

From East to West: A Phenomenological Study of Mainland Chinese Expatriates'

International Adjustment Experiences in the U.S. Workplace

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

In this era of globalization, the importance of international assignments in multinational corporations is constantly growing. Previous studies have shown that, in late 1990s, nearly 80% of mid-sized and large companies have had employees working abroad, and 45% of these companies planned to increase the number of employees that they had on international assignments (Gregersen & Black, 1999). International assignments are important to the survival of global companies in the twenty-first century, and the numbers will continue to increase despite high financial and human capital costs (Marquardt, 1999). Accordingly, more and more people are being sent to foreign environments by their home country organizations.

For the people living in foreign environments and working on international assignments, Briscoe (1995) defined as “expatriate.” Numerous studies have been conducted to identify factors, interventions, and reasons of failure that affect expatriate’s cultural adjustment and work performance, such as cross-cultural training, spouse and family support, expatriate’s personal characteristics, expatriate selection, timing of delivering training, job characteristics, cultural novelty, and so on (e.g., Littrell, Salas, Hess, Paley, & Riedel, 2006). Expatriate development has become a significant issue for human resource development (HRD) research and practices (Osman-Gani & Tan, 2005).

International adjustment is a multidimensional construct, which makes the international adjustment experiences of expatriates unique and complex (Black &

Mendenhall, 1991). However, most of the extant literature on expatriate development was developed in the Western context, and the major theoretical frameworks were mainly developed and tested on Western expatriate samples.

China, as a rapidly growing nation, is inevitably getting involved in this globalization trend. The Chinese expatriates who are originally from mainland China (as known as the People's Republic of China) have shown a growing presence in the global market all over the world (Wood & El Mansour, 2010). However, little attention is paid to mainland Chinese expatriates who have been living and working in the Western context; and Chinese expatriate samples have not been well-represented in empirical studies (Wood & El Mansour, 2010). Quite a few empirical studies explored expatriates from Greater China areas, such as Hong Kong and Taiwan (e.g., Selmer & Shiu, 2009), which, however, could not fully represent mainland Chinese expatriates. Due to human complexity and the culturally bounded nature of management (Hofstede, 1983), it is not clear whether the Western-based expatriate development literature could be applicable and describe mainland Chinese expatriates' experiences and their international adjustment process.

Problem Statement

With the growth of global markets and emergence of Chinese multinationals, an increasing number of Chinese expatriates work overseas on international assignments. The issues of expatriate adjustment of Chinese expatriates working overseas are rarely discussed in the extant literature, despite the potential damage to company reputation and excessive costs that could result from failure in effective adjustment. Previous studies on

this topic have mostly focused on the adjustment of Western expatriates who are assigned in other nations (Black & Mendenhall, 1990). The extant literature has largely approached cross-cultural perspectives and experiences through a Western-centric lens (Nam, Cho, & Lee, 2014). With the constantly changing global economy and the rise of new super powers like China, multinational corporations from emerging economies have expanded the scale of their operators, by actively participating in global markets, and developing more business ties with overseas partners. One major limitation of previous studies, as demonstrated by Kim and Slocum (2008), is the applicability of findings from studies with American, European and Japanese expatriates to other samples with different social, economic, and cultural backgrounds. In the context of expatriate management in Chinese firms, the majority of studies have focused on Western expatriates in Greater China (Cooke, 2009). However, what has not been captured is the pattern of adjustment of Chinese expatriates working overseas. Since an increasing number of Chinese firms have recently become global operators, Cooke (2009) has called for research on “the key challenges in the management of Chinese expatriates abroad” (p. 25). There is a compelling need to shift from the Western-centric perspective, and understand the expatriate adjustment process and experiences when expatriates are moving from east to west.

Current research on Chinese multinational corporations’ expansion and development has mostly focused on issues at the macro-level, for example, environmental scanning and trends on economy and politics, analysis of the industries, strategies for globalization, and international operation (e.g., Deng, 2004; Liu & Shi,

2003; Wang, 2006). These studies have set a solid base for further research; however, there is an urgent need for future analysis to address issues at individual level, such as Chinese expatriates' adjustment and development, and its practical implications to organization development at Chinese multinational corporations (Xu & Du-Babcock, 2012). In line with the research needs, this phenomenological study is based on learning from authentic experiences of mainland Chinese expatriates through their narratives, and exploring the essence of their expatriation and adjustment, as well as how they make meaning of the process for themselves.

Research has demonstrated the significant impact of expatriate training and development on successful operation in international assignments. Much of the previous research on expatriate assignments has concentrated on reasons for failure and on the expatriation and repatriation stages of international assignments. Yet the question of what the actual experiences of expatriates' adaptation and adjustment have been like remains unclear. There is a dearth of literature about how expatriates make sense of a new cultural environments based on their own perceptions. Few studies have investigated the cross-cultural transition process that mainland Chinese expatriates are struggling with, and how they resolve the issues from their perspective grounded in their home culture.

Based on the issues described above, the problem addressed in this study can be summarized as that there is lack of research on mainland Chinese expatriate's lived experiences of international adjustment when they are living and working in the United States.

Need for the Study

Increasing Number of Mainland Chinese Expatriates in Other Countries

The research on mainland Chinese expatriates' lived experiences is in high demand, given that the number of Chinese professionals and managers working in Western countries is rapidly increasing. A decade ago, the literature was focusing mostly on Western expatriates living and working in Asian countries (e.g., Goodall, Li, & Warner, 2006; Selmer, 1999). However, in recent years, the trend has changed: more and more Chinese expatriates are being sent on international assignments in Western nations due to multinational corporations' transnational expansion (Adler, 2008; Mendenhall, 2006; Tung, 1998). Thus, the current literature and cross-cultural training strategies, which were mainly developed for Western expatriate managers, are significantly challenged by the "new blood" of Chinese expatriates population. Recent reports have emphasized the need for Chinese organizations to develop strategies in order to assist Chinese professionals and managers in better accomplishing international assignments overseas (Wood & El Mansour, 2010).

Uniqueness of Chinese Culture

Chinese expatriates may face numerous tensions besides the common challenges experienced by any expatriate from any country may experience, given the uniqueness of Chinese culture and context. Wang (2007) asserted that Chinese expatriates who work in the Western context are facing tensions between cultural roots and a foreign value system, between a sense of loyalty and betrayal, between family and work, between

personal desires and collective needs, between home and foreign lands, and between change and stability.

