge of work-life balance had a bad effect on the results we obtained, but in one way, this helped us since they were able to express themselves and provide a different point of view.

We interviewed the four respondents from the university around two weeks after the initial interviews and this gave us some time to analyze and change some of the questions in our interview guide. We found out that one of our questions regarding equality between boys and girls could be formulated in a different way to make it easier to understand, and to enable the results of this question to be analysed. Lantz (2007) says that a good interview should give results that are reliable and valid and can help others in their studies. Since there is not a lot of previous research regarding availability for family and work life in China, we want this thesis to be enable further in-depth research. Regardless of whether our results will be used for scientific or practical purposes etc., they should still be as detailed as possible (Lantz, 2007).

3.5.1 Our interview guide

When we first started on this thesis we read some previous research in the fields of availability for work and family and WLB, and generally about Chinese culture. This was because we needed to know how we wanted our study to look, which starting points we should have, and what the main questions would be. We wanted to have some knowledge in the field in order to be able to create a suitable interview guide for our respondents. The questions had to have some connection with previous theories and also act as a key enabling us to answer our main questions in this thesis, namely, “How do men and women in China prioritise between family and work and what affects the priorities they make?”
We decided to design our interview guide using seven different categories. These categories are background, family, demands at home, work/meaning of work, sparetime/meaning of sparetime, balance between home and work and discussion. We chose these categories because all of them had some connection with what we wanted to study, “how do men and women in China prioritise between family and work, and what affects the priorities they make?” We wanted to start off with some background questions to get the respondents to talk about themselves and for us to gain an insight into who we were talking to. This was a good way to get our respondents to relax, and to get off to an easy start with the interpreters. Since we used the targeted open interview, we started off with open questions, and as the interview progressed the questions became deeper ending up with some discussion. We got the chance to ask follow-up questions and see the respondent’s own experiences. Below, you can see a selection of five questions we used in our interview guide and why we used them. These questions played a big role during the interviews since they gave us a lot of informal data to use in our upcoming analyse chapter. The rest of our questions you can find in the attached files 7.1 & 7.2 in the end of this thesis.

- Do you live with your parents or your parents in law?

We asked this question because we thought it was interesting since it would give us the whole picture regarding the respondent’s family situation, and it could also confirm some of Confucius’ five important relationships. Even though Confucius’ five relationships mostly concern the two relationships between husband and wife and parent and child it might be interesting to see how they prioritise their families and to see if it is as common nowadays to live with one’s parents or parents in law as it used to be in China. In asking this question, and talking about the respondent’s family situation, we would also be able to ask follow up questions regarding their demands and chores in the home. For example if the respondent lives with his/her parents or parents in law, who does the household chores and is mainly responsible for the home.

- Do you have the opportunity to have flexible working hours?

We thought that this question could lead us to an insight into how the organization’s working hours look and if it tends to give its employees the opportunity to more easily combine family with work. In our theory chapter, you can read that being available for family can also mean being available for them while at work, for example, if you have flexible working hours or are able to bring your work home with you (Mijung & Chesla, 2007). So, we wanted to see if it is common to allow the employees of the organization to work under their own accountability or if they are tied to specific working hours and offices. We also saw this question as a good opportunity to ask follow-up questions that depend on the respondent’s answers, for example if they want flexible working hours or if they are satisfied with their situations.
- What is the main reason you go to work every day?

We asked this question because we were curious to see if the respondents worked to have a salary, to get promotion, to develop, or if they just wanted to get away from home. This question provided us with a lot of good responses and, at a later stage, it also became one of our most important questions since it provided us with our two themes for the analytical chapter. We thought that we would obtain a lot of different answers but we only obtained two different answers so we were able to divide our respondents into two groups, i.e, the ones working to have a salary and the ones working for motivation and development.

- Are you able to separate family from work, and work from family?

We used this question because we thought it would help us to see clearly if the employees actually had some kind of work-life balance, and how they were available for both their family and work. This question was quite broad, so it gave us the opportunity to ask follow-up question based on the respondent’s answers. If the respondents simply answered yes or no, we would be able to ask them to explain more, or the way in which they were not able to separate the two spheres.

- Do you want another child?

We asked this question based on the new policy that allows families in China to have two children instead of just one. This new policy can change the family situations of a lot of families in China, and we were curious about whether or not these families were ready for this change, and how they talked about it at home with their partners. We obtained different answers that gave us a wider perspective on the changing of this policy, so we feel pleased that we chose to ask this question. We also noticed that it was a good question to ask since it provided us with a lot of data to analyse, together with our main thesis questions.

3.6 Processing the material

During the entire process, we followed the seven steps talked about by Kvale and Brinkmann (2014). We think that this interview tool has helped us very much and we recommend that other beginners in this field use it. After our first six interviews had been conducted, we transcribed these in order to be able to see our results more easily. We printed the transcribed results and started to work through them one interview at a time. We highlighted the most important things that our respondents had said, we used different colours to divide up the different areas regarding family and work. We used one colour to highlight the things they said which were especially interesting and which were good analysis material. This method made it easier for us to analysis our results in the light of existing theories. This approach gave us the chance to see what kinds of questions provided us with the most interesting results, and which questions we should focus on more when conducting the other four interviews. The selection of questions that you could read above was important for us during all of the interviews. You will be able to read the old interview guide and the changes we
made in the attached files 7.1 & 7.2. Even though we made some changes to the interview guide we still followed the same process as regards transcription and highlighting when processing the second batch of material.

At the same time as we transcribed the material we changed the respondents names into fictive names so they cannot be identified. We also changed some of their answer from colloquial to writing language. The meaning of their answers will not be affected by this only get a clearer picture of what they mean.

At Chengdu Events, where we did some of our interviews, they have an encouragement system. Many of the respondents mentioned it during the interviews, and we became curious about the point of this. We received information about this system in Chinese, from the HR department of the company. One of our interpreters translated it for us and we were able to read about it. Same thing here as with using interpreters during the interviews, the translation we got might be a lack of understanding and missing some details. In our attached files, you will be able to read both the Chinese and English versions of the encouragement system but we will give you as a reader a small introduction to the system now and continue to describe and discuss it in the analysis chapter. The encouragement system that Chengdu Event has is divided into three categories; Staff welfare, work attendance and regulations and types and measurement of vacation. The staff welfare category provides the employee with guidelines about their insurance, gifts when they have a birthday and what the staff union organizes. Work attendance regulation provides the employee with guidelines about their working hours, punch card system and absenteeism. The last category types and measurement of vacation is providing the employee with guidelines about vacations, annual leave and sick leave.

3.7 Analyzing the material

When we first started on our process of analyzing the material from the interviews, we separated the respondents into two themes: the ones working for motivation and the ones who only is working to have a salary. During our interviews, we noticed that these two themes were the most significant and thus we chose them to be the template of our analysis. When we started to code our collected data, we continued to use the previous themes. In our first analytical step, we used one theme where the respondents were working for the money and another where the respondents were working for their own motivation, in other words an instrumental or committed attitude to work (Eriksson, 1998). In the process of obtaining these results we started by dividing our interview questions into different categories to see which groups would yield the same or different results. We started by presenting a general pattern that concern both groups and later on, we looked at the differences between them. One of our analytical categories, that concerned both groups, is that all of the respondents tend to put most of their energy into work on weekdays and into their families at the weekends. At a later stage, we found a valuable factor when it came to separating our two themes. The ones working for money belonged to private organization while the ones working for motivation
belonged to public organization. We decided to continue by separating these two and using them as our two main categories.

In our analysis, we started by explaining availability for work on weekdays and for family at weekends, and how attitudes towards work and sector matter in working life. Then, we separated the organizations from each other and discussed what we had found out about them. We thought it would be a good way of making the analysis clearer and easier to read if we separated the two groups and discussed them one by one. In the final summary and discussion we made a summary by putting these two themes together with the two child policy and discussed them.
4. Analysis and results

Our purpose in writing this thesis was to see how work-life balance and availability for work and family are experienced, handled and how the ancient Chinese culture affects in contemporary China. Our preconceptions about this were that the Chinese are more available for their families than for work since they do not have the same welfare system that Sweden does. This assumption is also based on the Confucius belief that the family is the most important thing. However, this assumption proved to be incorrect, albeit not completely incorrect, but there are many other aspects regarding how they prioritize between work and family than what we had first envisaged. In broad terms, we found out that there are some differences in how employees prioritize on the basis of which organization they belong to.

This chapter is structured in such a way that we first present the results from the private sector and then from the public sector. For both these parts, we will discuss the main patterns and end the section by answering our main questions “How do men and women in China experience demands regarding work and family and how do they prioritize these demands?” and “What affects the priorities they do?”. After these two sections we will present and discuss how the respondents think about the one child policy and its changes. We are aware of that this topic is not mentioned in our main questions but we think that it has a big part of how the respondents prioritize between work and family.

4.1 Administrators at a Private organization

At Chengdu Events, an encouragement system, that you can find in the attached file 7.3, is used which can steer the employees towards working more in line with the company, and which can also be used by the employer to see how the staff are behaving. At Chengdu Events an encouragement system was used which almost all of our respondents mentioned. They said that they received their encouragement from that system and we understood it in terms of them rarely receiving any encouragement from outside of the systems framework.

We have a system that the company gives you promotion according to your ability and rate your recommendations and tasks at the company (Cedric, 30)

Using this system, they also received most of their encouragement on the basis of their attendance. We understand this since Chengdu Events assumes that if you are present at your workplace, you will be doing what you should be doing. One is available for work both spatially and temporally (Bergman & Gustafson 2007). These demands and expectations regarding absolute availability at the work-place made it easier to separate work from family. Our respondents said that they were good at leaving their work at the office in order that, when they came home, they would not need to worry about it. “Yes, I don’t think about work in my home” says Carol, 30.

This encouragement system entails both positive and negative consequences for the employee. The positive aspect of this system is that the employee obtains a clear picture of
which demands are placed on him/her as regards being available for work, and what is expected from him/her. The negative effect of the system is that the employee does not have so much control over his/her own working hours thus he/she cannot plan his/her work in case of sudden problems or sicknesses within the family. The main thing that can affect employees the most is the regulations of their working hours. This regulation can be the main factor as regards why the respondents actually think that they have achieved this balance between work and family, since the company controls their regular working hours on daily basis and most of the respondents are not expected to work from home.

All the employees at Chengdu Events use a punch card system that keeps them from misbehaving. If an employee arrives late one day, he/she can be punished by paying a fine and, if he/she arrive late several times, he/she can be dismissed. If one arrives late or neglects one’s duties, this can been seen as absenteeism which can entail consequences. The employee can get a warning or come under supervision, during this period, the employee cannot be promoted. In other words, the employee has to behave and use the punch card system properly if he/she wants to be considered for promotion (Attached file 7.3).

We think it can be seen as common sense that any employee should be able to meet these promotion criteria’s, no matter which company they are working for. However, at this company which is seen as successful, we understand that the employees are more concerned about keeping their jobs. There are a lot of people in China and the competition over jobs is massive. From our interviews, we can tell that those who are working really appreciate their jobs since this is their chance to earn money and support their families. We asked the respondents what is the main reason they go to work and all of the respondents from Chengdu Event told us it was to make money. Felix, 33, said he worked to “Make money for a living”.

