The present research paper studies the nature of job satisfaction of foreign white-collar employees in Finland. First, it makes a review of the different classes of motivation theories: need, instrumentality, and balance theories, and thus spans a bridge to understanding job satisfaction. Job satisfaction is explained through its role in the theories of work motivation. It is generally one of emotion or feeling that an individual gets as a result of some job-related characteristic or event. Maslow, Herzberg and Locke’s theories as well as Hackman and Oldham’s model of the determinants of job satisfaction are presented. The results of recent studies are used to bring about a more contemporary perspective to the theoretical background.

To understand the concept of job satisfaction in the perspective of foreign employees Berry’s model on acculturation is introduced and the different acculturation strategies are presented. The cultural dimensions model developed by Hofstede is adopted as an approach to the differences between countries and its findings are referred to in order to explicate the typical features of the Finnish culture and the cultures from which the interviewees come.

The present study applies qualitative research methods. Data generation was accomplished by means of a tripartite semi-structured interview. The first part uncovered the employees’ perceptions and experiences and was subsequently analyzed using a grounded-theory approach. In the second part the main postulations of the aforementioned theories were tested, and validated or disconfirmed through a continuous process of comparison to the employees’ own statements. The culture-specific part of the interview revealed typical problems and challenges that foreigners face in Finland and pointed out areas in the social environment that call for improvement.

The results of the study demonstrate that autonomy, learning and task variety are the most influential factors leading to job satisfaction. The theoretical postulations concerning intrinsic and extrinsic satisfaction being caused by factors different in nature found substantial support, as did Hackman and Oldham’s model and Locke’s suggested relationship between needs and values. The cultural distance, language and social environment were found to exert considerable impact on the overall experience of foreigners in the country and in work life.

The main sources I have used are: