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The influence of cultural factors on the cross-cultural adjustment:

A study focuses on the working experience of Chinese knowledge workers in Sweden

by

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Abstract

Cross-cultural adjustment is described as the process where foreign employees adjust themselves to the host country. Cross-cultural adjustment explores the work and non-work adjustment in the host country, which is now widely used in cultural studies. However, cross-cultural studies usually focus on the three dimensions of cross-cultural adjustment (i.e. work adjustment, general adjustment, interaction adjustment), and the influence of the host country's cultural features on the cross-cultural adjustment are often neglected. Some researchers commonly discuss about the cultural differences between China and Sweden, some similarities between those two countries are overlooked.

By using a combination of inductive and deductive approach, this thesis investigates how Chinese knowledge workers experience their working life in Sweden from the cultural factors' perspective. In order to gain some deep insights, this study approaches the working life of Chinese knowledge workers from the work and non-work life dimensions. Finally, this thesis provides the theoretical contribution: take the cultural factors into consideration when studying the cross-cultural adjustment.

Keywords: Chinese knowledge workers, Sweden, cross-cultural adjustment, cultural factors

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

According to Hofstede (2001), due to the different cultural backgrounds, Asian countries and European countries hold different national cultures and organizational cultures, which is believed that the former influences the latter (André, 2008). Guðmundsdóttir (2015) further claims that the values and beliefs rooted in the country could affect how organizations act towards their national culture. Therefore, Sweden, an archetypal individualist country, has a different national culture from China, a typical collectivist country (Hofstede, 2001). Also, their national organizations are supposed to have opposing organizational culture. Chinese organizations prefer to have a vertical hierarchical structure to strengthen the authority of managers, while Swedish organizations put more emphasis on employees and their opinions, so they prefer flat hierarchy (Hofstede, 2011).

With the development of global business, more and more companies prefer to recruit foreign knowledge workers such as engineers and software developers from other countries to make up for a lack of talent in their domestic employment markets (Zhang & Peltokorpi, 2016). Nowadays, some Swedish companies begin to hire employees from different countries (Łopacińska, 2012) to bring some new changes to respond to their international development (Alvesson, 2013). Just in Lund, there are supposed to be more than 200 Chinese knowledge workers employed in different industries. (It is not an official number, but this data comes from a Lund Chinese committee). This high number surprised me, and I began to wonder how those Chinese knowledge workers adjust themselves to Sweden and its culture. As a Chinese student, I experienced some differences and difficulties, such as, the different time concepts. In Lund, there is a tradition e.g. to start lectures 15 minutes later than on schedule; however, in China it is better to be punctual. Furthermore, I encountered language problems, such

as that if people do not speak Swedish, there will problems e.g. cultural misunderstandings. So, I assume that those Chinese knowledge workers are also confronted with the same difficulties and differences independent of their work or life in Sweden.

As Selmer (2002) claims, the adjustment process is largely decided by how the host country is differs from the home country. Researchers have come up with a cross-cultural adjustment method to study how foreign workers adjust themselves to the new host country. This method is now widely used in social science and business studies (Wang, 2016). Wang (2016, p.232) claims that the "overseas adjustments" include work and non-work related adjustments such as "psychological adjustment, social-cultural adjustment, and work adjustment". Nowadays, cross-cultural adjustment is not only about the degree foreign employees feel comfortable in their host countries, but also the job performance according to different performance criteria in their organizations (Black, 1988). However, work adjustment is not independent from other adjustments. Maybe this conceptual framework fits in other cases, but during the process of my empirical study, I found that there is a need to further explore the definition of a successful cross-cultural adjustment and in this study some new insights of cross-cultural adjustment will be studied. Despite the taken for granted differences, I will further explore the cultural similarities between China and Sweden.

Another important study aspect of this thesis is the discussion of the influential factors of cross-cultural adjustment. This research looks into the situation of Chinese knowledge workers who are employed in Lund now. The practical implications of this study can to some extent provide some insights into organizational Human Resource Management on foreign workers' management. Furthermore, it enables the management to better understand how their Chinese employees perceive their work in Sweden and which factors are attractions for them to stay here (Vaiman & Brewster, 2015). Moreover, this paper will give some suggestions, such as what kind of

preparations future Chinese workers should have if they want to work in Sweden someday.

1.2 Research purpose

This study will critically analyze and discuss different aspects of cross-cultural adjustment. Not just finding something which confirms the existing theories, but provide a more comprehensive perspective of cross-cultural adjustment from a theoretical and practical approach. Because some researches assume that China and Sweden are entirely different (Łopacińska, 2012), few of them have noticed that they share something in common. Considering the lack of cultural research between China and Sweden, this thesis will mainly explore the cultural studies between China and Sweden from another perspective such as cultural similarities.

1.3 Research Questions

My research follows one main question that is:

● *How do Chinese knowledge workers experience their working life in Sweden?*

Although my main question focuses on working lives, the lives outside of work is also an important part of cross cultural adjustments. Therefore, I developed two categories of my research questions: non-work and work adjustment.

I prepared my interview guide (see Appendix) according to this research question. With the literature I read and the aim, I want to know as many stories about my participants as possible, so I came up with the following sub-questions.

● *How do you think of your first weeks in Sweden, is there any special feelings, events or difficulties that you can still remember?*

- *How do you like your job? Do you think it is a source of living or self-fulfillment?*

- *Where do you see yourselves in the future?*

Those questions helped me see how my participants perceive their past lives, present jobs, and future statuses. And my empirical analysis and discussions are formed by them. By asking those questions I find out the important factors which can contribute to the literature that I will use in this study. Since the participants I interviewed are individuals, their backgrounds are also different. So, I have to come up with special questions according to their personal experiences. For example:

If the participant mentioned their exchange experience, then I asked them the following question:

- *How do you think your exchange experience influence your feelings when you come to Sweden?*

One of my participants used to work in China, now she works in Sweden, when she told me this, I asked her the following question:

- *Since now you have worked in the Swedish branch for 1 year, do you see any differences between Beijing branch and Swedish branch? Can you give me some examples?*

One of my participants shared her conflicts with her colleague, which attracts me. So I asked her the following question:

- *How do you solve this conflict with your foreign colleague?*

Some questions made me understand my participants better. How my participants think, how they see those differences, and how they act. The answers gave me some inspiration to think more about why questions, why they think like this and why this matter or does not matter to my participants. The main question and the follow up questions towards the same aim, that is to better understand the behaviors and the thoughts of my participants. With them I will make a more comprehensive discussion and analysis, not just see some obvious phenomenon but also something that underlie it.

1.4 Thesis outline

This thesis will firstly present the theoretical frame work, cross-cultural adjustment, of this thesis. The second part will introduce the methods and methodology, which will be applied to address the research process. Third, the empirical findings of my study will be presented, and then the discussion will come after it. The last part is the conclusion of the main findings also the theoretical and practical contributions.

2 Literature review

In this chapter, the theoretical frame work of this thesis will be introduced. Firstly, I will use the cultural model of Hofstede (2001) to explain the national and organizational differences between China and Sweden. Secondly, I introduce cross-cultural adjustment, which lays the foundation of the study. Finally, the two influential factors of cross-cultural adjustment will be presented.

2.1 Chinese versus Swedish national culture

2.1.1 Cultural differences

Hofstede (2001) proposes his cultural model which include four cultural dimensions, Individualism vs. Collectivism, Masculinity vs. Femininity, Power distance vs. Uncertainty avoidance, and Short-term vs. Long term orientation. (Gunkel, et al. 2016, p.570). This cultural model frequently used in different studies that relate to culture to distinguish different countries by the results of Hofstede' study (Gunkel, et al. 2016). With the development of cultural studies, some researchers begin to criticize this concept (e.g. Fang, 2003; McSweeney, 2013, mentioned by Gunkel, et al. 2016). They questioned the objectivity of his concept, since the sample of his research is more than 100,000 employees of IBM, even those employees come from different countries (Vaiman & Brewster, 2015), however, people still think his sample is not comprehensive. Some researchers criticize the measurement of his study, while others criticize he overlooks the individual differences (Gunkel, et al. 2016). Moreover, McSweeney (2002, mentioned by Gunkel, et al. 2016) questioned the validity of Hofstede's study, due to the lack of theoretical background of cultural studies.

Despite these criticisms of his model, some dimensions of his model can be applied in this research (see Table.1). Such as the dimension of individualism and collectivism, according to the characteristics of those two dimensions, and take the different national

cultural backgrounds into consideration, China scores high in collectivism so it is a typical collectivist country, while Sweden scores high in individualism so it represents individualist country (Jönsson, et al. 2015). I find it is helpful to use his model to explain some differences between China and Sweden.

Generally, collectivist societies put emphasis on relationship. This relationship refers to different aspects such as, the relationship with people, the relationship with society, which means that individuals in collectivist societies like social activities so as to have some interaction with others, also the relationship with organizations (Jönsson, et al. 2015). On the contrary, in individualist societies, people are not closely connected with each other, because family is the core of their daily life (Jönsson, et al. 2015). People prefer to spend more time to look after their families, rather than spend a lot of time interacting with others (Selmer, 2002). This difference can reflect on different organizational culture (Jönsson, et al. 2015).

Table 1. Hofstede Cultural Dimensions-Sweden and China
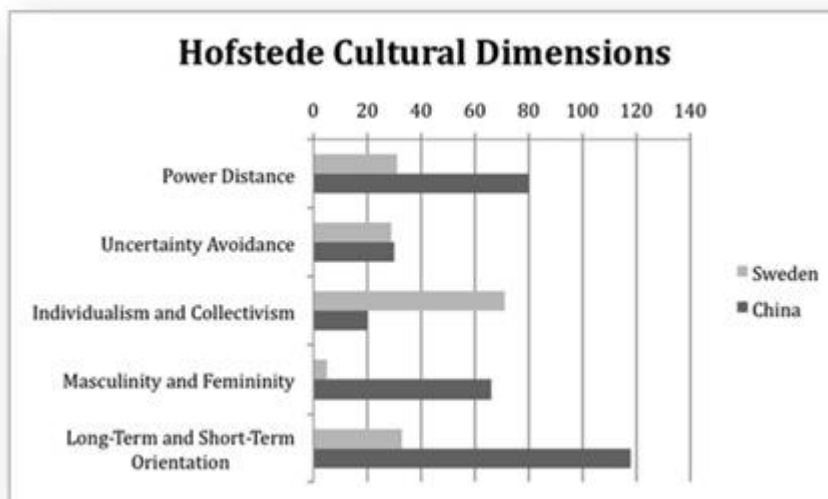
Source: *Svensson, M. Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions- Sweden and China, 2010*

2.2 Chinese versus Swedish organizational culture

Influenced by aforementioned national differences, China and Sweden are portrayed as

having different organizational culture. Firstly, because of the different importance of hierarchy, Chinese employees have different conflict managing styles with Swedish employees (Tjosvold & Sun, 2002). No matter in Eastern or Western countries, as long as people work in organizations, having conflicts with others is inevitable. However, when it comes to the conflict managing style, it varies from county to country (Gunkel, et al. 2016), different cultural values effect different preferences.