The negative aspect of the encouragement system or at least this is how we see it from our point of view, is that we were unable to read anything in the material about what happens if you work overtime. We asked one of our respondents who usually works late if she will be paid for her overtime and she answered thus:

My salary is not based on if whether I work late or not, but I do have the opportunity to work flexible hours since I work late. I’m kind of a workaholic since I like having work to do and I don’t like having too much spare time. I’m passionate about my work. (Kristin, 32)

This respondent lived with her parents-in-law and had a child aged seven. She was the only one who felt this way about her work and from a Western perspective this might sound a bit odd- especially since this is a woman with a young child. She did not spend a lot of time with her child, and this was not because she had to work to earn extra money. The reason why she was available for work in terms of both time and space is because her parents were available for her child. We think that our other respondents have chosen not work overtime since this will not result in more salary, and to create a work life balance instead. Felix, 33, says “I want to relax at home and don’t want to work then”.
Chengdu Events is a service-based company and thus its customers have an impact on how satisfied they are with the service provided by the employees. This is something that some of our respondents mentioned during their interviews. One of the respondents said this:

Because we are a service company, so when the clients make some good comments about us we get encouragement like promotion or a higher salary, but it does not follow a pattern it is flexible. (Carol, 30)

The encouragement system is also related to how service-minded the employees are. If they give their customers good service, they will be able to obtain some privileges like a higher salary or promotion (Attached file 7.3). This may be something that the company has implemented in order for the employee to become more willing to give good service. This employee is certainly well aware of this encouragement, and what we can tell, accepts it. As regards the flexibility of this encouragement, it was not clear to us in what way it is flexible. Is it flexible on the basis of how many good comments the employee receives, or flexible on the basis of how many employees receive good comments?

In our theory chapter we presented five main models of the WLB (O’Driscoll 1996). The third one of these models is the compensation model, which you can apply to the things we discussed above. This means that, if you are appreciated for something you do at work, this will compensate for appreciation missing from the family sphere (O’Driscoll 1996). It can also work the other way, if you are appreciated within your family sphere, you will not have the same need to get it from the job sphere (O’Driscoll 1996). In both of the above quotes by the respondents, it is evident that their work brings them appreciation and compensation. Therefore, they seem to be satisfied with their job situations because they have this encouragement system that brings them compensation in the work sphere. The fourth main model of WLB is also useful when it comes to understanding this. Some of these employees maybe work a lot in order to have the opportunity to support their families. The extra money can help these employees to support their families, and give them the opportunity to live more expensively or to save the extra money for their children’s educations (O’Driscoll 1996).

4.1.1 Family-friendly policies in the private organization

A striking pattern in the data material was that most of the respondent’s did not think that Chengdu Events did anything to help its employees to find their work-life balance.

No they do not do anything. Or we have children’s day 1th of June, if a worker have a son or daughter they can have the day off. (Carol, 30)

However, when we obtained some material from the HR department, we saw some benefits that we thought could be a great help. In some respects, one can say that Chengdu Events is a family-friendly company since, for example, it pays for insurance for its employees. It also pays for insurance for its employee’s children, but only when the employees give birth to their child while employed at Chengdu Events (Attached file 7.3). This is one way of showing the employees that the company supports them into starting a family. But does this mean that Chengdu Events is not a sought-after employer among jobseekers who already have a child?
This is a hard question to answer since this might differ from person to person, also this is an individual choice and a financial issue for the jobseeker’s family. Anyhow, this is a benefit that might encourage more employees to consider having a child, or even a second child, since this will help them financially. Since the company pays for insurance, which can be expensive, the employees “save” a lot of money which they can use to support their families.

Other ways of making the employees available for their families include, as the respondent above said, parents getting the day off to spend with their children once a year, on International Children’s Day. They also told us that, if an employee has a child and does not live with his/her parents or parents in law, the mother will have the opportunity to go home an hour earlier than the rest of the staff. This is to allow mothers to come home in time to serve dinner to their children. We did not find any of these sayings in the papers that the HR department gave us, however since almost all of the respondents at Chengdu Events mentioned it, we see this as being true.

Because I have a child, I can leave the company one hour earlier than those who are not parents (Lola, 29)

The system of encouraging employees to spend time with their children can, on the other hand, give rise to some kind of injustice regarding the employees with children who live with their parents or parents-in-law. Maybe they will not appreciate all the help they get, or maybe they will even put more pressure on their parents or parents-in-law. By pressure, we mean that they might expect that all of the household chores are done by the time they come home so that they can spend all their time with their children. This sense of injustice can appear in Western society, however, since China has a wholly different culture, and might not complain. The younger generation appreciate and respect the older generations (Mijung & Chesla 2007).

So with the encouragement system and the benefits, the staff at Chengdu Events enjoy the privilege of the company actually helping them on their way to being available for both family and work. Most of the staff does not seem to appreciate it that much, only seeing the work-life balance as something that all employee regulate by themselves. One respondent said this for example:

I think that the balance between work and family is down to me and I don’t think that the company can offer anything to help me find that balance.” (Cedric, 30)

A lot of the work of finding a balance in one’s life is down to each and every person, however, if the company had put more limitations and demands on its employees, then it would have been harder for them to find a balance (Lewis & Gambles 2007). Over time and as interest in the work life balance grows, the employees of Chengdu Events might hold some other opinions in a couple of years’ time. They might have changed their minds about how the company’ benefits jointly with their own efforts, can play a key role in their method of finding their work life balance.
4.1.2 Work-life balance and availability for family and work in the private organization

In our theory chapter, you can read about availability for work and family. If the employee has the opportunity to work flexible hours, or take work home with him/her it will be easier for him/her to be more available for work and family at the same time (Bergman & Ivarsson 2010). In this case, we found out that the employees of Chengdu Events do not have that opportunity, with one respondent telling us:

I don’t have the opportunity to work flexible hours, but I want to, and neither can I bring my work home with me because its more suitable to do it here. (Cedric, 30)

Actually, most of the respondents told us that they wanted to work flexible hours and to be able to take their work home with them in order to be more available for their families. Now that they have strict working hours, the employees at Chengdu Events have a clearer line between their availability for family and work. When they are at the office they are only available for their work, and when they are at home, they are only available for their families. Carol, 30, says “Because I have a son, I don’t want to bring my work home”.

In the theory chapter, you can also read what it means to be available for one’s family, that it concerns time with one’s family, but also time for household chores (Bergman & Gustafson, 2007). In general it is more common for the woman to do more households chores than the man and it creates gender norms (Bergman 2011). In China it is more common for the woman to take care of the child, e.g. feeding or bathing them when they get home from work. However, all the fathers that we spoke to said that, when they are at home they spend their time with their children as well. It is not unusual to see fathers taking their children out on daytrips at the weekends, just to spend time and play together.