Chinese ways of thinking and behaving are guided by Confucianism, which is highly aligned with social hierarchy and status (Tan, 1986). The Confucian value system is based on high collectivism, large power distance, conformity, and harmonious interpersonal relationships (Chew & Lim, 1995; Hofstede, 2001; Triandis, 1995). However, these values may be viewed and understood differently in Western value systems. Goodall and Li (2007) identified culture shock, language barriers, miscommunication with local staff, staff turnover, empowerment and motivation, and teamwork as main problems faced by Chinese expatriates in cross-cultural adjustment to Western contexts.

Furthermore, *guanxi* is another concept that significantly influences the Chinese workforce. Its significant impact on expatriate adjustment and Chinese expatriates' interactions with host country nationals cannot be ignored. *Guanxi* can be broadly defined as the relationships between an individual and others, which involves personal friendship or professional relationship in workplace (Law, Wong, Wang, & Wang, 2000). Wong (1998) identified four main components of *guanxi*: trust, favor, dependence, and adaptation. Many studies have proposed that *guanxi* helps tie people together, but for those who do not share common values based on *guanxi*, it creates serious gap that is not easy to bridge by different social networking approaches (Butterfield, 1990; Hui & Graen, 1997). Thus, when Chinese expatriates come to the Western organizations, they

face a significant challenge of adjusting their ways of building and maintaining *guanxi* with host organization co-workers.

In a word, the newly emerged phenomenon of increasing number of mainland Chinese expatriates working in the U.S. is under researched. Given the uniqueness of Chinese culture, an in-depth understanding of their experiences and how they perceive their cross-cultural transitions is needed. A qualitative study will generate thick descriptions on the meanings of their lived experiences to explore how the mainland Chinese expatriates experience their international adjustment journey in an international context.

Purpose of the Study

The first purpose of this study is to identify the emerging themes, describing the essence of mainland Chinese expatriates' international adjustment and working experiences in a Western context. The findings of this study will provide the lived meanings of how Chinese expatriates experience their international adjustment in the Western workplace, through demonstration of how, why and what they have been facing as they were going through the cross-cultural transitions.

The second purpose is to contribute to extant literature on international adjustment and expatriate development by particularly addressing the mainland Chinese expatriate issues. Implications for HRD research and practices will be formulated to provide recommendations for multinational corporations related to their training and development strategies and organization development interventions, tailored to the needs of mainland Chinese workforce.

Significance of the Study within Human Resource Development Research Domain

Situating this study in a broader HRD research scope, expatriate development is an important issue within the domain of international human resource development. This study creates an opportunity to gain an in-depth understanding of mainland Chinese expatriates' international adjustment, which is too important to ignore as it is associated with increasing workforce diversity and the needs of tailored training and development (T&D) and organization development (OD) interventions based on employee's special needs. Findings of this study will address the commonalities as well as differences between mainland Chinese expatriates and other expatriates, to inform HRD scholars and professionals developing customized HRD interventions for mainland Chinese expatriates in Western contexts.

Workforce Diversity

Multinational corporations in China have been expanding talent sourcing to welcome talents from all over the world and also sending Chinese expatriates to work on international assignments overseas. Accordingly, multicultural work teams are developed consisting of individuals from different nations or cultures who work together to achieve a shared goal. Interdependent interactions within the teams grow correspondingly as well, which increases the demand for efficient and effective adaptation of expatriates to working with all the members on the team (Salas, Burke, Fowlkes, & Wilson, 2004). Miscommunications, misinterpretation, low levels of trust, and stereotypes may lead the multicultural teams to fall apart (Salas et al., 2004). HRD research and practical guidance are needed on multicultural team training to improve the

adaptation and performance of expatriates, and the host country nationals' capacity of working with team members from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Training and Development

Research has demonstrated that cross-cultural training has a significant role in assisting expatriates in going through the international adjustment transition successfully (Caligiuri & Tarique, 2012; Early, 1987; Tung, 1998). Black (1988) stated that only 30% of expatriates receive cross-cultural training. Littrell, Salas, Hess, and Riedel (2006) indicated that effective cross-cultural training programs have three main characteristics: they address the needs of the expatriate; they provide customization of training contents and methodologies to expatriate's needs; and they adhere to the standards of program quality. Training and development programs tailored to expatriates' unique needs are in demand. This also means that more research informing the development of such T&D programs is needed.

Organization Development

From an organization development perspective, gaining a deeper understanding of expatriates' characteristics and developing effective expatriate development strategies will enhance multinational corporations' global expansion and organization development. Osman-Gani and Rockstuhl (2008) have indicated that expatriates' work performance can be influenced by organization development interventions. Continuing education, mentoring, and coaching have been addressed in the literature as necessary organization development interventions to improve expatriate's international adjustment experiences (Cooper, 2011; Osman-Gani & Rockstuhl, 2008).

In summary, given the significance of expatriate development issue within the HRD field, it is essential to hear expatriates' voices, and gain a better understanding of their needs and challenges from their own perspective.

Research Question

To achieve the purposes of this study, a phenomenological study was conducted to explore the essence and meaning of mainland Chinese expatriates' lived experiences of living and working in the U.S. The following research question frames this phenomenological study: What are the international adjustment experiences of mainland Chinese expatriates living and working in the U.S.?

Overview of Research Design

Taking into account the complexity involved in international adjustment and working in a multicultural context for mainland Chinese expatriates, investigating the essence of their expatriate experiences lends itself to a qualitative method. The central research question elicits an understanding of how mainland Chinese expatriates experience life and work in the U.S.

A hermeneutic phenomenological approach was employed by this study to interpret narrative data collected from a group of mainland Chinese expatriates. In-depth interviews were conducted among ten Chinese expatriates originally from mainland China. The findings from this study through the analysis of authentic narrative data express the socially constructed realities of expatriate adjustment experiences, and provide insights into the meaning of the phenomenon of mainland Chinese expatriates

working in the U.S. The data analysis reveals the essence and emerging themes derived from mainland Chinese expatriate experiences and their perceptions.

Overview of Chapters

In chapter 2, a review of the extant literature will cover relevant areas, including literature review on dimensions of culture, characteristics of Chinese culture, international adjustment theory, cross-cultural training literature, cultural intelligence literature, and a synthesis of extant empirical studies on Chinese expatriates. This literature review provides a framework for understanding the theoretical foundations of expatriate development, cycles of expatriate adjustment, and emerging issues around this topic. It also illuminates the relevance of uniqueness of the Chinese workplace culture and potential challenges that Chinese expatriates may experience in the U.S. workplace. Chapter 3 explains the rationale for choosing a hermeneutic phenomenological approach as the appropriate methodology for this study aligned to research questions. Then, implementation issues of this research are presented, including sample selection criteria, interview process, data collection, data analysis, and ethics issues among others.