In collectivist organizations, the shared values are group welfare and the respect from employees to managers. Employees who work in this kind of organizations are supposed to behave in consistent with their shared values (Peng & Tjosvold, 2011). Therefore, people prefer to keep harmonious relationships with others, even when they confront with conflicts or when they feel potential conflicts. They will choose to avoid conflicts by using an indirect way such as, they usually pretend to agree with others first and then ask help for others or use indirect language to express their opinions (Peng & Tjosvold, 2011). People think it is a perfect way to show their respects to others, at the same time they do not want to lose their faces, by arguing openly with others. According to Peng & Tjosvold (2011), in collectivist societies, people have social face concerns, they want to keep positive images in front of others. When people are confronted with conflicts, they firstly consider their faces and others' faces, if the conflicts are not inevitable then they will avoid them (Ting-Toomey, 2003, mentioned by Peng & Tjosvold, 2011).

In organizations influenced by individualist culture, the situation is different. Because the individualist culture values individual development, such as individual achievements, more than group welfare (Tjosvold & Sun, 2002). Especially in Sweden, the opinions of employees are more important than the opinions of managers or leaders (Łopacińska, 2012). Employees are encouraged to have open discussions within their groups. People nowadays prefer to deal with conflicts at the beginning when they confront with conflicts (Creo, 2014). Generally, when there are conflicts people would

like to have open discussion, they think the avoidance of conflict is ineffective, if everyone is willing to express their opinions then problems will be solved effectively (Tjosvold & Sun, 2002). For them, challenge others' problems or point out others' faults are not personally behavior, they want to use straightforward ways to find creative solutions (Pruitt & Syna, 1989).

Secondly, since in Swedish society people put emphasis on family, therefore, in organizations they highly praise work-life balance (Frye and Breaugh, 2004), which is believed that if companies can ensure a work-life balance culture, their employees will be more efficient at their work, because they have the support from their families (Frye and Breaugh, 2004). Employees in Sweden generally have flexible working hours and they are allowed to arrange their tasks (Łopacińska, 2012). However, in Chinese organizations, due to the group welfare, employees are required to give priorities to work rather than family to make sure their group profits. Therefore, working extra hours is seen as a way to show employees' commitment (Łopacińska, 2012). The more hours they work the more honorable they will feel.

2.3 Cross-cultural adjustment

In the study of Black and Gregersen (1991), they introduce the history of cross-cultural adjustment. The research of cross-cultural adjustment originates from the study of cultural shock (Oberg, 1960, mentioned by Black, 1998). In 1988 Black proposes the concept of cross-cultural adjustment, which is widely used in relative studies. In his study, he defines cross-cultural adjustment from two perspectives, one is subjectively, the extent that "incumbent" (Black, 1988) feels psychologically comfortable in host countries, particularly the extent they meet the new role requirements. Another one is from an objective perspective, which refers to the degree that incumbents use his or her performance to prove the adjustment. In latter studies, researchers define the concept of cross-cultural adjustment as the degree that people feel comfortable with different facets of the host country (Wu, & Koehler, 2013). While other researchers define cross-

cultural adjustment as the "process where a person interacts with and adapts to a foreign environment". (Liu & Huang, 2015, p.3). There are some differences between the definition of cross-cultural adjustment. As mentioned above, some researchers see the cross-cultural adjustment as the degree people psychologically adjust, others see it as a process. No matter how they define the cross-cultural adjustment, it still relates to the results in the host country.

Most researchers seem to agree that cross-cultural adjustment is multidimensional (Black, 1991; Chan et. al, 2012). According to Black (1991), cross-cultural adjustment has three dimensions, interaction adjustment; general adjustment; and work adjustment. Interaction adjustment refers to the psychological comfort which is about the interaction with host country from both outside and inside work. General interaction is related to psychological comfort, which is about daily life such as, climate, food and customs. Work interaction is described as the job performance of overseas assignments. Researchers like Chan et al (2012), propose other three dimensions of cross-cultural adjustment, psychological adjustment, social-cultural adjustment, work adjustment. Those three dimensions put more emphasis on the psychological issues. But they all talk about work adjustment and the dimensions of work and non-work adjustment.

Nowadays the study of cross-cultural adjustment can relate to social learning theory, which is used to explain the interaction of people with their host country such as, learning more about the national culture of the host country and new skills and behaviors (Bandura, 2002). Therefore, the adjustment process also includes learning and showing new skills (Liu & Huang, 2015). In previous studies, they mention the communication with local society (Zhang & Peltokorpi, 2016). The proficiency of foreign employees in local language is the key to their social identities. However, in this research the host country is Sweden, which has its official language Swedish.

Zhang and Peltokorpi (2016) claim that, language proficiency has positive influence

on the three dimensions of cross-cultural adjustment especially on interaction adjustment, which relates to the interaction with both work and non-work activities. Language plays an important role in communication, if people can master the local language then they will be able to interact better with local people (Zhang & Peltokorpi, 2016). If people cannot speak the language of host country, then the information they receive might not be limited but the information that they understand is limited. (Peltokorpi, 2007). The proficiency in the language of the host country is related to social identity theory (Zhang & Peltokorpi, 2016). Language automatically divides people into two categories, in-groups where people can speak the language; out-groups where people are still not master the language (Peltokorpi, 2007). People act differently toward the two groups (Zhang & Peltokorpi, 2016). Only when people begin to have social interactions with local people they will have a sense of belonging and the sense of acceptance (Brislin, 1981, mentioned by Peltokorpi, 2007) of that society. Therefore, language is also a tool for people to get social identity (Brandes, 2009, mentioned by Zhang & Peltokorpi, 2016).

When it comes to the process of cross-cultural adjustment, the two adjustments that Black and Gregersen (1991) propose to some extent explain the influential factors of this process, one is Anticipatory Adjustment, another one is In-Country Adjustment. In my study, I will mainly talk about Anticipatory Adjustment, which refers to the preparation people do before they go to the new country (Black & Gregersen 1991), which has positive influence on cultural adjustment. In the study of Black and Gregersen (1991), they categorize two dimensions of Anticipatory Adjustment: individual and organizational. Individual adjustment relates to the previous abroad experience. With these experiences people can reduce the uncertainties of the new environment and have right expectations such as, what their life will be like in the host country (Black, 1988). Organizational adjustment is described as the preparation that current organizations give to their employees who are assigned overseas, such as some training about the culture and customs of a new environment (Black and Gregersen

1991).

2.3.1 Personality traits-openness

Many researchers of cross-cultural adjustment have recently begun to combine it with human behavior (Marsella, et al. 2000). They show increasing interests in predicting the cross-cultural adjustment of individuals and they believe that individual differences to some extent influence the adjustment process (Marsella, et al. 2000). These individual differences are defined as personality traits, which refer to the inherent cognition of how to act and think in different situations (Marsella, et al. 2000). Therefore, some researchers start to stress the importance of personality traits such as, in the study of Lebia-O'Sullivan (1999), she declares that personality traits influence the ability of individuals to cognize and learn different skills in host country. Shaffer et al. (2006), suggest that personality traits affect the way individual think and act, so as to influence the performance of individual in both work and non-work activities especially social activities (House, Shane and Herold, 1996). Furthermore, Marsella, et al. (2000) claim that even personality straits belong to psychology study, however, the study of psychology and cultural is interdependent.

The study of personality traits can trace back to the pioneering research of Allport (1937), whose research lays the foundation of further studies on personality traits. With the contributions of many researchers, the Big Five model comes out to give the basic structure of personality traits study (Marsella, et al. 2000). At the beginning, McCrae and Costa (1985) suggest that the five traits include agreeableness, conscientiousness, openness, extraversion, and emotional stability. However, they change emotional trait into neuroticism in their study in 1996 and the study of McCrae in 1998. Agreeableness refers to interpersonal factor, which influence the communication with the host country. Conscientiousness is the degree that individuals can behave themselves, and cautious about the acceptable behaviors in host country. Openness is described as the ability that individuals act flexible towards different norms, values and thoughts. Extraversion is

the trait which influence the ability of individuals to build active relationships with their host country. Neuroticism is the tendency to keep stable emotions no matter in what situations.

However, researchers begin to realize that the Big Five Model is still too abroad not representative (Wu et al. 2013). As mentioned above, some researchers propose a special factor-relationship to China, which means the Big Five Model is not applicable in every country. Therefore, Lebia-O'Sullivan (1999) claims that, personality traits can be narrowed down to two personal competencies, dynamic and stable competencies. Dynamic competencies refer to some conscious behaviors, while stable competencies involve several traits such as, open-mindedness, emotional stability, social initiative, and cultural empathy. The two competencies are actually interdependent, stable competencies impact on the influence of dynamic competencies on adjustment process, because stable competencies decide the ability of individual to gain dynamic competencies.

Further research is done by Zee and Oudenhoven (2000), they refine five dimensions of personality traits: emotional stability, social initiative, open-mindedness, cultural empathy and flexibility. Compared to the study of Lebia-O'Sullivan (1999), they add one more trait-flexibility, which is not just the flexibility used to explain open-mindedness. It refers to the ability to learn something from previous experience, and new skills from new environment. Zee and Oudenhoven (2000) explain why they add flexibility is because it can fill the gap between "expected and actual situations" (Wu et al. 2013, p.4030). Emotional stability refers to the ability to act properly even when they are under stressful situations or when confront with cultural differences in host country (Zee & Oudenhoven, 2000). Social initiative is defined as the desire of individuals to deal with different problems so as to achieve their personal goals in host country (Zee & Oudenhoven, 2000). Open-mindedness is described as an open attitude when individual meet different values and norms of different cultures (Zee &

Oudenhoven, 2000). Cultural empathy refers to the capability to understand the different behaviors of those people who come from different countries (Zee & Oudenhoven, 2000).

Even though different researchers propose different models to stress the importance of personality traits of people who live and work in host country, it is interesting to see there is one trait included in every model and that is openness. This positive attitude can to some extent predict a successful adjustment of individuals in their host country. When people are not biased about the culture of host country and show their interests in learning more about host country and interacting with local people, then they will more easily adjust to the new environment (Peltokorpi, 2008; Zee & Oudenhoven, 2000). As Albrecht et al (2014) claim that openness is closely related to working adjustment, because people who want to work abroad usually perceive themselves as open-minded. Openness influences people's acceptance of different organizational culture, moreover the different working systems (Albrecht et al. 2014).