I spend a lot of time with my daughter. All of my time out of the company I spend with my family and my friends. (Cedric, 30)

As you may have read earlier on this chapter it is very common in China to live with ones parents or parents-in-law, which means that there are fewer house-hold chores for working parents, when they are off work, they can be more available for the family specifically. For the respondents at Chengdu Events it is not that common to have a maid or housekeeper since families help each other out. One respondent at Chengdu Events said:

We live with my husband’s parents because they can help us with our child and they do all the household chores like the cooking, the laundry and the cleaning. (Kristin, 32)

Since this is a typical pattern in China, it is thus difficult to connect it with the theories of availability for the family that have been studied, for example, in the Western countries. The general concept of availability for the family, concerns spending time with one’s family as well as doing households chores (Bergman 2011). In one sense in a Chinese perspective, the
availability for family is losing its completeness since, in most cases it only concerns actual family time and not household chores.

From Monday to Friday, I have work to do and on Saturdays my son has piano lessons in the morning and drawing lessons in the afternoon. On Sundays we might just go out to the park to be with the family. (Kristin, 32)

This quote is a good example of how the employees of the private organization are available for work on weekdays and family at weekends. When the weekend comes around, their parents or parents-in-law have often done all the household chores during the week so the family can have some quality time.

4.1.3 Conclusion and summary of private organization

All of the respondents from the private organization are white-collar workers, in other words, they belong to the professional group which in Western society, is said to experience the greatest problems striking a balance between family and work (Lewis & Gambles, 2007). We have, however, noticed that, in this private Chinese organization, the employee does not seem to have this problem. Since they have strict working hours, and receive help from their parents or parents-in-law, they seem to be able to strike a good balance between the two spheres. The respondents all thought that they had struck a good balance between job and family, but that it was down to them, and that the company had not had anything to do with it. The situation might be different if the company did not have the family friendly policies or the employees did not receive any help from their parents or parents-in-law. It is striking how much help they get from their parents. It might be harder for white-collar workers in Western countries to strike a balance between family and work. We think this is because it is not that common to receive the same help from parents or parents-in-law as regards taking care of children or households. All of our respondents at Chengdu Events told us that the reason they work is to support their families, in other words, they work to have a salary. This is one of the reasons why they have this balance between work and family - they prioritize their families and want to spend all of their spare time with them. Since they do not have the opportunity to work from home, or flexible working hours, it also helps them to only be available for work when at the office and for the family when home. In summary, we can see that the previous theories about work-life balance and availability for work and family are rather difficult to apply to a Chinese context because they have different ways of working and living. The most important factor affecting how they prioritize their availability for work and family are their family situations and their finances. The white-collar workers of this private organization are not required to work from home, so, when they get home, they can stop thinking about work and separate the spheres from each other.

The answer to our main questions, i.e. how men and women in China prioritise between work and family, and what affect the priorities they make, is thus, in this case, money and family for the employees of the private organization. They work in order to be able to support their families, i.e., their first priority is family but, to be able to support that family, they have to receive a salary by working. The family is the most important thing, but work is the factor that
makes it possible for the employee to have a family in the first place. In our theory chapter, you can read about the five relationships that Confucius has introduced into Chinese culture. In our results, we can see that at least two of these relationships play an important role in how employees prioritise between work and family. Specifically, we mean the relationship between husband and wife, but also the relationship between parent and child (Mijung & Chesla 2007).

4.2 Teachers at a university

Our respondents working at the University and public organization did not talk about an encouragement system, instead, they were given bigger opportunities to work flexible hours and to work from home. These opportunities can, according to the respondents, be both a help and a hindrance when they want to strike a balance between work and family. The respondents working as teachers told us, that when a teacher does not have any classes, he/she can stay at home, preparing lessons for some other day, or just have the day off, depending on how much work they have to do. One of our respondents gave us her opinion about flexible hours and the opportunity to work from home, and how it affects her balance in life, saying:

I can not separate family from work because we have very flexible working hours and no fixed offices. I think we need to separate it. The key, in order to separate it, should be regular working hours and a regular workplace. It is only my personal view. Most of my colleagues do not want those kinds of regular hours or workplaces because they want to spend most of their time at home. But I prefer the previous one, to separate it. (Juliet, 48)

During our interviews, we found out that some of our respondents from the public organization did not agree with previous research that flexible hours and working from home are to be seen as benefits. The respondents rather saw it as an obstacle to be able to separate family from work and work from family. We think that being able to work from home and being available for both work and family is very dependent, once again, on how one’s family situation looks. If the employee has a young child, there might be more pressure in being available for family than if the employee had an older child who might have a lot of homework or other activities, to keep him/her busy. In our study, we can see clear patterns with regard to this since our respondents had children of different ages, and we can see how their answers were affected by that. One respondent with an older child told us that she did not spend much time with that child when she was home, when we asked how come, she answered thus:

Because he needs to go to school even in the evenings. I think he comes home from school at 9 p.m. because they need to study together at school. Usually, their class finishes at 8.30 p.m. and he arrives home when it is almost nine. After that, he sometimes needs to do more homework. (Juliet, 48)

The theory of availability for family is something you should bear in mind here. Because it is the same as being available for work, but instead of work, it is the family you are available for (Section 2.2.3). In this case, the employee is available for her family, but her son is not.
Because he has to study at night when the employee is available for her family, he cannot spend time with them. This does not really match the concept of availability for family because it is not about the employee, rather, it is something that affects him/her. This kind of availability is not about how you can work and simultaneously be available for your family, in this case, it is purely about the employee being available for her family, and spending time with them. So, when the son does not have time to spend with his family, the parents may have to do some household chores instead. But overall, the employee is more available for work on weekdays and for family at weekends, since they have more spare time together then.