Chapter 4 presents the findings from interpretive analysis of interviews conducted in 2014 with ten mainland Chinese expatriates who were working or worked in the U.S. Emerging themes and categories with representative quotes are displayed and discussed in this chapter to explore the question researched in this study. In chapter 5, the findings are discussed. The themes that have emerged from the data analysis are compared to the extant literature. The conclusions of this study are presented in chapter 6. Implications for human resource development and recommendations for future research and practice

are discussed. In addition, limitations of this study and reflections on the research process are presented.

Definitions of Terms

The following terms are used frequently in this dissertation. To ensure a shared understanding of these terms, the following definitions were selected as appropriate in the context of this research project.

Culture. Culture can be defined as a set of shared norms, values, attitudes, and beliefs, and norms that are established over time in a certain group's context (Hofstede, 1999; Javidan & House, 2001).

Expatriates. Expatriates are the people living in a foreign environment and working on international assignments (Briscoe, 1995).

Mainland Chinese expatriates. Mainland Chinese expatriates are expatriates who grew up in the People's Republic of China and hold citizenship of China.

Expatriate Adjustment. Expatriate adjustment refers to the degree of "psychological comfort and familiarity an individual feels for the new culture" (Black & Mendenhall, 1990, p. 130).

Multinational Corporations (MNC). A multinational corporation (MNC) or multinational company is "an organization that owns or controls production of goods or services in one or more countries other than their home country" (Pitelis & Sugden, 2000, p. 72).

Host Country Nationals (HCN). Host country nationals are individuals who are indigenous to the area of operations that is different from the host country of the

multinational enterprise. Particularly for this study, the host country nationals are co-workers or colleagues in the U.S. workplace whom the mainland Chinese expatriates work with.

Summary

This chapter has presented the background of the problem and explained the need and purpose of the study. Situating this study in broad HRD research, the significance of this study was addressed. The research question and appropriate methodology for analyzing mainland Chinese expatriates' international adjustment experience were introduced. The next chapter will provide a comprehensive review of the literature including dimensions of culture, international adjustment theory, cross-cultural training and learning, and cultural intelligence, which all undergird this study.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

In this chapter, conceptual and theoretical frameworks relevant to this study are reviewed. The reviewed literature can be categorized into four broad areas: (1) culture dimensions and complexity, (2) multidimensional constructs of international adjustment, (3) cross-cultural training and learning, and (4) cultural intelligence literature. The following review of the literature will present major theories and salient issues in each of these areas as they relate to expatriate development and adaptation on an international work assignment.

First, several theories on the dimensions of culture and major characteristics of Chinese culture are presented to explain why Chinese expatriates may experience great challenges during their international assignments overseas. Second, a review of international adjustment theory that undergirds the dimensions of expatriate adjustment involving various levels of factors and stages is presented. Third, cross-cultural training literature is reviewed and discussed to gain an overview of training interventions and learning approaches that have been implemented for expatriate development in organizations, including training methods, effectiveness, best practices, and training stages among others. Finally, a review on cultural intelligence is provided to discuss the key success factors for expatriate adjustment and development. After the theoretical reviews, a synthesis and critique of current empirical studies particularly focusing on

Chinese expatriates will be provided. A brief description of and the rationale for reviewing conceptual and theoretical frameworks for this study are shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Major Theoretical Frameworks and Literature Associated with this Study

Theories & Literature	Rationale
Culture Dimensions and Values: (1) Hofstede's culture dimensions theory (2) Cultural value orientations theory (3) Chinese cultural context	Foundation: To undergird cross-cultural studies, and explain the cultural differences.
International Adjustment Theory	Dimensions: To display the multidimensional constructs of international adjustment for expatriates, and to identify the various factors that may affect expatriate's international adjustment and adaptation.
Cross-Cultural Training (CCT) Literature:	Interventions:

<p>(1) Cross-cultural training— performance interventions; (2) Cross-cultural learning approach.</p>	<p>Taken the factors and process of expatriate adjustment into account, this literature displays the current expatriate development practices and strategies in order to improve cross-cultural adjustment and performance.</p>
<p>Cultural Intelligence (CQ) Theory</p>	<p>Moderator of Expatriate Success: Cultural intelligence is moderating success of expatriate adjustment, and needs further testing and research on its development.</p>

The literature revealed the lack of empirical studies on expatriate development strategies, especially related to the experience of increasing numbers of foreign expatriates (taking mainland Chinese expatriates as an example in this study) who come to live and work in the U.S. Thus, this comprehensive literature review supports the need for a qualitative study to investigate potential emerging issues and generate deeper knowledge of the expatriate experience.

Dimensions of Culture and Cultural Complexity

As defined, culture is a set of shared values, norms, attitudes, and beliefs that are developed over time to reflect the characteristics of a certain group’s context and

environment (Hofstede, 1999; Javidan & House, 2001). When expatriates are sent to another culture, their values and beliefs may not be necessarily compatible with those held by the indigenous groups in the new culture. Even though cultural values may be identified and tied to nationality or context, culture is a complex construct and has no clear-cut boundaries. On a daily basis, expatriates interpret cross-cultural events and experiences in another country through their own cultural beliefs, which might necessarily mean the same as in the new environment (Bennett, 2004). To prepare today's workforce who are facing globalization in interacting with diverse colleagues effectively and harmoniously, it is essential to develop the awareness of diversity, tolerance of ambiguity, and understanding of cultural constructs and differences.

Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory

The most widely discussed theory in cross-cultural research is Hofstede's theory of culture dimensions. Culture was defined by Hofstede (1984) as collective ways of acting, thinking, and feeling, which is the cognitive programming that collectively groups people by certain characteristics. Hofstede's national culture analysis made significant contribution to systematically identify national culture differences from five different foundational dimensions, consisting of power distance, individualism versus collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity versus femininity, and long term orientation versus short term orientation (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010).

Power distance describes how much the less powerful parties in organizations accept and react to the unequal distribution of power among members in the organizations or institutions. For example, China represents a large power distance

culture. The United States is a nation with smaller power distance culture (Hofstede, 1984).

The dimension of individualism versus collectivism refers to the extent of integration into groups by individuals (Hofstede, 1984). In individualistic cultures, people are expected to stand up for themselves. The U.S. is an example of a country with such a culture. Contrarily, in collectivist cultures, individuals predominantly belong to certain cohesive group as the members (Hofstede, 1984). Previous research and studies have recognized Chinese culture as a strong collectivist culture (Hofstede, 2001; Triandis, 1995). Collectivistic society is identified as a strong sense of belonging to a group (Hofstede, 2001). Individuals in such society tend to differentiate in-group people and out-group people, and tend to depend more on in-group people but minimize interactions with out-group people (Hofstede, 2001). In China, individual behaviors are often guided by norms that take their family and the society into account, and reflect expectations from the society and empathy toward others who are identified as in-group people (Lockett, 1988; Westwood, 1992).