In summary, this chapter firstly use the cultural model of Hofstede (2001) to compare the different national and organizational culture between China and Sweden, and then draw on the cross-cultural adjustment theory and include personality traits-openness and anticipatory adjustment (See Figure 2.1). As pointed at the above literature, personality traits and anticipatory are argued by Marsella et al. (2000) and Black and Gergresen (1991) as the influential factors in cross-cultural adjustment. My study will follow this theoretical model.
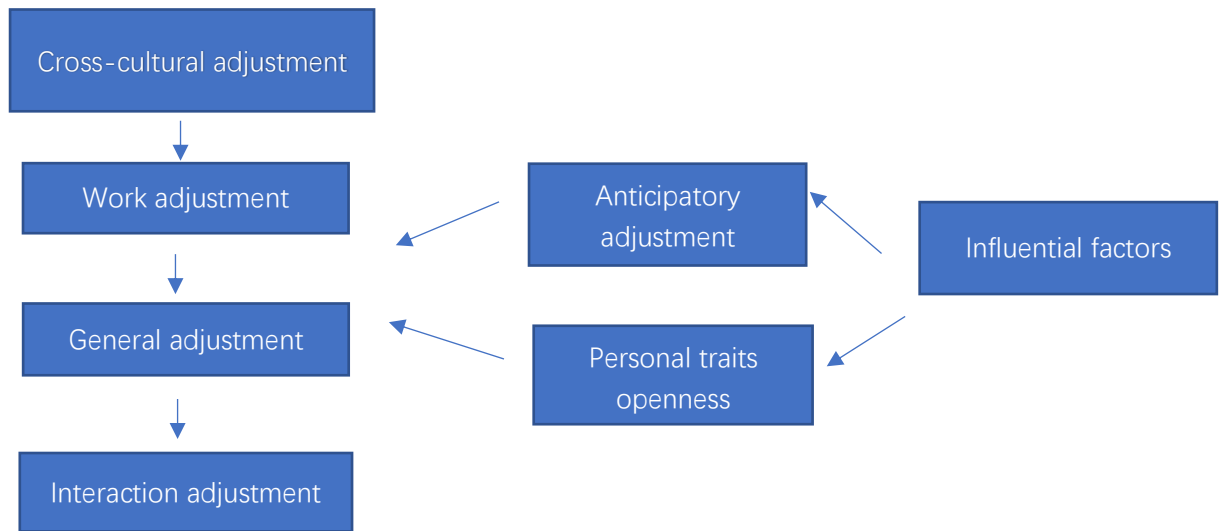
Figure2.1 Theoretical model

3 Methods and Methodology

Since my main study question is about how Chinese knowledge workers experience their working life in Sweden. Therefore, how those Chinese knowledge workers think and how they behave themselves are interesting topics which need to be studied. I have chosen a qualitative approach to explore the experience of Chinese knowledge workers in Sweden. As a data-driven study, the qualitative research is seen as a way to explore the personal experience of my participants (Alvesson, 2011), so as to dig more insights into the underlying reasons of how they think of their experiences (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2000).

3.1 A combination of inductive and deductive approach

The qualitative study is widely believed as an inductive research, which claims that the results of research influence theory, while the deductive research suggests that theory actually influences the empirical findings (Bryman & Bell, 2007). The differences between deductive approach and inductive approach are the different influence order of theory and research (Bryman & Bell, 2007). At the beginning of my research, I read a great deal of literature to give myself some insights into this topic. As Alvesson (2011) suggests that the reading of literature before conducting interviews enables the researchers to cumulate some ideas of the research process. Glaser and Strauss (1967) criticize that deductive research does not closely connect to empirical data, to make up this point I also have inductive research, which aims to bring new findings and meanings from the collected data (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2000). To have a comprehensive study, there is no need to divide inductive and deductive approach clearly (Bryman & Bell, 2007).

As a data-driven research (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2000), the collection of empirical data is significant. So, I conduct semi-structured interviews to flexibly generate data (Bryman & Bell, 2007). However, without the theory base, it is difficult

to have the following steps. In my qualitative study, I prefer to combine the inductive approach and deductive approach together, even deductive approach is seldom regarded as a qualitative approach (Bryman & Bell, 2007). However, at the preparation phase, due to my participants are individuals, I only meet them around 65 minutes, I am unable to conduct observations. Consequently, theory collecting and reading play an important role which lay the foundation of further inductive study.

At the data analysis phase, a lot of work is required such as the interpretation of empirical data and categorize similar or different contents (Alvesson, 2011). As a popular approach, grounded theory will be used to analyze data, because it lays the foundation of theoretical outcomes by generating the empirical findings (Alvesson, 2011). It is believed to move back and forth between data and theory (Bryman & Bell, 2007). Simply, I also see my study as flexible inductive research. Meanwhile, no matter it is deductive or inductive they both have a common element that is theory (Bryman & Bell, 2007), they are connected with each other.

3.2 Data collection

This study focuses on the experience of Chinese knowledge workers in Sweden, the empirical data is collected by conducting semi-structured interviews. Those interviews follow an interview guide, which guide me to ask open-ended questions, at the same time the interviewees have enough room to reply to the questions (Bryman & Bell, 2007). After deciding my research topic and main questions, I started contacting possible participants. Due to the limit of time, I planned to conduct 10 semi-structured interviews. Also, my research is about the experience of individuals, so the data should be collected from different people with different backgrounds. The diverse backgrounds of my participants will enable me a comprehensive perspective towards this topic. Different people have different experiences and attitudes toward different things, which means during the analysis phase I can make comparison among my participants.

Considering that I do not know many Chinese knowledge workers in Lund. I tried to use my network here to contact candidates. In the end, I contacted 12 candidates and conducted interviews with 10 of them. I chose my participants according to the following criteria: firstly, the candidates should be Chinese people who work in Sweden now (some of them have changed their nationality to Swedish); secondly, they have to work in organizations, because the study question is about their working life here. There is no limitation of how many years those Chinese knowledge workers have been here, because time may also influence their experiences.

All my participants (see Table3.1) work as knowledge workers, because they are highly required for professional knowledge and skills to do their jobs. In the following study to protect the personal information of my participants, with their permission, I changed their names. According to Alvesson (2004), knowledge workers are those employees who possess advanced knowledge and work in knowledge intensive firms, which use complex knowledge to provide knowledge related work. 6 of the participants are male, 4 of my participants are female. Some of them came to Sweden for their Master or Ph.D. study, some of them came to Sweden because of the relocation of their job, others come to Sweden because they apply to the position in the Swedish branch of their organizations. The different backgrounds of my participants helped me to some extent eliminate the bias of my study (Bryman & Bell, 2007). Because I can see the different behaviors of different participants, when they confront with the same problem such as their acceptance of local food. Qualitative research is sensitive to context (Alvesson, 2011), it can explore and develop the main comparison.

Names	Gender	Age	Position	How long have been Sweden
Ku	Male	30	Project Manager	6years
Yu	Female	38	HR	1 year
Lin	Male	38	Engineer	4 years
Xu	Male	36	Project Manager	7 years
Xi	Male	43	Engineer	10 years
Zha	Female	25	Digital Analyst	2 years
Zhan	Male	37	Software designer	10 years
Ji	Female	40	Data Analyst	16 years
Yi	Male	26	Consultant	4 years
Xue	Female	29	Software Tester	11 months

Figure 3.1 Basic information of my participants

Since I am a Chinese student, all the interviews are conducted in Chinese. At the data analysis phase, I transcribe them first and then translate them. To better analyze the interviews, with the permission of my participants I digitally recorded all the interviews. The average length of them is 65 minutes. My interviews are primarily conducted during the spare time of my participants, because I want to give enough time to my interviews and participants to share their stories. All the interviews are face to face interviews. I meet three of my participants at Espresso House, five of them at Chinese School, one of them at the company of that participant, one of them at her house. I let

my participants decide where to meet, I want them to feel free and open to sharing their stories. So I can have deep conversations with them. I also let them decide when to meet, because I want to make sure that we have uninterrupted interviews. There is a Chinese School in Lund that offers Chinese courses to Chinese children. I was allowed to go there every Sunday to interview parents who wait for their children. I went there four times and interviewed five participants.

According Alvesson (2011), there is an idea of interviews called "romanticism" (Alvesson, 2011 p.13), which enable the researchers to get closer to their participants, so as to allow participants to share their true stories and thoughts (Alvesson, 2011). However, he criticizes that the closeness between interviewers and interviewees does not produce objective and authentic data (Alvesson, 2011). Because the interviewers may guide how their participants express their opinions (Alvesson, 2011). In my research, the closeness between me and my participants comes out automatically, because we all come from China and we can talk in our mother tongue. I see the closeness between me and my participants as positive, even though sometimes I ask them short questions, they give me long answers. I seldom stop them when they share their stories with me, I do not interrupt or guide them

3.3 Semi-structured interviews

Generally, there are two interviewing styles in qualitative research, one is unstructured interview, another one is the semi-structured interview (Bryman & Bell, 2003). Different from unstructured interviews which only have one question can be free like a conversation between interviewer and interviewee (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2000), semi-structured interviews have some research questions for specific research topics, but the research questions are usually open-ended (Bryman & Bell, 2007). I chose to conduct semi-structured interviews because I already had a general idea about my study topic, which is working experience of my participants in Sweden. However, in the research process some experiences of non-work life will be studied. Therefore, my

research question is kind of broad. As Alvesson (2011) claims that in order to study a broad topic, interviewees should be given enough space to share their experiences. Every interview has the same basic questions such as, *How long have you been Sweden?* Those questions allow to me to know the backgrounds of my participants (Alvesson, 2011). But I ask my participants different questions, according to their answers to some questions. If I am interested in their special personal experience, I ask more questions related to their experiences, to explore their attitudes and behaviors such as *How do you like your position in Lund as a software developer?*

I put emphasis on my participants (Alvesson ,2011), because their experiences influence this study. Therefore, I have to make sure that they can understand every question I ask, they are allowed to ask me questions if they have any doubts about my questions. During the interviews, I encourage my participants to share their ideas about their inside work life and their outside work life, how they see those differences, how they manage to adjustment themselves to Sweden. More important is their psychological well-being. The interaction between me and my participants lead us to see something different from the existed knowledge (Alvesson, 2011). Since this research is about the experience of those Chinese knowledge workers, the role I play in all the interviews is the person who guides the participants to share their experiences and be a good listener, listen carefully to their stories (Bryman & Bell, 2007).

In order to not limit the answers from my participants (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2000), I avoid using technical terms, such as cross-cultural adjustment or organizational culture. On the contrary, I ask questions like *How long does it take for you to feel comfortable in Sweden, your daily life, and your work?* And *How do you like your company? Do you enjoy working there?* My follow up questions are *Can you give me some examples?* I think it is important to ask my participants to give examples because when they give examples they would like to share more about their stories. Sometimes, when they share one story with me, then this story may remind them of another story

that they think is impressive or interesting. The more stories I listen, the more I know about my participants.

3.4 Multiple data analysis approach

In qualitative research, empirical data from interviews plays an important role in generating empirical findings (Alvesson, 2011), therefore, how interviewers interpret and analyze the data are emphasized in the analysis approach, because as researchers, interviewers are part of the study, their interpretation matters in the results of the research (Alvesson, 2011). Therefore, at the data analysis phase I choose to combine approaches, such as grounded theory, hermeneutics and reflexivity.