### 4.2.1 More available for work, less available for family

It is common for the teachers to also have some additional administrative work at the University, providing them with a higher salary but less spare time. This administrative work is optional, and one of our respondents used to do this work during different periods depending on his workload doing his regular teaching job. One teacher said:

> I think that people need a chance to develop, to develop their careers and I think we also need some changes in life. Teaching is one lifestyle and sometimes, if we have the chance, I will be happy to change my way of working to do some administrative work to challenge myself. I can do different things to get more experienced. Maybe it is more exhausting and I get more tired than when I just do my teaching job, but I think, during the process I can get more developed. (Greg, 40)

This way of taking on a higher workload in order to develop and have more things to do can also be seen as a way of being more available for work, and also more loyal to one’s employer (Bergman & Ivarsson, 2010). This employee is seeing his chance to develop when he has the chance to work flexible hours, and work from home with his teaching job, he was more available for both spheres at the same time while doing only one job. Doing two jobs puts more pressure on him to create his own work-life balance since he is still doing some of his prep work for his classes at home. This teacher also told us that he only lives with his wife and daughter and does not receive any help from parents or parents-in-law. This affects the availability for the family since it concerns both actual time with the family and time spent on household chores. He said:

> I think my wife does most of the household chores, but if she´s busy we do not do a lot of housework. Maybe sometimes, if she´s free, she will cook for us but if we are both busy we will eat out. So there is not so much housework at home. At weekends, we will clean our apartment, and she does most of that, but I help her. (Greg, 40)
We found that it is common for the ones in the public organizations to have a maid or housekeeper who does all of your household chores so when the employee is off work, he/she can be more available for family. One respondent told us:

Since both me and my husband have jobs we can afford to have a maid. We see our maid as a part of our family, she comes to our house once a day and does all of the household chores for us. When we are off work, we have the opportunity to spend all of our spare time together. We does not cook at home, instead we go out to eat with friends and family. We value our time off work and being together. (Georgina, 46)

So in this case the concept availability for family, which also concerns, according to previous theories, the availability for household chores, is being changed (Bergman, 2011). Employees do not have to worry about their household chores since these are someone else’s responsibility, instead, they have the opportunity to be fully committed to their families when they are off work. Of course, not all employees can afford, or do not prioritize, the help of a maid. It does not matter how they deal with their daily tasks, they still have this work-life balance way of thinking, which helps a lot. They are aware of the problems that can be caused by a blurry line between the two spheres and they are working hard to separate them from each other.

No one can tell you how to balance your family and work, you need to find a way. The way that is suitable for you. I think that different persons have different situations. (Lily, 32)

Since they do not have fixed offices or regular working hours, they can largely decide for themselves how they are going to prioritize. If a problem appears, they can work from home or bring their child to work, they have a more flexible job that can vary with the circumstances.

We have noticed in our data that household chores does not take up as much time as they can do in Western countries since it is common to get help and to go out and eat. If the family go out to eat, they will save time on some household chores, e.g., cooking and doing the dishes. “We go out to eat to have more sparet ime with our family and friends” says Georgina, 46. It seems like both men and women in this category are good at actually being available just for family whenever they get the chance. Once again, linked to our theory chapter, the Confucian view of the family plays a key role in how they prioritize and appreciate their family time (Mijung & Chesla, 2007). Since the respondents from the public organizations work as teachers and administrators, they have the opportunity to work abroad, for example in Western countries. This opportunity is something we noticed had affected them in their answers. For example:

I think I’m learning from Western culture. I think I’m standing in-between Eastern and Western culture. So, I accept Chinese culture and Western culture. Regarding my culture, I’m quite open and fearless. She has her own life and I, as her father, wish her a happy and peaceful future life and that’s okay. (Greg, 40)
This answered the question of whether or not he, as a parent, had any demands regarding his daughter. As you can see, he has chosen to implement both Chinese and Western culture after gaining an insight into Western culture while working abroad. He did not tell us exactly what aspects of the cultures he had chosen to use in his family, but he did tell us about his view of WLB, also connected to a Western culture and a Western perspective:

After my year abroad, I consciously pay attention to this. I think most of the sections, and the boss and leaders, still don’t have enough awareness of the work-life balance. But I think the school has the stuff to provide a better work-life balance. In China we don’t have the same work-life balance as in Europe, they are more organized. (Greg, 40)

Yue & Yan (2013) say that the concept WLB is developed in Europe but has created some interest in China. They speak about how China, as a country can look at the Western World to learn how it has implemented the concept. In this case, our respondent, as an individual, has experienced the WLB in both a practical and a theoretical way. When he came back to China, he chose to keep some of the Western ways of thinking, paying attention to the importance of the WLB in his daily life. This is one way of continuing to develop and implement the concepts in China, so that they become more concrete on an individual level, instead of just talking about implementing them in that country, which could be a bigger and longer process.

4.2.2 Conclusion and summary public organization

At the public organization, the respondents are also so-called white-collar workers who work in offices, classrooms, or from home (Lewis & Gambles, 2007). The University is their employer and we believe that the University works a lot with work-life balance since the respondents seemed to be more aware of this than were the respondents from the private organization. Almost all of the respondents at the public organization mentioned it in their answers, telling us about some sections of how they lived their lives with this balance in mind. Once again, they said that they followed the Chinese pattern. They are working to support their families and to develop, because a job is an important part of a person’s life, but one’s family will always be the most important part. A job is something that you have for most of your life but your family will always be there and thus you will have to value it more highly.

The answer to our main questions of how men and women in China prioritise between work and family, and what affect the priorities they make, thus, in this case, for the employees of the public organization, both family and motivation. They live in accordance with the Chinese pattern of the family being the most important thing, but they do not just work in order to have a salary. They see their work as an opportunity to develop, but also, of course as an opportunity to support their families. We noticed that all of them were very satisfied with their working situations and that this was not because of their salaries, it was because of the motivation that their work gave them.
4.3 The possibility of another child, but in a society not ready for this

When we asked the question of whether or not all of our respondents, both the ones from the private and the public organizations, would consider another child since you are now allowed to have two children in China, we received different answers. These answers came to be of a big interest and that is why we have chosen to have a separate section regarding this topic. This seems like a question that has been circulating within society as well as among friends and family, ever since the government recently changed its one child policy.