Uncertainty avoidance refers to a society's tolerance for ambiguity and uncertainty (Hofstede, 1984). People in weak uncertainty avoidance cultures tend to accept unknown situations and prefer to have fewer rules. The U.S. and China are examples of countries with weak uncertainty avoidance. Contrarily to this, strong uncertainty avoidance cultures tend to avoid encounters of unfamiliar situations or unusual circumstances, and tend to follow through step by step procedures and

implement policy and regulations as planned. Examples are the Latin American countries, Korea, and Japan (Hofstede, 1984).

The dimension of masculinity versus femininity describes two different societal preferences: the masculinity side of this dimension stands for a preference for competition, achievement, materialism, assertiveness, and heroism; and the other side of this dimension, femininity, represents an emphasis on well-being, quality of life, collaboration, and modesty (Hofstede, 1984). Masculine cultures are more competitive, assertive, and ambitious than feminine cultures; examples are Germany, China and the U.S. However, feminine cultures value more relationships and quality of life; examples being Korea, Spain, and France (Hofstede, 1984).

The long term orientation versus short term orientation dimension describes individual's focus on either the future or the present and the past. Long term orientation dimension was originally adopted from Chinese Value Survey (Chinese Culture Connection, 1987), and this dimension was unrelated to anything found within Western surveys. Long term orientation dimension was referred to by Hofstede and his colleagues (2010) as "Confucian Dynamism", which relates to a future-oriented perspective instead of a historical or short-term perspective (Hofstede et al., 2010). It was also found that long term orientation strongly correlates with average national achievement in mathematics (Hofstede et al., 2010). China ranked high on long term orientation dimension. Over time, this fifth dimension was tested by empirical studies and validated through researching among samples from more countries; however it is still not as strongly accepted as the other four dimensions (Minkov & Hofstede, 2011).

In the book of *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind*, the cultural framework was extended to six cultural dimensions, discussing in addition to the above five dimensions, the sixth dimension of “indulgence versus restraint” (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010). Indulgence versus restraint dimension refers to the extent to which individuals in the society try to control their desires and impulses (Hofstede et al., 2010). Indulgent cultures allows people to enjoy their life and have fun, which are the basic sources of pleasure and human nature (Hofstede et al., 2010). Whereas restrained culture is one where the society suppresses and regulates gratification of desires under strict social norms (Hofstede et al., 2010).

The cultural dimensions have been widely used to explore and identify culture differences across nations, the methodology of measuring constructs of Hofstede’s cultural dimensions has been further explored and re-evaluated over time by some other researchers through various research projects. For example, House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, and Gupta (2004) conducted the Project GLOBE to further explore national cultural differences. One of the primary critiques is that asking respondents what they consider important to themselves versus what they think others should or should not do are two different methods, which might lead to significantly different results (House et al., 2004; Minkov & Blagoev, 2011; Smith, 2006). Also, it must be noted that Hofstede constructed individualism and collectivism as two different dimensions. However, Triandis (1995) recognized individualism and collectivism as a multidimensional continuum for individuals, which is that an individual may hold both values at the same time grounded in a situational context. In addition, Gundling, Zanchettin, and Aperia

Global (a cross-cultural consulting company) (2007) have recognized the danger of “dimension dogma” that this national cultural dimensions research may fall into given the ambiguity and cultural complexity of any cultural context in the world.

Hofstede’s culture dimensions theory pointed out the existence of cultural differences and culture distance among nations along specific dimensions of culture. The rich discussions related to this theory and relevant theories in the literature set the foundations and possibilities for revealing the dynamics of multicultural interactions among mainland Chinese expatriates and Western host country nationals in relation to this study.

Cultural Values Orientations Theory

Another theory that has also been discussed widely is cultural values orientations theory. Kluckholm and Strodtbeck (1961) conceptualized five values orientations shared by cultural groups, including the foundational human nature (e.g., good, and evil), interactions and relationships among people (e.g., relationships among individuals and the group, and hierarchical relationships), orientation of activities (e.g., being versus doing), individual’s relationship with the nature (e.g., harmonious relationship, and domination), and orientation toward time (e.g., focusing on past, present, or the future). These dimensions are represented differently in different countries, but usually one value from each orientation may be dominant in that culture (Kluckholm & Strodtbeck, 1961).

The U.S. culture is often viewed as “controlling nature”. For example, American ways of reacting to business problems are to control the environment, and increase efficiency and productivity in order to maintain personal security and comfort (Ting-

Toomey, 2005). Regarding the time orientation, many Asian cultures, including the Chinese culture, do not tend to look to the future but into the past to solve problems. These values are reflected in business settings. The past-present oriented cultures reflect on history in the past and plan for the future in a long run, while future-focused cultures focus more on the future and tend to be efficient and achieve short term goals. In the workplace, if co-workers do not share the common beliefs or culture values orientation, it may cause conflicts and inability to adjust to new conditions (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1998).

Chinese Cultural Context

Confucianism. Over time, Chinese ways of thinking and behaviors have been guided by Confucianism, which highlights the adherence and establishments to social status and hierarchy (Tan, 1986). Confucianism directs individual's interactions with other people, and arranges interpersonal relationships. Confucian values shape such cultural traits as collectivism, large power distance, harmonious relationships, conformity, and interpersonal affect (Chew & Lim, 1995), and inevitably have strong influences on interactions and operations in workplace.

The consideration of culturally situated specificity has become increasingly important in scholarship development and practice exploration in international human resource development. Wang, Wang, Ruona, and Rojewski (2005) explored how the Confucian-based culture affects organizational and management practices in China. Five aspects of Confucianism are identified as the major cultural values that are dominant in the Chinese cultural context. They are: (1) hierarchy and harmony, (2) group orientation,

(3) *guanxi* (networks and relationships), (4) *mianzi* (face), and (5) time orientation. These values play a significant role in working relationships, supervision and management practices, decision-making processes, organizational context, and other relevant human resources practices (Wang, Wang, Ruona, & Rojewski, 2005).