Grounded theory is widely used to analyze the collected data of qualitative research (Bryman & Bell, 2007). Coding is regarded as the main tool of grounded theory to develop categories (Bryman & Bell, 2007). I have some special questions with me when I review my transcripts such as, is there any repetitions? Is there anything that I do not expect at the beginning? Is there anything interesting or anything that is not the same as the literature I read before? Is there anything that confirms the literature I read before? With those questions with me, I find out some key words such as previous abroad experience and language that are mentioned by some of my participants. As Alvesson and Sköldberg (2000) state, that in general the categories from coding are developed from two factors: one is directly from the answers of participants; another is explored by the researchers. In my study, I firstly code the most repetitively mentioned themes, and then divide them to different themes and construct sub-themes.

Hermeneutics is an interpretative approach (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000), which mainly works for the interpretation of texts (Bryman & Bell, 2007). Researchers use hermeneutics to discover something deep in the collected data or the information behind the data (Ricoeur, 1981), especially in qualitative research hermeneutics is required to analyze the empirical data (Alvesson, 2011), so as to discover the meanings behind the

text (Bryman & Bell, 2007). While the text should come from the understandings of the researchers, who are asked to put themselves in the context to think the uncovered meanings (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000). The understanding of literatures and the interpretation of my interviews are extremely significant in my study. Because how I understand and what my participants mean decide the process and even the result of my research. The reason why I choose hermeneutics, is because of its focus on social context. While cross-cultural adjustment can to some extent understand as a social action (Black, 1998). With the historic social background of hermeneutics, the interpretation of the literatures has a more comprehensive approach (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2000).

Another important tool of grounded theory is the Constant comparison (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), which emphasizes the connection between data and theory (Bryman & Bell, 2007). The connection is something that makes sure the ideas and insights about theory the categories we find at coping are kept. At the same time, researchers are supposed to constantly make comparisons between theory and data. And between different categories. In my study, I make a constant comparison between the concepts of cross-cultural adjustment and the data I collect, try to find something different or similar. Furthermore, I make the comparison between the two categories *Life inside work* and *Life outside work,* to see if there are any different behaviors or attitudes between the two categories.

Last, according to Alvesson (2011), reflexivity refers to process that the researchers see the empirical data from different perspectives and eliminate possible bias. For example, some researchers may just focus on the part which they are interested in. Reflexivity asks for a constant interpretation process of the interview contents. When researchers encounter new perspectives, they are welcome to challenge their previous interpretations, in order to have in-depth insights of their interviews (Alvesson, 2011). Reflexivity proposes an open approach, which means that researchers can understand

the empirical material from different perspectives to understand the meanings behind some answers and interview situations (Alvesson, 2011). In my study, when I find the themes that I do not expect at the beginning of my research, I will begin to consider what do those themes mean: Are they related to my main research question? If so, I will begin to interpret them until I find the meaning behind them.

3.5 Limitations

Considering the complexity of conducting an inductive and deductive research (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2000), there are some limitations that I cannot avoid. Even though I try to use different methods to eliminate the bias of my study but the following limitations should be counted in.

Firstly, 10 participants were used for this study, which is a reliable sample size. However, what may have had an impact is that some participants were married with children, while others were single. Ideally, it would have been preferable to have all the participants with the same marital status. Therefore, it is reasonable to say that the comparison in this study is not representative.

Secondly, in general this study is interpretive; therefore, it is difficult to assess if the participants are presenting their true feelings. One way to overcome this obstacle would be to have access to the participants' managers and peers to hear their perspectives and compare their responses to the participants' responses.

Thirdly, there is the issue of language. In order to have deep conversations with my participants, interviewing in their mother tongue, Chinese, was the best choice. Since my mother tongue is Chinese, this made the interviews rich in conversation. However, there are consequences for this choice. All interviews required translating during the transcribing process. Since my mother tongue is Chinese and my English is not proficient, it would have been ideal to have a professional translate the interviews.

4.Case presentation

In this chapter, I will explore the experience of Chinese knowledge workers who currently work in Lund. The analysis answers the main research question: *How do Chinese knowledge workers experience their working life in Sweden?* However, a working life is not a stand-alone entity, there are other factors which interplay with work adjustment to help foreign workers better adjust to their host country. Therefore, I structure this chapter around three factors: first is the aspect that my participants did not integrate into Swedish culture; the second one is their acceptance of Swedish culture; the last one is the influential factors of the adjustment process. Since this chapter lays the foundation for the discussion chapter, I will conclude by discussing aspects of Swedish culture that my participants accepted and did not accept.

4.1 Not integrating into Swedish culture

4.1.1 Language-Swedish

Since I have been in Sweden for eight months, I know it is crucial to learn Swedish, especially if people live here for a long time. Although Swedish people can speak English, the surroundings are in Swedish, such as at the supermarket and the train station. Therefore, when I prepare my interview questions, I am curious to know if those Chinese knowledge workers could speak Swedish or not, since some of them have been here for more than ten years. At the beginning, I predict that half of my participants could speak Swedish because half of them have been here at least four years. However, the results surprise me.

Almost every interviewee talks about the problem of language. It is a unique point because Sweden has its own language, Swedish, which is the key to communicating with local people. Even though it is something that my participants know it is better to learn, few of them do. They also know that if they could speak Swedish, they would get

involved in Swedish society better. However, they consistently find a lot of excuses for themselves such as, *"I do not have enough time to learn Swedish."* or *"I do not have the energy to study Swedish."* Sweden is a special case because some Swedish people tend to believe that others will not have difficulty living in Sweden as long as they can speak English. However, Swedish in fact plays a significant role in Swedish society.

Zha: "How could you get involved in this society if you cannot speak Swedish? Last time, when I went to a party, there were some Swedish people. At the beginning, they asked me some questions in English; then they began to speak Swedish. I had to find other friends to talk to them. I felt bad that time because I had the feeling of being excluded."

Zha shares this experience with me to explain why she finally made up her mind to study Swedish, because she wants to integrate into Swedish society. It is understandable that Zha is still motivated to have more interactions with Swedish society as she has only been here for one year. The importance of Swedish is also emphasized by other participants; however, their attitudes are different from Zha.

Xi: "I cannot speak Swedish; I know it is better to learn it. But you know, whenever I plan to study Swedish I think about my English instead. I have studied English for so many years, but my English is still not that good. I prefer to study English when I have some spare time. But yeah, in the future if I have the chance, ha ha ha I will study Swedish."

Xi came to Sweden because of the relocation of his job; he has been here for ten years. Even though he has been here quite a long time, he still cannot speak Swedish. When I ask him the reasons for this, he finds a lot of excuses for himself. Interestingly, even though he gives a lot of reasons, he then says he would study Swedish if he had the time to do so.

Ji: "I planned to study Swedish several times, but in the end, I failed. To study a new language

requires courage and enough time. I feel tired when I finish my daily work, and then I have to go home and take care of my son, how could I find the time to learn Swedish? So, yeah, I do not have enough time and energy to study Swedish. But I know if I could speak Swedish I would know this country and Swedish culture better."

Ji came to Sweden for her master's degree; she has been here for more than 16 years. At the beginning, she just wants to study abroad and experience a new culture and new environment. Then she meets her husband here; they decide to stay here and get married. She works as an analyst for a bank. As the mother of a ten-year-old boy, she thinks she should spend more time with her son. Thus, she does not have enough time to study Swedish.

Not having enough time and energy to study Swedish are common reasons from my participants who have been here for several years. These factors lead to them not prioritizing Swedish over English. Therefore, due to their lack of proficiency in Swedish, even though some of them have already been here for several years, they still do not have the sense of belonging here. From the experiences of my participants, I know that even Swedish matters in social interactions, but it is not the main influential factor of their working life here. Since those Chinese knowledge workers who come to work in Sweden, working language-English is more important.

4.1.2 Food

Eastern countries and Western countries have different food preferences and different cooking methods. Considering the literature I read and my personal experience, I think it is interesting to know whether my participants change their tastes to adjust themselves to Swedish food or not.

Yu: *"I can eat Swedish dishes or other countries' dishes. But you know we are Chinese, we love rice, our taste is not easy to change, I have eaten Chinese dishes for more than 30 years. There is*

no need for me to change my taste, and I do not want to change it. I can buy all the ingredients I want here, I can cook Chinese dishes at home, it is not a big deal."

Yu used to work in Shanghai branch of a Swedish company, last year she found a new vacancy in Lund, she applied for that position, then she received the offer from Swedish branch. She likes the job she is doing now; also wants to experience a different life, so she finally decides to come. Now she and her family have been here for nearly one year. Not just Yu, other participants also admit that they still keep their Chinese tastes, and they do not think it is necessary for them to adjust their tastes to Swedish tastes.

● Not making many local friends

Considering their lack of proficiency of Swedish, I begin to wonder if they have local friends here or not. When I ask my participants this question, some of them admit that they only have few friends here, then they explain the situation to me.

Lin: "Swedish people have their friends, who they met when they were in high school or college. There is no need for them to make friends with us. Even I can make friends with them, how to maintain the relationships with them is another problem for me. We still have different cultural background. So, I only have a few local friends here, even though I have some friends, but the relationship will not last long because I sometimes change my job and move to other places. Moreover, if you do not know the culture in Sweden, it is hard for you to make friends with them. They have their circle of friends, there is no need for them to accept you"

Lin and other participants share their experiences about making friends with local people with me. They think local people are friendly and kind, however, making friends with Swedes is not easy. Some participants also do not believe it is necessary for them to make many friends here, as long as they have their families and some friends here.

My participants think that they adjust to Sweden well. However, according to their answers, I see that they still have to confront some issues such as problems with the Swedish language. But those problems are not crucial to their life in Sweden, as long as they can use English to communicate; they can cook Chinese dishes at home; they have their family here with them and some friends.

4.2 Acceptance of the Swedish culture

4.2.1 Language-English

My participants work in international companies, since English is popular in Sweden, their work language is English. Therefore, my participants' proficiency of English influences their job performance. For example, whether they could express their opinions freely during group discussions depends on how proficient their English is. When I ask my participants about the obstacles of their jobs, the first obstacle that comes to mind is English, which is the essential tool for them to communicate with others, also the basic skill they need to master. From the following answers, I see that my participants have some worries about their English. Therefore, they try to integrate themselves into their work by improving their English.

Zha: "Language is always my obstacle in performing better at work. I am not a native speaker of English, so I always make some grammar mistakes, which upsets me. I feel worried when I hand in my report to my boss, I am afraid that he could not understand my report."

Zha works in an advertising agency, she works as an analysist there. She has to not only to communicate with her colleagues but also her clients. She is not confident about her English, but she has to write reports to her manager about the case they are working on. Because her manager is American, she is afraid that her manager could not understand her reports because of her grammar mistakes or incorrect expressions.

Lin: "At the beginning, my English was bad. I could only have some basic conversations with my colleagues. Then when we have meetings or discussions, I was afraid to say something, because I did not know how to express myself. Now, I can express myself clearly."