I have already answered this question many times. In my mind, yes, I love children. I want a second child and my husband does it too. But in reality, I don’t want it. My parents health is not very good and my parents-in-law´s health was good. But now, after one kid, a two-year-old with a lot of energy, their health is not good. I’m afraid that no one would take care of him. It’s normal for me to have seven months parental leave after giving birth, but after seven months, nobody would take care of him. So, in reality I don’t want it, but in my mind, I want it because I love children. (Lily, 32)

Day centres in China only accept children who are older than 3 and it is only the mother who is given 7 months off work after giving birth to a child (Vaughan, 1993). The question then is who is expected to take care of the child once these 7 months have elapsed? There is day centre for children under 3 but this seems to be very unusual (Vaughan, 1993). At least the respondents we talked to told us that. The simple solution is for the parents or the parents-in-law to take care of the baby, but this also puts a lot of pressure on them. As in this case, our respondent above did not feel that her parents or her parents-in-law were sufficiently healthy to take care of another baby. Another aspect of this situation is the potential occurrence of a generation gap. The parents may not have the chance to raise their kids the way they want to since they will not be the ones spending the greatest amount of time with their kids. The same respondent as above continued to tell us:

Because we don’t want the grandparents to take care of our children because our habit are different, the education is different and they are old, too. So their state of health won’t permit them to do more work, but we don’t have a choice, they have to take care of our children. (Lily, 32)

We believe this is one of the reasons why Confucian culture is still strong in China. Instead of raising children in a modern way, they raise them with respect to old traditions. Just as the five relationships and virtues tells in Confucianism (Mijung & Chesla 2007). This is not something that is seen as a problem, however, modern child-rearing in China will not compete or keep up with the Western way because of the old traditions and culture. It is easy for the government to accept families having two children, but for families, it is more problematic. By problematic we mean that it is not just a matter of having another child, you also need someone to take care of that child when you go back to work. If you do not have any grandparents who can help you, then maybe you will be forced to hire a maid and pay her salary.
I think the one child policy is not very scientific. So it’s time to change it. China also needs more people. If we don’t change that policy, then maybe China will quickly become an ancient society. So we need more babies, but this is the government’s idea, but I think that not everyone will have a second baby. Because it’s really quite a burden on families, both financially and with regard to time. For me, I’m in a dilemma about deciding whether or not to have a second baby. Because, if I want a second baby, I will need to have more time to take care of him/her, and to make more money as well. I also will need a bigger house and so on and it’s a problem. And I’m not young! Although I feel young... Ha-ha. I also have several friends who have similar ideas and some of them are quite brave. They have given birth to a second child so I think different families make different choices. And Chinese society needs more babies to boost its economy and wealth.” (Greg, 40)

This answer provides another perspective that is more suited to the main question in our thesis, work life balance and availability. This respondent sees both problems concerning finances and time. Raising another child is a complicated situation. You will have to work more because you need more money to support the whole family, at the same time, you will need more time to take care of both your children. This puts more pressure on you, both as a parent and an employee. You have to be much more available in both the work and family spheres (Bergman & Gustafson 2007).

Another result that we obtained during our research is that the concept work-life balance might not be the most suitable concept to use in China. It is a good and descriptive concept which shows that it is important to strike a balance between family and work (Noon & Blyton 2007). However, it is difficult to decide whether or not one has struck that balance since there are many factors that play an important role, e.g. the family situation or finances.
5. Final summary and discussion

In our last chapter we will discuss the results from both organizations in order to obtain an overview, as well as to see what separates them and what similarities they have.

Our first analytical step led to the initial separation into two categories of our data. When analysing the data, we saw a clear difference in our material regarding the respondent’s’ attitudes towards their jobs. We divided them into two categories and used an explanation that Eriksson (1998) have been using in her studies; those who work only to bring in a salary and those who work for motivation and development. After identifying these two categories we saw that those only working to bring in a salary were also the ones working at the private organization. Our other category concerned those working for motivation and development, and these were the ones belonging to the public organization. This pattern can be explained by the employees of the public organization having more contact with their customers and, in this case, their students. Teachers can follow their students’ development and see how their work affects their students’ learning and lives. They have more possibilities of managing their own work and seeing that their work is making a difference. The employees of the private organization do not have this kind of contact with their customers and they do not work independently in the same way that a teacher does. When they do progress it is often the whole team together that achieves the goals, not individually. Without this individual work, it might be hard to work for motivation instead of salary, something which, in this case, shows in their answers.

Our analysis revealed that those working for motivation are more able to express themselves than those working for salary. We think that motivated people are used to standing alone and have the privilege of standing up for their own opinions. Those working in the private organization seemed more reluctant to give us detailed answers; since they have what Eriksson (1998) should call an instrumental attitude towards their work, they might feel that it is not convenient for them to express themselves too freely in case their boss finds out. Anyhow, we think that we obtained the answers we needed in order to find some clear patterns in the two sectors regarding availability for family and work. Regarding the demand of being available for work and family the company’s policies and the opportunity to work flexible hours or from home plays an important role. During our interviews we saw that a major difference in availability for family and work is dependent on which organization our respondents worked at, and which opportunities and demands they experienced.

Our results show us that, in China, the demand as regards being available for work and family is contradictory. The clearest pattern that we found for both organizations is that, on weekdays, our respondents are more available for work than for family. This can be seen as obvious since they do not work at weekends and are more available for family then. But, when they come home from work on weekdays, they do not seem to spend all their spare time
with their families or doing household chores. The answers show that when they come home, if they have older children, these children will often need to do homework and will not have the time to spend the whole evening with their parents. If the respondents have younger children, they just give them a bath and put them to bed once they have arrived home from work. Often, when employees have younger children their parents or parents-in-law take care of these during the day, and manage the household. This means that employees with younger children rarely need to cook dinner for their families. Of course, the family is not just centred on the child; on weekdays, our respondents tend to spend their spare time with their parents, partners or friends. At weekends, the respondents are much more available for the whole family, even though their children might have activities or classes then, too.