Guanxi. In Chinese, “*guanxi*” (关系, Simplified Chinese) means networks and relationships; “*guan*” (关) means a “locked door”, and “*xi*” (系) means “system of links” (Law et al., 2000). In the business and management setting, *guanxi* is the relationship between colleagues that can help each other to open the “locked doors” and build the “system of links”. According to Wong (1998), trust, favor, dependence, and adaptation are four main elements of *guanxi*. Xu (1996) indicated that *guanxi* is grounded in high level of trust and respect, which creates an irresistible responsibility that leads to in-group-based decision-making. Also, hierarchical relationships strongly predict the interpersonal relationships among Chinese employees (Adkins & Naumann, 2001). Grounded in the traditional Confucian value system, for example, respect for older people and a belief in the hierarchical social class, have emphasized the significance of *guanxi* in the Chinese workplace (Boisot & Liang, 1992).

To build a good “*guanxi*” has been viewed as the key factor of success in Chinese workplace (Law et al., 2000). *Guanxi* relationships are attached culturally to an individual’s age, seniority, social class, and social status within their family and the society, which affects the way *guanxi* operates in managerial decision-making and workplace interactions within the Chinese context (Farh, Tsui, Xin, & Cheng, 1998). As

such, these relationships have a significant bearing on the professional conduct of individuals in Chinese organizations (Wright, Szeto, & Cheng, 2002).

In the case of mainland Chinese individuals working in the U.S. who grew up under the traditional values system, the Chinese expatriates will inevitably bring the Confucian-based values and behavioral patterns developed in Chinese workplace to the U.S. workplace. However, those values may not be necessarily accepted by the American host country nationals, which may result in conflicts, misunderstandings, and miscommunications.

International Adjustment Theory

Theoretical Framework

The second main body of literature reviewed is international adjustment theory. Black, Mendenhall and Oddou (1991) developed a model distinguishing anticipated adjustment and in-country adjustment. This framework was developed based on a comprehensive review of previous literature on domestic adjustment and international adjustment, and refined the international adjustment literature by examining and incorporating domestic adjustment factors.

The anticipatory considerations for international adjustment displayed in this model are: (1) individual factors, including the training received and prior experience; and (2) organizational factors, including recruitment and selection criteria. The in-country adjustment considerations fall into four categories, consisting of: (1) individual factors, for example, relational skills, self-efficacy, and perceptual skills; (2) job factors, for example, role clarity, role discretion, role novelty, and role conflict; (3) organizational

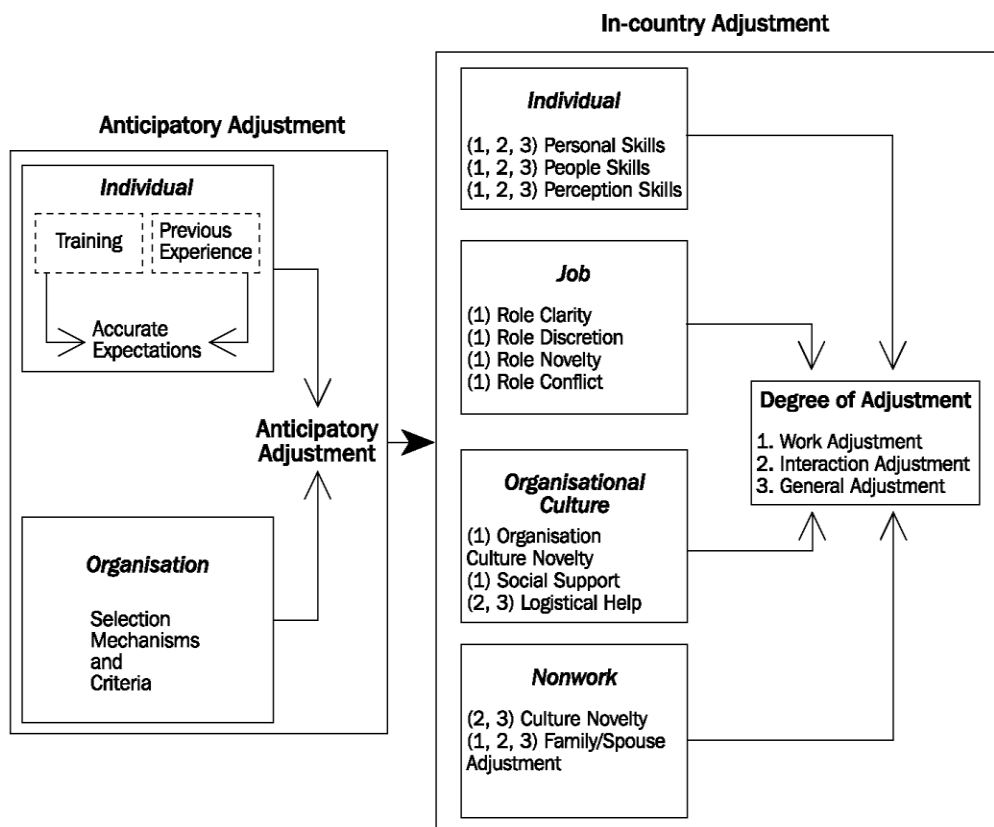
factors, for example, organization culture novelty, social support, logistical help, organizational socialization tactics, and organizational socialization content; and (4) non-work factors, for example, adjustment of family and spouse (Black et al., 1991).

Degree of International Adjustment

In early 1960s, cross-cultural adjustment used to be viewed as a united phenomenon (Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1962; Oberg, 1960). Black, Mendenhall, and Oddou (1991) indicated that the degree of international adjustment is supposed to be a concept with multi-dimensions, including three different facets:

- (1) Adjustment to work;
- (2) Adjustment to interacting with host country nationals;
- (3) Adjustment to the general environment.

Black et al. (1991) proposed theoretical framework of international adjustment, shown in Figure 1.



Note: Numbers in parentheses indicate the numbered facet(s) to which the specific variable is expected to relate

Source: Black, Mendenhall, & Oddou (1991).

Figure 1. *Theoretical Framework of International Adjustment*

Black, Mendenhall and Oddou (1991) provided propositions related to factors in successful international adjustment. For example, realistic expectations are positively associated with anticipatory adjustment and to degree of international adjustment.

Previous work and non-work related experiences help in forming and establishing the desired accurate expectations. Also, pre-departure cross-cultural training is positively related to accurate expectations. Individual expatriate's self-efficacy, relational skills, and perceptual skills have positive relationships with degree of adjustment. For the job factors, role clarity and role discretion are positively correlated to international

adjustment, particularly for work adjustment. However, role conflict and role novelty are negatively correlated to international adjustment. For the organizational factors, low organizational culture novelty, social support from organizational members, and logistical support are positively related to degree of international adjustment. Individual socialization tactics are correlated with high role innovation during the international transition and adjustment process. Also, family and spouse adjustment is positively associated with employee international degree of adjustment.