Lin has a mentor when he joins his company, and he says his mentor helps him a lot. His mentor shows him around his company, and tells him where the tea room is. Lin is an open-minded person, he knows his English is not good, he begins to study what others say and then he begins to express his opinions in group discussions.

Since they both work in international companies, English is the basic language skill and also the first and foremost obstacle. Their lack of proficiency in English influences their confidence about their work performance and their daily communications with their colleagues. Therefore, when some of my participants confront difficulties in English, they try their best to solve it.

Zha: "I know my English is not good, so every time before we start a new project, I look up all the professional vocabularies and make sure I know the exact meaning of those words."

The reason why Zha likes her job so much is because she can learn new things from every project, she loves the process of learning. Even though she sometimes confronts difficulties finishing her tasks, but she tries to solve them in the end.

Xi: "Every day I give myself some spare time to study English. When I have meetings, it is time for me to practice my listening, at the same time I could know how to express my opinions during meetings or discussions."

Xi finds excuses for him not to study Swedish, however, he makes plan to study English. He explains that it is because English is his work language, which influences

his job performance. Therefore, he has to practice his English.

When my participants talk about English, they all have a positive attitude toward it, if they cannot express their ideas, they will learn to at least say something during the group discussions. Like Zha, she knows she does not have a large enough vocabulary, so she tries to remember more professional English words to have a better job performance. Or like Xi, even he has a lot of things to do, he gives himself some spare time to study English. On the contrary, their attitudes toward Swedish are not as positive as toward English, they have a lot of excuses not to study Swedish. I think it is because English is highly related to their assignments, they have to practice their English so as to have desired outcomes.

4.2.2 Food

Zha: "At the beginning, I think salad is the most disgusting food in the world, but now I love it. I can eat salad every day. When I went back to China last year, I even could not eat hot pot anymore."

Zha thinks since she lives in Sweden now, then she should adjust her taste to the western tastes, she tries the food here and begins to cook salad at home. Now she has one more choice, she could not only cook Chinese dishes, but she could also cook Swedish dishes at home. She feels good about this because she is trying her best to adjust to Sweden.

Interestingly, Zha is the only one who expresses her willingness to accept local food. However, most of my participants have the same answers as Yu. They can be flexible on a lot of things such as the climate or the culture here, but they still keep Chinese taste, no matter how long they have been Sweden, they still cook Chinses dishes as their daily meals. They can eat local food, but they cannot eat them every day.

4.2.3 Conflict management

Some of my participants do not think that specifically Chinese-Western cultural differences are obstacles to them, because more general attitudes and behaviors are more important in their communication with others.

Yi: "I am a businessman, you know what is important to businessmen? That is profit. I do not think cultural differences are obstacles to me. I do not have any communications problems with my business partners, as long as our business is profitable."

Yi came to Sweden for his master's degree. Before his graduation, he decides to establish his company here. He participates in some competitions to acquire the fund of his business. Now he has set up his company for one year. He shares some difficulties establishing his company here, but he thinks that no communication problems are caused by cultural differences.

However, two of my participants share the stories about the cultural conflicts between them and their colleagues. They think different national cultures influence different people, especially if they work in international companies where working with multinational colleagues makes cultural conflicts almost inevitable.

Zha: "Well, you know, we are Chinese, we seldom point out others' problems directly, it is impolite to do so. But my foreign colleague she always points out my problems directly, there are some cultural differences between China and western countries, sometimes she makes me feel that I make some big mistakes, which upset me for quite a long time. You know, one day I finally could not stand it, then we argued with each other. She said that she thought if I did not tell her the truth then I was not sincere. I also told her that because of my cultural background I could not stand others pointing out my problems directly, if you do it, please do it in a gentle way."

As Zha says, she is influenced by the special social face concerns in China.

Consequently, she chooses not to have direct conflicts with her foreign colleague, she thinks it is the way she shows her respect to her colleague and keeps a harmonious relationship with her colleague. Some researchers point out that as collectivists, Chinese people care about the relationship with others and the profits of the group not individual (Ann & Dean, 2011). Therefore, they control their emotions to avoid having direct conflicts with others.

Restricted by traditional Chinese values, Zha admits that, when her foreign colleague points out her problem directly, she has an inner struggle about how to deal with face concerns, because in Chinese cultures it is rude to point out others problems directly. However, she realizes she is in Sweden now where open conflict is allowed. She thinks she should act according to Swedish culture and not traditional Chinese culture anymore. Maybe some researchers think that the social face concern is deeply rooted in Chinese people. But Zha finally has an open conflict with her colleague, this is because she feels there is no need for her to care that much about the relationship or face anymore. After that big argument between Zha and her colleague, she now feels free to express her opinions. The next story from Xu further exemplifies that Chinese knowledge workers show their flexibilities in different organizations, where they have different organizational culture.

Xu: "Most of my colleagues are nice and professional. But I can still remember one thing happened several years ago. You know we always work in a team, I used to have a Vietnamese colleague. Once I was in charge of one project, it was on the weekend he called me and said there was something wrong with my project, his attitude was bad, I felt uncomfortable at that moment. But yeah, it was teamwork, I solved that problem immediately. But after resolving this problem, I called him to express my anger about his behavior. You know, it was not my problem, and it was during the weekend."

Xu says he understands that his colleague wants the task to be done, but he cannot

stand that his colleague calls him during the weekend and blames him. He does not tolerate his colleague as Zha does and expresses his anger directly. He admits that at the beginning, he does not want to have conflicts with his colleague, but prefers to be frank as his colleague is also very honest and expresses his opinions whenever he wants to.

Those two participants share their stories with me, before I ask them about the relationship with their peers, which means this kind of experience is impressive to them. The conflicts with their colleagues enable them to consider the cultural differences between China and Sweden. When I ask them how they manage conflicts, they say they prefer to be honest to their colleagues and share their feelings afterwards. It is interesting to see that they have positive attitudes when they have conflicts with others. After that, they began to change their ways to work and talk. They also see the changes of their colleagues, they think the respect is mutual.

4.2.4 Organizational culture

According to the literature I read before my interviews I know that Swedish companies like to have open discussions to welcome the opinions from their employees. Therefore, during my interviews, I ask my participants if they are welcome to express their ideas or not. All of them admit this common organizational culture here.

Xi: "In Swedish companies, we can express our ideas freely. Sometimes my managers even encourage us to say something during the meetings, it is different from the organizational culture in China, in which we are not that welcome to say something. You know, managers are the bosses, ha ha."

Before Xi comes to Sweden, he worked in his previous company in China for several years. Therefore, he experiences the different organizational culture in China and

Sweden. He thinks he is flexible because he can work in a hierarchical environment and in a flat hierarchy company.

Lin: "I like the work environment here in Sweden, it is flexible and free. When I used to work in China, only when our ideas are creative then our managers would welcome them. Otherwise, you would better listen to others. Here the discussion is more open."

Lin also has work experience in China, but he prefers the organizational culture in Sweden. As an engineer, he wants his ideas to be accepted by others, then he will feel motivated to do more.

Those two participants have the experiences both work in Chinese companies and Swedish companies, they see the differences they make the comparison. From their answers, I see that they can accept the Swedish organizational here. Hence, they also working here.

Xu: "*Of course, in Sweden, all the employees are welcome to express their opinions. They want innovations. I used to work in China, you know China cares more about the efficiency because the market is competitive. Here is Sweden, efficiency is not as important as innovation. So, it is common to see that there are lot of never-ending discussions, which means no decisions will be made. Everyone shares their ideas, but no one makes decisions. This situation sometimes confuses me, sometimes I could not see the meaning of some discussions.*"

This participant is the only one who talks about his attitudes towards the endless discussions. In Sweden, the ideas of employees are always more important than making decisions immediately.

4.2.5 Work-life balance

When I ask my participants how their relationship is with their colleagues, they share another interesting thing with me, which is their work-life balance.

Xi: "My colleagues go home directly when they finish their work. They seldom stay to work extra hours or even on weekends. It is impossible for them to do so. I have a good relationship with my colleagues because they are helpful and professional. But our interactions are only during our working hours, when we finish our work of course, we prefer to go home. Work-life balance is highly emphasized here."

Xi praises highly of his colleagues and appreciates their professional attitudes and behaviors. Influenced by the organizational culture in his company, he enjoys work-life balance now, which is different from China, but Xi says he can understand and accept it here. He then shares his thoughts about living abroad, he thinks that it is important to know the rules and accept them in the host country.

Yu: "I am not sure if you heard about work-life balance before, which is important in Swedish companies. You know that I work in a Swedish company, even when I used to work in Chinese branch, our managers also encourage us to achieve work-life balance. Working extra hours is not acknowledged in my company. Managers suppose their employees should be efficient to finish their daily tasks rather than work long hours."

As I mentioned before, Yu comes to Sweden because of her job relocation. Since she works in the Swedish company, she experiences similar organizational culture in both countries. Work-life balance is regarded as significant value shared by the whole company. She then tells me that she likes work-life balance in her company, because she could spend more time with her daughter.

4.2.6 The importance of family

Family is emphasized in Swedish society, so I come up with the question how they think of their job, as a source of income or a source of self-fulfillment? My participants share their opinions with me.

Xu: "I think my job is a source of income here. Why? As an engineer, you know if I went back to China several years ago, now I may become a millionaire. Some of my former colleagues in China, they establish their own companies, they can earn a lot of money now, ha ha. But since I have been here for so many years, I think I am influenced by the national value-family here, I feel that my family is more important than my job. I like the flexibility of my job, because I can take care of my kids. If something happens to my children, I can leave my company earlier. It is understandable in Swedish companies."

Xu says when he used to work in China, he does not think that family is that important, sometimes he prefers to spend time with his friends and colleagues. When he come here, he is influenced by the family concept here. He has worked for his company for ten years as an engineer. Several years ago, if he gave up the job here and went back to China, his salary may be much higher than now. However, he admits that he is influenced by the family concept, for him the happiness of his family is more important than money. Now he prioritizes his family over his work.

Xi: "Absolutely a source of income, sorry I am a little bit negative, but yeah, for me my job is a source of living. Considerable income is the attractive factor for me to work here, because it can ensure a good living condition of my family. It is common at here that family is the most important thing in local people's lives."

Xi admits that he is a little bit realistic, why he does this job is because of the salary. So now for him, he just wants to finish his assignments and go home on time. Considerable salary is the most important thing which can ensure the living conditions

of his family.

Lin: "I see my job as self-fulfillment first, because it is very fascinating and I have no idea if I do not do this job what kind of jobs can I do. By doing this job, I could afford my family that is perfect for me. But I find that in Sweden people also think their jobs are a source of living to them."

Lin likes his present job, he feels motivated when he does his job assignments. He cares more about doing some research in his professional fields than getting promoted to a higher position. So, he is satisfied with his job, because he can do what he likes at the same time he can afford to support his family.