Our purpose in writing this thesis was to see how work-life balance and availability for work and family are experienced, handled and how the ancient Chinese culture affects in contemporary China. Since we conducted our interviews at both a public and a private organization, we obtained different answers. The employees of the two organizations have different ways of dealing with their availability for work and family. The employees of the private organization and the ones who tend to work to have a salary, have no flexible hours and a fixed office, while the majority think that they are good at separating family from work. The employees of the public organization, the ones who tend to work for motivation and development are the exact opposite. They have flexible hours but no fixed offices, and they all agree that they are not good at separating family from work. In our theory chapter you can read that being available for family can mean that you have the opportunity to work from home, and to have these flexible hours (Bergman & Ivarsson, 2010). If you are able to work flexible hours or work from home, it may be easier to be available for both of these at the same time. The line between family and work will not grow so thick, but it can also put more pressure on the employee to deal with his/her work-life balance. Even if you become more available for family if you bring your work home, it might be harder to define when you are working and when you are with your family.

Family life has a major impact on working life in China and exactly how available one can be depends on how one’s family situation looks. If he/she is living with his/her parents/parents-in-law, it will be easier for an employee to be more available for work; however, at the same time, he/she will be less available for family. If one lives with one’s parents/parents-in-law, the pressure to be a good and ever-present parent will decrease since one’s child will be taken care of by his/her grandparents. If an employee does not live with his/her parents/parents-in-law, the pressure will be higher in the family sphere than in the work sphere. That is because the employee needs to have a better presence at home, especially the mothers.

We can connect this with one of the five main models of WLB, i.e. the spillover model, which we discussed in the theory chapter (O’Driscoll, 1996). The family sphere can affect the work sphere in a positive or a negative way. In this case the family sphere affects the work sphere in a negative way since mothers need to be more available at home than at work. Therefore this is one of the reasons why some employees only work in order to do what is asked of them and to have a salary. They don’t have enough time to spend extra hours at work because they
need to get home to take care of their children and do the house-hold chores. Even if their kids are older and can take care of themselves it still seems to be the case that employees live according to this pattern already and are just working for their salary in order to support their families. The respondents from the public organization, in other words the ones saying that they work for their own motivation and development do not seem to want to spend more time at work if it affects their families. Salary is not an important factor in why they work, the important factor is the motivation they get from being at work but their families will always be the most important thing. As a result, we can see that the family sphere is the most important one for the employees of both the public and private organizations and possibly a side effect off Confucian culture. Apart from family situation, we can also see that finances have the second biggest impact on how much an employee needs to work. It is very important to support one’s family and from our research we can see that it might be the family’s finances that decide whether or not they want to comply with the two child policy and have a second child.

To sum this thesis up, we once again answer our main questions, which are “How do men and women in China experience the demands regarding work and family, and how they prioritise these demands?” and “What affects the priorities they do?”. However, this time, we will look at both organizations together in order to obtain an overview. For the employees of both organizations, family is the biggest priority but, in order to be able to support a family, these employees need a salary. The organizations had differing opinions as regards how important a salary is. For the private organization, family came first and then salary. For the public organization, family also came first, but motivation and development were more important than salary. This result may be due to those of the public organization being more academic than those of the private organization. We think that this is because the employees of the public organization are more motivated and affected by interacting with students, and see their development. No matter what the respondents from both organizations think, and how they value their salaries, they cannot deny that a salary will always be an important part off ones financial future. A salary gives employees the opportunity to support their families, and to consider having another child now that the one child policy has been changed.

When we embarked on our study, we did not find so much previous research into either work-life balance or availability in China. We think that this might be because of the many aspects and cultural differences vis-à-vis the Western World, where both concepts have been implemented more. In this study, we are very pleased with our choice of main questions since we got to learn a lot about work-life balance, availability for work and family and the Chinese culture. We obtained some new perspectives and saw how a culture can have such strong effects on one’s life. We did not think that the Chinese culture would play a big part in our thesis as it did, and we also believe that these questions would yield an entirely different result in a country where culture is not that strong. However, we also feel that this topic is important to study in China since it is a big country with a lot of inhabitants and job opportunities. We feel that the strength of this thesis is mostly that we have collected empirical data from China that has characterized our study instead of using Western theories as our main focus when we
did our analysis. We hope this can be useful for further studies. Another strength in this thesis is the fact that we did interviews in both a public and a private organization, providing us with a wider perspective on how employees prioritise work and family. The respondents’ conditions varied with the organization they belonged to, and that affected our final results. We think that if we had only conducted our study at one of the organizations, the results would not be general; it would just reflect the organization in question. The weakness of our study is primarily language; if we spoke fluent Chinese, we would not have been forced to use an interpreter. Even though using an interpreter went well, we still feel that we may have missed some important details or, perhaps, the fact that the respondent did not feel comfortable answering a question in as much detail as the other respondents had done when we had not used an interpreter. If we had the chance to redo this study, we would focus more on asking follow-up questions, and on asking the respondents to answer in more detail even though communication and language skills were lacking.

As you can read in our theory chapter, China is facing imminent problems with this work-life balance (Yue & Yan, 2013), and it needs to learn from Western countries how to implement the concept. We hope that this thesis can encourage further research in this field since this is a current topic in the work-life sciences, and it is also of interest to do research in such a big and developing country as China.
6. Reference list


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7. Attached files

7.1 Interview guide 1

**Background**
- How old are you?
- Which kind of education do you have?
- How come you started working at Chengdu Event?
- When you were young, did your parents work a lot or did they stay at home?
- What does your partner do for a living?

**Family**
- How does your family situation look like?
- How old are your kids (gender)? Are they in kindergarten/school/university?
- Do you live together with the mother/father to your kids?
- Does your parents/parents in law live together with you?
- Tell us about how a regular day can look like in your life (working hours, tasks in the household etc.)

**Demands at home**
- What demands do you have as a parent?
- What are you doing in your home vs. what are others doing in your house?
- Do you have an housekeeper or maids?

**Work / Meaning of work**
- What are your working hours?
- Do you have the opportunity to work from home?
- Do you have the opportunity to have flexible working hours?
- What is the main reason that you go to work every day?
- What is the most important thing with a work for you?
(Salary, develop opportunities, fellowship)
- Do you feel that you get encouragement at work? In what way (salary, compliments etc.)?
- Do you think that you have chance to develop in the company?

**Sparetime/ Meaning of sparetime**
- What does sparetime mean to you?
- Do you have a lot of sparetime? (Do you wish you had more?)
- When you are off work, do you prefer family time or alone time?

**Balance between home and work**
- Are you able to separate family from work, and work from family?
- Are you able to stop thinking about work when you are at home?
- Do you find work life balance important?
- Does Chengdu Event find work life balance important and what do they do to help you to find it?
**Discussion**

- Are you satisfied with your situation? Is there anything you’d like to change regarding your family and work situation?
- In Ancient China it says that "I want my son to be a dragon", do you think the society has the same desire today?
- What would you say affects you the most when you prioritize between family and work?

Examples of follow up questions:
- How do you mean?
- Can you develop?
- Please give us some concrete examples
7.2 Interview guide 2

**Background**
- How old are you?
- Which kind of education do you have?
- How come you started working at the university?
- When you were young, did your parents work a lot or did they stay at home?
- What does your partner do for a living?

**Family**
- How does your family situation look like?
- How old are your kids (gender)? Are they in kindergarten/school/university?
- Do you live together with the mother/father to your kids?
- Does your parents/parents in law live together with you?
- Tell us about how a regular day can look like in your life (working hours, tasks in the household etc.)

**Demands at home**
- What demands do you have as a parent?
- What are you doing in your home vs. what are others doing in your house?
- Do you have a housekeeper or maids?

**Work / Meaning of work**
- What are your working hours?
- Do you have the opportunity to work from home?
- Do you have the opportunity to have flexible working hours?
- What is the main reason that you go to work every day?
- What is the most important thing with a work for you?
(Salary, develop opportunities, fellowship)
- Do you feel that you get encouragement at work? In what way (salary, compliments etc.)?
- Do you think that you have chance to develop in the company?

**Sparetime/ Meaning of sparetime**
- What does sparetime mean to you?
- Do you have a lot of sparetime? (Do you wish you had more?)
- When you are off work, do you prefer family time or alone time?

**Balance between home and work**
- Are you able to separate family from work, and work from family?
- Are you able to stop thinking about work when you are at home?
- Do you find work life balance important?
- Does Chengdu Event find work life balance important and what do they do to help you to find it?

**Discussion**
- Are you satisfied with your situation? Is there anything you’d like to change regarding your family and work situation?
- In Ancient China it says that "I want my son to be a dragon", do you think the society has
the same desire today?
- What would you say affects you the most when you prioritize between family and work?

Examples of follow up questions:
- How do you mean?
- Can you develop?
- Please give us some concrete examples
7.3 Chengdu Event’s encouragement system

Staff Welfare

1. Buy the social Insurance for regular staffs, basic amount 2000RMB
2. Offer physical examination once a year
3. Half-day-off for women staffs on Women’s day, carry out special activities
4. Host birthday party for staffs every month and distribute 200RMB as cash gift
5. 12RMB traffic subsidies every regular workday
6. Distribute gifts and cash on holidays and festivals
7. Staff union organizes outdoor activities occasionally; company supports every department to organize league construction regularly.
8. Provide coffee, tea, pastry etc. at tea time every day for staffs
9. Company provides plenty of books for reading and regulates 2 hours every Friday afternoon as workday reading time
10. Enjoy official holidays and company distributes 1000RMB as cash gift
11. Work over a year can enjoy 5-day paid annual leave
12. If deliver a baby during work time, company will buy children’s commercial insurance
13. Company will fully reimburse related certificate tests during work time
Work attendance regulations

- **Working time:**
  - Work 5 days a week, daily work time: 9:30-12, 13:30-18:00
  - The company is entitled to adjust work time due to seasons or other factors

- All staffs use punch card system and must punch before come and go

- Must punch in person. Check in 30 minutes later than working time regard as arriving late; check out 30 minutes earlier than working time, as a leaving early. Without any checking record, regard as absenteeism.

- Leave the work without permission, regard as neglect of duty

- Arriving late, leaving early and neglect of duty over 30 minutes without asking for leaving will regard as absenteeism

- Absenteeism within 2 hours will regard as half-day absenteeism, over 2 hours as a day absenteeism

- Arriving late or leaving early within 3 times (including 3 times), fine 20RMB each time; over 3 times, fine 100RMB after the 4th time; add up over 10 times a month, get fired.

- Absenteeism will be imposed upon a warning or be circularized a criticism and cannot be promoted during the inspection; absenteeism over 3 times in total will get fired.

- Daily punch record regards as attendance basis; when there are no punch records, every department should submit attendance record forms according to the actual situations. HR will account staff attendance to punch records and other attendance record forms.

- Attendance record forms including note for leave, outside registration form etc.

- On a business trip or go out for business temporarily need to fill in outside registration form with the permission of department manager. Without any permission will be regarded as absenteeism. Outside registration form should be submitted to the personnel department for the record in time and served as attendance basis.

- If anyone fail to punch due to the breakdown of punch card system should inform personnel department and complete punch record at once, not accept if overdue.

  Forget to punch will be treated as arriving late or leaving early.
Types and measurement of vacation

- National holiday:
  Staffs have right to take vacation break with the state provisions. Salary should be tripled as compensation if staff works on holiday.

- Annual leave:
  1. Official employees have paid annual leave year-round according to the company policy.
  2. If the annual leave cannot be taken due to work affairs, employees are allowed to apply for correspondent base wages of the annual leave as compensation; but advances application should be given before the expiry of the annual leave, otherwise the annual leave will be cancelled automatically and cannot be accumulated. Cases of non-application for leave due to other personal reasons shall be deemed as automatically abandoning the annual leave.
  3. Employees shall apply for the annual leave voluntarily. Division manager should measure the applications in advance if the leave will not impact the regular operation of the company. Members of the same business team cannot be on leave at the same time.
  4. Annual days off for official employees that has worked on the company between 1-10 years is 5 days; between 10-20 years is 10 days and for 20 years and above is 15 days, but days off is not allowed to bound with the national holidays.

- Sick leave
  Sick leaves are only permitted with the corresponding hospital diagnosis. Employees on sick leave can enjoy paid sick leave with 50% wages. If hospital treatment is needed, the company should execute according to the National Labour Law.