In summary, Black, Mendenhall, and Oddou (1991) showed that international adjustment is multifaceted and encompasses multiple factors. Those factors are manifested at individual, job, and organizational levels. In addition, this multidimensional construct of adjustment distinguished the considerations specific to different stages in terms of anticipatory adjustment and in-country adjustment. Grounded in the international adjustment theory (Black et al., 1990), expatriate adjustment has been identified as a major concept to address in the cross-cultural training literature, which will be discussed in the next section of this chapter.

Cross-Cultural Training and Cross-Cultural Learning Literature

Performance Intervention: Cross-Cultural Training

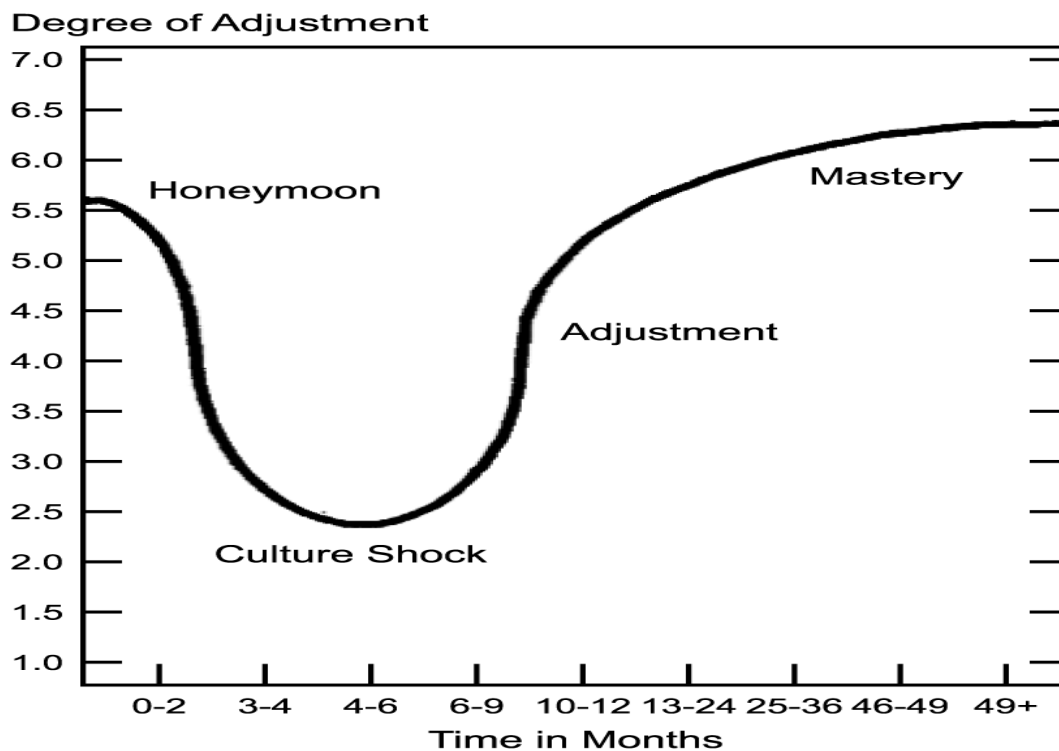
Cross-cultural training (CCT) was defined as a technique and educative process to improve cross-cultural effectiveness through acquisition of behavioral, cognitive, and affective growth that are essential for effective cross-cultural interactions (Deshpande & Viswesvaran, 1992).

The importance of cross-cultural training has been growing in recently years, because of the increasing frequency of cross-cultural interactions globally. Brislin (1990) suggested that interactions between people from diverse cultural background are extensively increasing, in relation to the increased global mobility and minimized physical and technological barriers for international transfers. International interactions may contain international business trips, international assignments, and interactions with people from different backgrounds even within the local community and workplace (Black & Mendenhall, 1990). However, cross-cultural diversity may impede the effective communications among people from different cultural contexts. For example, expatriates may experience culture shock during the early stage of visiting a new country or an unfamiliar cultural context. Befus (1988) defined the culture shock as a transition period during which individuals may suffer from anxiety or loneliness in a new culture, or experience transformative personal growth. Cross-cultural training and education is necessary for expatriates to adjust to a new culture effectively.

Cross-cultural training can help facilitate effective cross-cultural interactions (Black & Mendenhall, 1990). Many previous studies have found that there is a significant positive relationship between cross-cultural training and performance in global assignments (Earley, 1988). Deshpande and Viswesvaran (1992) also reported that cross-cultural training strongly and positively influences cross-cultural skills development, cross-cultural adjustability, and job performance of individuals.

U-Curve theory. U-Curve theory has been discussed widely as a theory that informs cross-cultural training strategies in practice. According to Church (1982), the U-

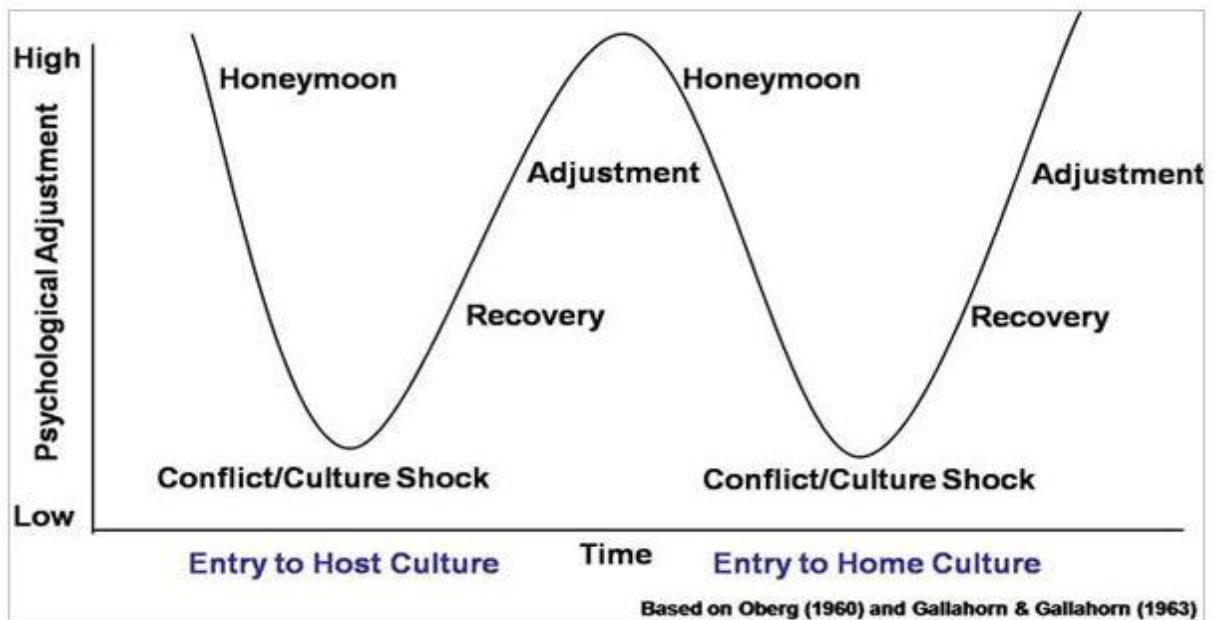
Curve theory helps to explain why cross-cultural training should be successful in assisting cross-cultural adjustment of expatriates, and why the training should be specific to different stages of adjustment process. According to the U-Curve theory (See Figure 2), expatriate adjustment functions differently over time (Church, 1982). In the first stage of assignment, expatriates will experience a “honeymoon” stage when they feel optimistic and enjoy the surprises from new environment. The second stage is culture shock stage when expatriates may become confused and frustrated by the foreign culture. The third and fourth stages are adjustment and mastery stages when expatriates will gradually make progress toward the completion of cross-cultural adjustment (Church, 1982). This theory illuminated cross-cultural training research and practices to take timing and sequence of training into account.