Some of my participants merely see their jobs as their source of income and that could be seen as a little bit negative, however, why they regard their jobs like this is because of their family. Influenced by the Swedish national culture, and how their colleagues and local people do, all my participants who get married, think family is the most important thing in their life now. Some of my participants come to Sweden with their wives and children, they think their main responsibility here is to make sure they provide for their families and give them a good living conditions.

4.3 Influential factors of the adjustment process

It seems that my participants adapt well to the national and organizational culture in Sweden. Their experiences aroused my curiosity as to why and how they can adjust themselves to these cultural aspects in a positive way. Thus, I developed my interview questions to dig into the reasons behind this phenomenon. The first reason some of my participants pointed out was their personality trait of open-mindedness.

4.3.1 The importance of openness

When I analyze the process my participants adjust themselves to Sweden, I found that

they are very open-minded. Firstly, they like to experience new life; secondly; they welcome new changes and challenges, they try to know more about the Swedish traditions. Here I emphasize the role openness plays in cross-cultural adjustment, and openness refers to the open attitude toward different situations and opinions.

During the interviews, I find when I ask about difficulties or different feelings in Sweden, most of them answered no apparent difficulties. Then I began to feel curious about how did they manage to only have few problems or obstacles about their jobs or lives. I asked a question: "*Which personality or attitude do you think it influences your adjustment process.*" They answered a similar answer: openminded.

Zha: "When I went to my company I was just a graduate, of course I met some problems. But I like difficulties, and they force me learn new things. Every time I have a new customer, I learn relevant vocabulary in order to know more about that field. After I come to my company, I feel like I am learning new things every day. Sometimes my boss even asks me how to solve problems."

From the attitude toward learning Swedish and Swedish food, Zha shows her open-mindedness to me. She welcomes new challenges and new culture, she always tries to do everything she can. I can feel her eager to involve in Swedish society.

Xue: "The reason why I want to come to Sweden is because I want to experience a new environment, so when I come here, I feel excited to see new things and new changes of my life. When I meet problems at work, I prefer to figure out what is wrong with my project. Maybe this is what engineers always do."

Since Xue worked in China and Sweden, she sees some differences but she likes differences. She thinks differences mean changes and changes mean challenges.

Zhan: "Since you come work here, you have to accept the traditions in Sweden. I am not afraid to

welcome new things. I think I am an open-minded person, ha ha."

Zhan comes to Sweden for his master's degree eight years ago. He goes to his current company after graduation and he works as a software developer now. He enjoys working there, because he can always try new things and his company gives them the opportunity to choose the department they like.

Different people have different personalities. My participants have different personalities, which influence their various attitudes. However, it is easy to see that open-minded people prefer to meet new challenges, that is no wonder they choose to work or study abroad. With an open attitude, even when they confront with unexpected things, they still keep a positive mindset.

4.3.2 Previous knowledge of living abroad.

I started my interviews by asking my interviewees about their first weeks in Sweden, and they shared their stories with me.

Xue: "When you go to a new environment you first have to figure out your surroundings. So, during my first weeks I found out where the bus station was, where the supermarket was, and of course went to IKEA to buy some furniture to decorate my new apartment."

Xue and her husband used to work in the Beijing branch of an international company for three years as software testing engineers, then her husband found there were some vacancies in Sweden. They began to consider moving to Sweden, to try something new. Then they applied for jobs in Sweden, luckily both of them got offers. They have now been in Sweden for one year.

In my follow-up questions, I ask my participants about whether they experience difficulties or differences in living abroad – some of them answer no. They attribute

this to their previous study or work experience. Moreover, some of them had done some research about Sweden before they came here, so they do not experience many big difficulties either. The previous experience of living abroad is mentioned in the literature, which says that if people have such experience it will be easier for them to adjust themselves to the host country. However, this is not what I expected to find at the beginning of my interviews, because I suppose they come to work in Sweden directly. Surprisingly, most of my participants have this experience. Even though one of my participants has never been to Sweden, he did some research about his new environment before he came to the country.

- Previous study experience abroad.

Ku: "Well, since I had one year's exchange experience in the UK, I am familiar with life overseas, so I did not experience any big difficulties and adjusted quickly. But my life was a little bit boring at the beginning because I only had two places to go, one is my home, another one is my office…"

Ku has been Sweden for seven years; he came to Sweden for his Ph.D., and is now working in a biochemistry company. Before moving to Lund, he used to live in another city. He experienced five years' of a rather simple existence in his former city with only two places to go every day: his home and his office. But due to his one year exchange experience in the UK, he adjusts himself to Sweden quickly.

Zha: "I had one year's exchange experience before in Finland. This one year experience influenced me a lot. At the beginning, I did not plan to do my master's degree abroad, but when I went to Finland, I found that Nordic countries have quite a good environment, people are friendly and everything looks so beautiful here, so I decided to live here. So, when I went back to China, I began to apply for the universities in Sweden and Denmark. In the end, I got an offer from one university in Sweden; I felt so happy when I got the offer. Because of my exchange experience, when I came here I did not experience any big difficulties or differences."

Zha came to Sweden for her master's degree. She had an unforgettable experience in Finland, but during her stay there she seldom made friends with foreigners, which was a shame for her. So, when she comes to Sweden, she decides to do something different, she becomes outgoing and welcomes any differences here. For her, she does not experience any difficulties, because she had already experienced similar cultural differences in Finland. Because of the previous study experience of Ku and Zha, they adjust themselves to Sweden quickly.

- Previous work experience abroad

Xue: "Nothing special for me. Before I moved to Sweden, I came to Sweden several times a year for business trips, not to Lund but to other cities in Sweden, but all the cities are quite similar in Sweden. So, I did not experience any big difficulties. About differences, I still remember it was a Saturday when I arrived. I wanted to visit Lund the next day, but when I went out, I found only a few people on the street and all the shops were closed. I was a little bit surprised. Because in China, the streets and shops are always crowded, especially during weekends."

Xue works for a Swedish company that developed into an international company and has a lot of branches all over the world. Since the headquarters is in Sweden, the employees from other offices have to go to Sweden for some conferences or training.

It is interesting to note that three of my participants have previous study experience and four of my participants have previous work experience. The rest of my participants did some research about their host country before they came to Sweden so they do not experience any big difficulties either.

- Prior research on the host country

Lin: "Before I finally decided to come to work in Sweden, I did some research about this country, such as the customs, culture and climate. I even read some Swedish history. I just thought that I should know something about my new environment, at least some basic information. I know what is allowed here, and I know what is not acceptable here. I had some previous knowledge about Sweden. I think it is because of the research I did. So, when I came here I did not experience any big difficulties."

Lin was found by a headhunting company four years ago; a Swedish company gave him an offer to work as a software developer. Considering the natural environment in Sweden, he also wanted to give his children a better environment to grow up in, so he decided to come to Sweden. He did not have any previous experience of living abroad, but before he came to Sweden, he read some articles and books that introduced the traditions in Sweden, the weather in Sweden and so on. When he finally came to Sweden, he did not have to confront any big difficulties in Lund because he already had some previous knowledge of his new life in Sweden.

Four of my participants come to Sweden several times a year because of business trips. So, they do not feel unfamiliar with this country, which helps them reduce some uncertainties about their future life in Lund. For the other three participants who come to Sweden to pursue their degrees, even though they had not come to Sweden before, they had previous experience of studying abroad so they know what life abroad will be like. Therefore, they adjust themselves to Sweden quickly.

Take my participant Lin for example. He did not have any previous abroad work or study experience, but he did some research about Sweden before he came here. Therefore, he was to some extent prepared to live in a new environment with some previous knowledge. As he explains, he did not come to travel, he came for a new job, so it is better that he could know something about this country.

According to my analysis of the contents of my interviews and the literature, previous abroad experience or some knowledge about host country helps participants better adjust to life in Sweden. They have some previous knowledge about what their lives would be like and what they were expected to do in an unfamiliar environment. In other words, their worries about life abroad are less than those who are abroad for the first time, since they have already experienced some difficulties before. This time they know how to act appropriately and deal with different situations. At least some basic information is necessary for life in the host country.

4.3.3 Cultural similarities

At the end of my interviews I ask my participants: *"Where do you see yourself in the future?"* Surprisingly, they answer Sweden. Some of them explain that they want to stay because of the pleasant natural environment, good salaries and work-life balance in the country. In my last interview with Yu, she points out the underlying reason for wanting to stay in Sweden.

Yu: "Do you know that in Sweden there is a culture called "lagom"? Which shares the similar values with "Zhongyong" in Chinese traditional culture. We can find a work-life balance here, we do not need to work extra hours, we do not experience traffic jams here. "Zhongyong" proposes a peaceful life style, we can find our "Zhongyong" in Sweden. That is the reason why I see myself here."

After Yu mentions this, I begin to realize that China and Sweden are not entirely different, but share some values in common, such as the pursuit of a peaceful life. Her opinion allows me to see this study from another perspective and focus on similarities as well as differences.

In summary, in this chapter I analyzed my empirical findings by dividing them into three categories: previous knowledge of living abroad; not integrating into Sweden;

acceptance of the Swedish culture. They helped me to develop the coherence of my analysis. To find something deep in those findings, some themes have sub-themes, such as the "previous knowledge of abroad". According to the answers from my participants, I can see that different people have different opinions, the diverse backgrounds enable me to see different perspectives of their working lives here. Consequently, I find something interesting for example, when talking about the "Acceptance of the Swedish culture" part, most of my participants express their willingness to accept the organizational culture and work language-English here. In next chapter, I will discuss the relationship between the empirical findings and the literature.

5 Discussion

I presented my empirical findings in the previous chapter. Relating them to the literature review in chapter 2, I found that some findings confirm the existing literature while other findings differ from them. The similarities and differences between the literature and the findings will be discussed in this chapter.

5.1 A successful adjustment?

5.1.1 Cons

In Hofstede's cultural model (1991), China and Sweden are portrayed with different cultures, in some aspects as having opposing cultures such as different national and organizational culture (Łopacińska, 2012). Therefore, Chinese workers who work in Sweden are assumed to have a great deal of culturally adjustment problems (Selmer, 2002).

In general, the study of cross-cultural adjustment is measured by three dimensions as proposed by Black & Gregersen (1991), which are work, general and interaction adjustment. Few studies of cross-cultural adjustment have been done from the perspective of foreign employees (Albrecht et al. 2014). According to the three dimensions, my participants do not adjust themselves well to Sweden, because they encounter some difficulties. For example, problems arise in the dimension of "general adjustment" where food is one factor (Black & Gregersen, 1991). As I introduced in the last chapter, only one participant is trying to adjust her culinary tastes to Swedish tastes. My participants still keep their Chinese tastes, they can accept Swedish dishes, but they do not want to change their Chinese tastes. Another problem is "interaction adjustment" (Black & Gregersen, 1991), which refers to the communication with the host country. Few of my participants can speak Swedish, which means they are unable to have direct interactions with Swedish culture, for instance reading the Swedish newspapers or

watching Swedish TV shows. If they want to know what is happening, they must ask for help from Swedish speaking people. Finally, they do not have many local friends here, which means they do not have many local social interactions.