Source: Lee (2006).

Figure 2. U-Curve Adjustment Theoretical Framework

W-Curve theory. Similar to the U-Curve Theory, the W-Curve Model reflects that cross-cultural adjustment is not a one-time event, but a long-term process. Over the time, U-Curve Model has been criticized for oversimplifying the complex process of culture shock and intercultural adjustment, and for not addressing an important stage – that of re-entering the home culture. The six-stage W-Curve Model (shown in Figure 3), which was developed based on the U-Curve Model, consists of arrival, culture shock, adaptation, return home, reentry adjustment, and reintegration stages (Ting-Toomey & Chung, 2012).



Source: <http://www.uni-hildesheim.de/koreaweb/index.php/intercultural-communication/icc-stay-abroad?id=160>

Figure 3. W-Curve Model

Cross-cultural training practices. Black (1988) stated that organizations for the most part do not provide extensive cross-cultural training, and only 30% of expatriates receive training. It was also reported that very few organizations offered cross-cultural trainings to their expatriates (Dunbar & Katcher, 1990; Mendenhall, Dunbar, & Oddou, 1987). Some managers and related staff who were responsible for expatriates believed that cross-cultural training was not effective (Black & Mendenhall, 1990). Deshpande and Viswesvaran (1992) also discussed the assumption held by many managers of expatriates that cross-cultural training was not needed because employees who performed well in their home country will perform well in other cultural environments as well. Even more, expatriates are assumed to be capable to learn by doing and go through the intercultural transition successfully on their own in destination countries (Black & Mendenhall, 1990). Therefore, most organizations do not want to invest extra money and time into cross-cultural training.

More recently, it was reported that some organizations in the U.S. and other Western countries provided a one-day cross-cultural training session for their expatriates (Global Relocation Services, 2002). Black and Mendenhall (1990) also indicated that some corporations offered routine training for expatriates as a part of expatriation process. Inevitably, even cross-cultural training is an issue with great variation depending on different organizations; it has attracted sufficient attention from scholars and practitioners in the training and development fields in this era of globalization.

Cross-cultural training contents and methods. Contents and duration of cross-cultural training may vary. Earley (1987) proposed that two major types of cross-cultural

training contents are documentaries and trainings on interpersonal skills development. Trainings with documentaries usually consist of government-published documents and unwritten materials from public media, as well as incidental information that expatriates encounter during daily life (Earley, 1987). Interpersonal training usually involves teaching interpersonal skills that help travelers behave culturally appropriately when interacting with people from host culture (Earley, 1987). These contents are useful to reframe expatriate's attitudes, behaviors, and cognitions with culturally proper etiquette and cultural values and information (Brislin, 1994). These contents are also beneficial for performance management and perceived success of adjusting to a new culture (Earley, 1987).

Cultural familiarization training, as another format of training, involves basic introductions, usually a very short orientation, or a longer and more comprehensive orientation (Caligiuri, Phillips, Lazarova, Tarique, & Burgi, 2001; Gudykunst, Guzley, & Hammer, 1996). Environmental briefings, another training content, may include the needed information for expatriates to access in order to settle down at the host culture, for example, information about local geography, basic cultural norms, environmental climate, and accommodations, and so on. Another major content of cross-cultural training is language training (Eschbach, Parker, & Stoeberl, 2001). Language training may include a wide range of specific materials to serve different purposes. The training can be language instruction for survival purpose, or intensive and immersion language training for the purpose of increasing fluency in speaking and writing skills. The language training usually also instills contents of communications with host national

professionals or native speakers, which might also raise the curiosity, awareness and understandings of the host culture by experiencing authentic communications (Eschbach et al., 2001).

Regarding training methods for cross-cultural training, various techniques have been researched and implemented as individual practices or used in combinations. Triandis and Brislin (1983) stated that, in order to reduce the negative effects of cultural barriers, six cross-cultural training methods can be used: (1) information or fact-oriented training; (2) attribution training; (3) cultural awareness; (4) cognitive-behavior modification; (5) experiential learning; and (6) interaction approach. Also, Harvey (1997) discussed various often used methods of cross-cultural training, including case studies, role playing, demonstrations, lectures, panel discussions, programmed instruction, discussion groups, T-groups, games, experiments, simulations, and interactive video and computers-based exercises and simulations.

Cross-cultural training design. Salas, Cannon-Bowers, Rhodenizer, and Bowers (1999) emphasized that the needs assessment of cross-cultural training serves as the foundation of the entire program and should focus on analyzing training needs at multiple levels, including individual, group, and organizational levels. A comprehensive needs assessment needs to be conducted when designing a cross-cultural training program (Salas et al., 1999). Especially, the expatriate's needs assessment at individual level is invaluable at the stage of training design (Salas et al., 1999). In addition, other factors that may potentially affect the expatriate's success should also be considered by trainers, for example, nature of expatriate's jobs (Ronen, 1989), previous international

experience (Takeuchi, Tesluk, Yun, & Lepak, 2005), and care for spouse (Birdseye & Hill, 1995).