According to the above factors, none of my participants have a satisfactory adjustment here, because they have the aforementioned problems. Especially when it comes to the problem of language, which is an apparent barrier for foreign workers living in the host country (Ling & Vesa, 2016). As I mentioned in the previous chapter, for those Chinese knowledge workers who work in Sweden they usually have two language barriers: English and Swedish, one is the work language another is the official language in Sweden. Therefore, they confront more difficulties than other knowledge workers here such as English knowledge workers.

Communication is the basic need for everyone, without knowing the host language, it is difficult to acquire local information from local people (Ling & Vesa, 2016). According to the studies from Lauring (2008) and Peltokorpi (2007), in a society different languages divide people into groups automatically. This means that if you can speak the language then you are part of the "in-groups", otherwise you will be in the "out-groups" (Zhang & Peltokorpi, p.1450, 2016). When local people use local language to communicate with each other, people who cannot speak the language will be excluded from the conversations automatically. Whoever lives in a country need to have some connection with the local society, the language proficiency decides upon the intensity of their "social interaction" (Ling & Vesa, p.1451, 2016). As Giles and Byrne (1992) claim that, the influences of language on social interaction are the psychological and functional barriers. Psychological barriers refer to the connection with the host country, while functional barriers stand for the communication with local people. Moreover, Black (1987) declares that the degree that people feel psychological comfort is the standard to see whether they adjust themselves to host country or not. Once they fail to have this connection, then they will not have the social identity as local people,

their cross-cultural adjustment to some extent is not complete.

Most of my participants cannot speak Swedish, which is an obstacle they are aware of but which they cannot solve, because they have to work and take care of their family here. Also, they are not motivated to learn Swedish because their work language is English and making friends is not easy for my participants. Those situations gradually exclude them from local society. As Ling and Vesa (2016) claim, language is the key to social interaction, if they cannot speak Swedish, they have to depend on others to tell them what is going on in Sweden, because some news in Sweden is written in Swedish. They are not able to have direct communication with this country even Lund. It seems that no matter how long my participants have been in Sweden, they still have lack of social interaction and social identity problems

5.1.2 Pros

Most relevant studies about cross-cultural adjustment use the aforementioned dimensions to determinate if the adjustment is successful or not (Albrecht et al. 2014). However, in my study, I argue that it is more complex than what is pictured in the literature, and I present another perspective on a successful cultural adjustment. Using the present case study. Firstly, the widespread and good level of English in Sweden ensures that as long as people are proficient in English, they should not encounter difficulties during their stay in the country. Secondly, Sweden as an individualist country (Hofstede, 2001), the connections between people is not tight. Lastly, family is highly emphasized here. Therefore, in Sweden friends are important, but not as important as family. Considering the particular social facts here in Sweden, I argue that my participants have a successful adjustment. Because they culturally adjust themselves here, they accept the national culture and organizational culture. For my participants, the above problems are not crucial to their life, as long as they can perform well in their organizations.

In general, if the host country and the home country hold entirely different cultures, then it is more difficult for foreign workers to adjust to host country (Selmer, 2002). Also, since China and Sweden have different values, those Chinese knowledge workers are supposed to have difficulties adjusting themselves to work (Selmer, 2002). However, when I review the contents of "Acceptance of the Swedish culture", most of them are related to their work here, such as, work-life balance and conflict management, which are the organizational culture of their companies. Also, language here refers to English, which is their work language. No matter what kind of problems my participants are confronted at work, they usually have positive attitudes toward them because they come to work in Sweden, anything relates to their work they must figure it out.

Firstly, I want to talk about conflict management. As Marjaana, Christopher and Vas (2016) claim, how individuals will react when they are confronted with conflicts is influenced by their national culture. Cultural conflicts are inevitable because of the different cultural backgrounds of different individuals (Peng & Tjosvold, 2011). Ting-Toomey and Kurogi (1998) further claim that the national culture influences people's different styles to cope conflicts. Those Chinese knowledge workers are to some extent influenced by traditional culture, which encourages them to avoid conflicts with others due to social face concerns, which means that they not only care about their own 'faces', but also the 'faces' of other people (Peng & Tjosvold, 2011). They think it is impolite to point out others' problems' directly. Face concern culture can be traced back to ancient China, since there is an old saying: Before you do something, please think about others' faces (Peter, Matthew, Goksu, Celikkol, Sylvia, Hu & Muhammad, 2015).

Some researchers point out that as collectivists, Chinese people care about the relationship with others and the profits of the group not individuals (Peng & Tjosvold, 2011). Therefore, they often avoid conflicts with others and control their emotions. Take my participant Zha, for example, an individual who was influenced by the social face concern. She wanted to keep a harmonious relationship with her foreign colleague.

At the beginning, she chose not to say anything, and tried to tolerate her colleague's frank attitude. But why did she eventually get into conflicts with her co-worker? It is because she realized that she was working in Sweden, a place where open conflicts are welcome and pointing out others' problems is regarded as way to better solve problems. Therefore, she changed her way of managing conflicts in order to act properly in her organization. This change in her attitude and that of another participant, Xu, can be understood by referring to another literature. According to Peng and Tjosvold (2011), they found that Chinese workers may change their ways to cope with conflicts when they feel that the social face concern is no longer emphasized in the new environment. They know they can speak out their feelings or thoughts directly since they are now working with foreigners not just Chinese managers or workers.

Secondly, I want to discuss my participants' acceptance of the Swedish national culture and organizational culture. They know that in Sweden, family is usually emphasized as the most important thing to everyone. Some of my participants share their experiences of being influenced by this national value with me, such as Xu. Now, like other Swedish people, my participants also think that family is more important than other things to them. Considering the importance of family (Hofstede, 2001), my participants also adjust themselves to work-life balance because they want to spend more time with their family. They enjoy spending time with their children to have outdoor activities or travel to other places.

Yu: "You know, because of the work-life balance in my company, I can go home and cook dinner for my daughter every day. I do appreciate the time I spend with her. During my last Christmas' vacation we traveled to France and Spain."

Lin: "I have a son and a daughter, so I need more time to take care of them. Luckily, I have flexible working hours which allow me to adjust the time to better take care of my children,"

From their descriptions, I see that they share the same national and organizational culture as Swedish people. As Black (1987) claims that a successful adjustment is that the people know the norms and values in the host country, as long as they can accept them, then it can be seen as a successful adjustment. My participant Xu shares the same opinions with Black (1987), he thinks that the key to live successfully in the host country is to follow the rules here.

In Sweden, even though Swedish is important but not the most important factor which can influence my participants' job performance or general communication. The low or noon-existent level in Swedish may result in the lack of social activities, however, as Sweden is an individualist country, the connection between each other is not that tight, maybe they feel uncomfortable at the beginning, because it is different from China where the relationship with others is emphasized, but now my participants entirely adjust to it. This is because some of my participants come to Sweden with their family, whose members are also Chinese. Therefore, my participants do not need to speak Swedish both at home and work place.

Considering the special social facts in Sweden, I think my participants have gone through successful adjustments. They accept the determining factors, such as the national values and organizational culture, which play the crucial role in culturally adjustment. They have positive attitudes toward their jobs, they willingly to solve problems from their work, they welcome differences and challenges. They try to have good job performance to afford their families. As for work adjustment, they are successful. I think in the adjustment process, food preferences are not that necessary to change, as my participants say they can accept Swedish dishes, but they do not need and want to change their tastes. As long as they can find ingredients here, they can cook Chinese dishes then it is not a problem for them to live here. Swedish, food, not make many friends here, are problems for my participants but they are not influential factors to define a successful adjustment.

5.2 Influential factors of a successful adjustment

In this study, I argue that my participants adjust themselves to Sweden. I also claim that the following factors to some extent influence their adjustment processes.

5.2.1 Previous knowledge of living abroad

According to Black & Gregersen (1991), there are two adjustments which facilitate the process of cross-cultural adjustment, one is anticipatory adjustment another one is the in-country adjustment. The previous abroad experience is the anticipatory adjustment, which is divided into individual and organizational anticipatory adjustment (Black & Gregersen, 1991). In my empirical findings, some of my participants have the individual anticipatory adjustment. Because three of my participants have previous abroad study experience and one participant does some research before he comes to Sweden. The rest of my participants have previous work experience from abroad, which is emphasized by some researchers regarding its influence on the adjustment process (Pinder & Walter, 1984).

However, according to the experiences of my participants, I argue that this is not a comprehensive understanding. Since some of my participants have previous study experience and one participant does some previous research about Sweden, those experiences also help them reduce some uncertainties of the new environment. Therefore, I agree with Black and Gregersen (1991) that suggest that as long as people have previous abroad experience, they will more easily adjust to the host country especially in the work adjustment, because the information from previous experience helps them prepare for adjusting to life in the host country.

5.2.2 Personality trait-openness

Different participants have different personal experiences or different attitudes. Yet, I find that they have one thing in common: their openness. The openness of my participants explains that they decided to come to work in Sweden to experience a new working and living environment. Albrecht et al (2014) claim that openness influences the individuals' choices to work in foreign countries. As aforementioned, since China and Sweden hold different national and organizational cultures, there are supposed to be some misunderstandings caused by cultural shock (Albrecht et al. 2014). Also different from traveling to a different country for a short vacation, working and living in a different country require the openness of individuals to embrace differences and challenges (Albrecht et al. 2014). In the following empirical findings, from the answers to the question of work obstacles. I see that my participants like to welcome new changes and challenges from their work. They are not afraid of difficulties; when they are confronted with problems, they try to solve them as soon as possible.

Ji: "The reason why I came to study in Sweden was because I wanted to experience culture. Also when I came to Sweden I was only 24 years old, I think I was quite open-minded at the moment. I was curious about everything and always wanted to try new things. So I think I quickly adjusted to Sweden."

My participant Ji has been in Sweden for so many years, but she still remembers what happened when she came here. As she explains, because of her openness, she welcomes everything new into her life.

Allport (1937) proposes the Big 5 Traits theory, which includes: openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism. Other researchers further develop the personality traits theory and as mentioned before, no matter how it is developed, openness or open-mindedness is invariably included in their work (Zee & Oudenhoven, 2000). Therefore, in my study I argue that openness plays an important

role in cross-cultural adjustment, which refers to an open attitude toward different situations and the flexibility of individuals to adapt when they are in a new environment (Dan, Susan & Cherries, 2013).

Before I argue for the importance of openness, the influence of personality traits on adjustment process will be first addressed. As I mentioned before, personality traits are something inherent of individuals that decides the way people think and act (Shaffer et al. 2006). At the same time, how people perceive their new environment and behave themselves in the host country are deciding factors in their adjustment process (Wang et al. 2013). In the study of the Big Five personality traits, openness is thought to be closely related to work adjustment (Liu & Huang, 2015). Since my main study question is the working life experience of my participants, I emphasize the importance of openness in my research. My participants all work in international organizations, where they inevitably encounter different values and opinions from their colleagues and the different organizational cultures, their openness help them to accept those differences and act flexibly (Albrecht et al. 2014). The degree my participants accept their organizational culture and the willingness of adjusting to their existing work preferences, such as ways to make task plans, influence how their job performance will be.

5.2.3 Cultural similarities between Sweden and China - "Lagom" & "Zhongyong"

Despite the aforementioned well-known, general influential factors, here in my study I want to argue that there exist some cultural similarities between China and Sweden that are often neglected in the cultural studies that compare the two countries. In order to comprehensively and accurately understand and interpret these two cultures, the cultural similarities should be taken into consideration, because they play an important role in the work and non-work life of my participants. When I ask my participants' future plans they all see their future in Sweden, which arouses my curiosity. I wonder

why they want to stay in Sweden, despite many cultural and linguistic differences between China and Sweden. When I dig into the cultures in those two countries, I find something in common, which can be used to explain why those Chinese knowledge workers want to stay here. The cultural model of Hofstede (1991) cannot be used to analyse every country, because each country has its individual differences (Gunkel et al. 2016). When digging into the traditional values, I surprisingly find that the two countries share some values in common. In Sweden, there is a particular culture named "lagom," which can be traced back to Viking Age, referring to the tradition that make sure everyone receives the same amount of food and drinks (Williams & Devine, 2005). There is no direct English word which is equivalent to it, however, according to the meaning of "lagom," it is understood as enough or just enough, sufficient, and just right (Williams & Devine, 2005). Creo (2014, p.156) further explains it as "meeting the in the middle satisfied."

In China, there is also a similar culture, which is Zhongyong and people translated it as "The doctrine of the mean" (Yuan & Chia, 2011, p.436). There are two approaches to explain "Zhongyong", one is "harmony" (Yuan & Chia, 2011, p.437), which refers to a harmonious social situation and interpersonal relationship. Another one is "never go too extreme" (Yuan & Chia, 2011, p.437). When analyzing the inside meaning of them, I find that the two cultures advocate a similar value and that is the pursue of balance and moderation, not too much or too little. Moderation is always the best policy (Yuan & Chia, 2011). Influenced by this traditional culture, my participants find their "Zhongyong" here, which is in accordance with "lagom" in Sweden. Like my participant Xi, he gives up the opportunity to become rich and chooses to stay here because for him material wealth is not as important as psychological well-being. While in Sweden work-life balance is highly emphasized so he finds his "Zhongyong" here.

Above are my discussions of my empirical findings. I interpret differently than the literature regarding what a successful adjustment means. In this study, the host country

Sweden, has its own particular social facts, such as the importance of family and the wide spread of English. Those national and organizational values influence how my participants experience their work and non-work life here. Furthermore, I discuss the important factors of a successful adjustment, to explore what influence the process for my participants to adjust to Sweden. Finally, I find that China and Sweden share the same moderation policy, which affects how my participants perceive their current working life and overall future life in Sweden.

6 Conclusion

The aim of this research paper is to study how Chinese knowledge workers experience their working life in Sweden, with the help of my personal experience and theory I gathered in the literature. At the beginning of this study, I assumed that Chinese knowledge workers are confronted by many difficulties and differences. I planned to have a case study to explore the relevant studies about cross-cultural adjustment. The whole study aimed to answer my main research question: How Chinese knowledge workers experience their working lives in Sweden? I chose to use a qualitative research method and to conduct semi-structured interviews, which helped me to explore in-depth the main issues of my study. A good qualitative research does not only enable me to have theoretical contributions but also practical contributions. I interviewed ten individuals who are currently employed in Lund. The different backgrounds of my participants allowed me to explore this study from different perspectives, such as the different definitions of the culturally adjusted in the host country.

The main question of this study is about the working experiences of Chinses knowledge workers, who work in Sweden now. However, in the study of cross-cultural adjustment, work and non-work experiences are related to each other, which is exemplified in my empirical findings part. Therefore, the study focuses mainly on the work experience of Chinese knowledge workers but the non-work related experiences are also part of the investigation. The main theoretical model of this study is the cross-cultural adjustment, which is defined as the degree that foreign workers feel comfortable in the host country (Black, 1987). Black and Gergresen (2001) then propose that cross-cultural adjustment is multidimensional, which encompasses three dimensions; namely, work adjustment, general adjustment and interaction adjustment. The definition of cross-cultural and the three dimensions lay the theoretical foundation for my study.

6.1 Main findings

6.1.1 Positive influence of the previous abroad knowledge

As most of my participants share their relevant experiences to me, I begin to realize that the anticipatory adjustment from the study of Black and Gergresen (2001), is confirmed in my study. Because some of my participants have precious study experiences which helped them to be able to better adjust to Sweden. I see this as one of my theoretical contributions. When talking about previous experience all kinds of previous experiences should be taken into consideration.

6.1.2 Different definition of a successful adjustment

As discussed above, different countries should have different principles to define if foreign workers have a successful adjustment or not and the definition should consider the opinions of them (Albrecht et al. 2014). Because my participants came voluntarily to work in Sweden, they try to accept the organizational cultures in their companies and adjust their behaviors to fit in the shared organizational culture, e.g. they begin to express their opinions and try to have an open approach to manage conflict. Moreover, they are now sharing the same national culture, the importance of family, as other Swedes. Culture is related to values and norms (Łopacińska, 2012), from my empirical findings my participants share the values and behave themselves here.

6.1.3 Cultural similarities between China and Sweden

Many researchers portray China and Sweden as different countries and the organizations in them share opposing organizational cultures. However, as my participant pointed out and my further study, I found that China and Sweden share some values in common, that is the pursuit of moderation, not too much or not too little. This pursuit influences how Chinese knowledge workers see their work and non-work life here in Sweden.

6.1.4 The importance of openness

Some of my participants attribute their good work adjustment to their openness. This personality trait firstly attracts my participants to work abroad and then enables them to be positive and welcome challenges in the host country. They use their openness to solve the problems of their work such as, they practice English to communicate with their colleagues and express their opinions. To have a successful adjustment, openness is fundamental and necessary trait of foreign workers.

Above are the main findings of my study. As I discussed in the previous chapter, some of my findings confirm the existing literature, such as personality traits and anticipatory adjustments; some of my findings suggest the need to understand the definition of a successful adjustment from another perspective by taking the particular features of the host country into consideration. Lastly, some of my findings are different from precious studies, such as that China and Sweden share the policy of moderation in common.

6.2 Theoretical and practical contributions

The theoretical contribution of my study is a new interpretation of a successful adjustment, which was dominantly defined as the psychological well-being of both work and non-work adjustment (Black and Gregersen, 1991). But in this thesis, I argue that to define a successful adjustment is more complex because the different facets of work and non-work adjustment do not only help us to understand if people adjust themselves successfully or not. However, different countries have different facets. In my study, my participants cannot speak Swedish, they still keep their Chinese tastes and are not making many local friends. However, my participants culturally adjusted themselves to their work, which means that they can accept the shared values in their workplace. Moreover, the language problem of low Swedish language proficiency, food and the interrelationships with others are not emphasized in Sweden. Therefore, I see

the successful adjustment from the cultural aspect. To better understand what a successful adjustment means, the social aspects should be taken into consideration, and the principles should be adjusted according the situations of individuals.

The first practical contribution of my study is for organizations in Sweden. My study shows how those Chinese knowledge workers adjust themselves here. In the empirical findings part, I see the negotiation from my participants between their work place and private life. As my participants mentioned in the interviews, they appreciate the work-life balance and the emphasis of family here. Also, they can find their "Zhongyong", which shares similar values as "lagom" in Sweden. Those facts are the attractions, which attract my participants see their future in Sweden. Therefore, for organizations that want to hire Chinese knowledge workers in the future, they should understand that the work-life balance is important to Chinese knowledge workers as it is one of the major benefits of working in Sweden.

The second practical contribution is the suggestions for those Chinese knowledge workers who want to come to work in Sweden someday. They should be prepared that in Sweden there are some cultural differences from China, even though Swedish language is not the main obstacle if they want to deeply involved into Swedish society it is better to learn it.

6.3 Further study about Chinese knowledge workers in Sweden

As mentioned before, there is a limitation of my study that is I only interviewed Chinese knowledge workers here, none of their managers or peers were interviewed. Also, allowing my interviewees to answer me in their native language could give me a better insight into the topic. In further studies, researchers can do a more comprehensive research by interviewing the managers and peers of participants to see how they perceive their relationships and their job performance. This could greatly improve the validity and reliability of the empirical findings. In my study, few participants admitted

that they have problems to finish their tasks and most of them said that they have good relationships with their managers and peers.

I, therefore conclude my empirical findings according to what my participants said in the interviews. Which means I only see it from my participants' point of views. I suggest that further study can also focus on other individuals, because this approach can give more possibilities, such as in my study different participants have different attitudes toward Swedish and food. If the participants come from the same organization, then researchers will not be able to see if there are other different values shared in Sweden. Some of my empirical findings can be seen as inspirations of new studies, researchers can develop their own new approaches and new methods for this study.

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Appendix

Interview guide

- Basic information
- Name
- Age
- Gender
- How long have you been in Sweden?
- Why you come to Sweden?

- Life in Sweden
- Describe your first weeks or 2 months in Sweden? (any specific events in mind, feelings?). Follow-up questions: differences that you notice, similarities, difficulties?
- How long did it take for you to feel comfortable in Sweden?
- Can you speak Swedish now? Do you have the plan to study Swedish? Why?
- Do you have Swedish friends? How do you describe your relationship?

- Work in Sweden

1.Relation to company
- How do you describe your company? Do you enjoy working here? What do you enjoy the most?
- How many Swedish employees in your company, how many Chinese employees in your company?
2.Relation to work
- What' your position there? / Describe a typical working day.
- How long have you been this company?
- Do you remember your first day at work (in Sweden)? Can you describe it? Before you start working, did you receive any trainings? Did your company tell you something about Swedish culture or your organizational culture?
- How do you like your working environment?
- How do you like your job? A source of living or a source of self-fulfillment?
- Do you think that you are welcomed to express yourself?
- How do you think of your personal potential? Are they achieved in your company?
- Do you have any difficulties in finishing your task on time at the beginning of your work?
3.Relation to manager
- Do you remember the first time you met your manager? What did you think of your manager? What did you talk about?
- Do you enjoy working here? Do you think you are motivated to do your job or

just to finish a task?

- Can you share your fist achievement of your job?
- How would you describe the communication between your managers and you? If you have conflicts how would you solve it?
- Did you encounter any obstacles of your job?
- How would you describe the relationship between you and your peers? Let them come up with the description. Do you think that you are working toward the same direction?
- How often do you usually have meetings? What's the form of your meetings? Does anyone in your company should attend?
- How do you think of your managers? Would they tell you what to do, how to do? Or just let you make your own plan to do something?
- Where do you see yourself in the future? New jobs and why? New country and why? New company and why?
- Do you want to stay in Sweden or go back to China?