Mendenhall and Oddou (1985) proposed necessary skills that expatriates need to survive and thrive in new cultures, which cross-cultural training design may take into account: (1) self-maintenance, for example, mental health, psychological well-being, stress reduction, and self-confidence; (2) interpersonal skills, for example, the interpersonal relationships with people in host countries; and (3) cognitive skills, for example, understanding and awareness of social system and values in host countries, and correct perceptions of the host environment.

Cross-cultural training models. One of the cross-cultural training models is the Global Training Model, which was proposed by Marquardt, Nissley, Ozag, and Taylor (2000). In this model, each of the sequential stages of the traditional instructional design model is adjusted to the needs of cross-cultural training setting through the process of acculturation.

Another model of cross-cultural training was proposed by Harvey (1997), and was divided into four phases: (1) pre-departure phase, when selection criteria are being determined and selection of expatriates is completed; (2) early expatriation phase, when expatriates will receive training and evaluation within their domestic environment; at this stage, gaps or distances from their current competencies and needed competencies are determined in collaboration with mentors and other expatriate managers; (3) late expatriation phase, when expatriates have been exposed to the host environment, and can compare and contrast facts and issues of expatriate environment with those from the

domestic environment as part of the training session; and (4) on-going expatriation phase, the continued process of monitoring and assessing by expatriate managers or trainers, which results, among other things, in the evaluation and revision of the cross-cultural training programs. Harvey (1997) emphasized that at each stage mentoring plays an important role in cross-cultural training, and also defined cross-cultural mentoring as a one-on-one relationship between a cultural expert, as the mentor, and the mentee who may have less knowledge and skills in host culture and cross-cultural competency. Mentoring activities may include: (1) establishing a bond by providing information, establishing a mechanism for communication, identifying career orientation, reviewing realistic relocation options, and establishing informal communication links before the expatriation; (2) inculcating expatriates in new culture and new organization, and assisting in reestablishing alternative activities for spouses during the expatriation; and (3) facilitating finding a new position in organization, finding updates on organizational changes, assisting in resettlement, and encouraging participation in mentoring program after expatriation. Harvey (1997) suggested that experienced international executives should be serving as mentors.

Best practices of cross-cultural training. Littrell and Salas (2005) summarized and presented the best practices of cross-cultural training at different stages. At the training design stage, trainers should determine if the cross-cultural training is a general cultural training or culture specific training according to needs of organizations and expatriates themselves; the length of training should be adjusted based on the differentiated nature of the global assignments; human resource department in

organizations should play a dominant role in planning and implementing the cross-cultural training interventions; and trainers need to offer cross-cultural training to both expatriates and families or dependents as well (Littrell & Salas, 2005). At the delivery stage, blended training methods, including both on-site training and online support documents should be offered to expatriates; trainers can use multiple delivery methodologies for the training program; the delivery strategies should be developed based on training goals and training needs closely; issues of assisting them with returning to home country and home organizations should also be considered; expatriates need to be informed by home organizations with updated information; one-on-one coaching for the expatriate may be offered; and the cross-cultural training should be provided before departure, and immediately after expatriates arrive in the host country (Littrell & Salas, 2005). The evaluation of cross-cultural training practices should be implemented right after each stage of training; surveys or questionnaires may be used to collect and assess the gained experience and knowledge; and the criteria to evaluate the effectiveness and success could be diverse and vary according to different cultures and organizations (Littrell & Salas, 2005).

Moderators of cross-cultural training and performance. Besides discussing the cross-cultural training's direct impact on expatriate performance, many studies also explored the moderating factors of the relationships between cross-cultural training and expatriate's work performance. The first group of factors includes family and spouse adjustment. Many studies have indicated that expatriate's marital status, family, spousal adjustment, and spousal satisfaction are affecting the degree of international adjustment

for expatriates (e.g., Black et al., 1991). Even as a non-work related factor, spouse / family's adjustment is too critical to neglect for expatriate's cross-cultural adjustment. It has indirect but significant effect and may cause expatriate failure if unsuccessful (Bhaskar-Shrinivas, Harrison, Shaffer, & Luk, 2005; Tung, 1981). The second group of factors includes job characteristics. The difficulty and novelty levels of tasks, workloads, and role expectations are the main job characteristics that will affect expatriate's adjustment and performance (Black, 1988). The third group includes attributes comprising the profile of the expatriate. Individual attributes like cognitive flexibility, adaptability, tolerance of ambiguity, and social skills and so on will make a difference in expatriate's degree of cross-cultural adjustment (Bhagat & Prien, 1996). Finally, the fourth group, organizational factors includes organizational culture, social support provided by organizations, and institutional socialization. All these factors may affect individual expatriate's adjustment process (Black et al., 1992).

Suggestions for developing and conducting cross-cultural training. Littrell and Salas (2005) presented certain recommendations for cross-cultural training, including to develop cross-cultural guidelines, resources, and cultural competency management frameworks; to develop an assessment framework for cross-cultural competency; to design and develop training materials and programs to facilitate more effective intercultural communication and better manage diversity and inclusions issues in workplaces; to offer cross-cultural training and support; and to conduct further cultural competence research. Furthermore, Caligiuri and Tarique (2006, 2011) emphasized that the key efforts that contribute to expatriate success is to focus on both expatriate selection

(to choose the right candidate) and expatriate development (to offer right training), which is tied to business goals of the multinational corporations.

In addition, based on previous reviews on cross-cultural training, certain guidelines can be provided to cross-cultural practitioners (Littrell & Salas, 2005). For example, cross-cultural training should be customized to satisfy expatriate's needs; training curriculum needs to be carefully designed considering the cultural distance between expatriate's home culture and host culture; multinational corporations should be responsible for developing global mindset in order to prepare expatriates to be competent cross-culturally; cross-cultural training can use skill-based and scenario-based approaches; and organizations need to evaluate if cross-cultural learning from training session can be transferred to their specific job in order to improve organizational outcomes (Littrel & Salas, 2005).

Summary. Although many organizations do not prepare for expatriation formally, it was demonstrated that cross-cultural training is effective in increasing expatriate's knowledge of the host culture, advancing cross-cultural adjustment, and enhancing expatriate's work performance in international assignments (Mesmer-Magnus & Viswesvaran, 2008). Various cross-cultural training models have been developed, and the training process has also been discussed in various ways. In general, previous studies presented that cross-cultural training needs to be planned longitudinally throughout the expatriate's whole expatriation and repatriation journey across stages of pre-arrival, on-site, post-arrival, and re-entry. Also, the training design needs to be complete and should carefully consider the individual differences between expatriates. In

addition, many studies have discussed the various training contents that should be covered in order to deliver effective and thorough cross-cultural training.

Learning Approach: Cross-Cultural Learning

Instead of cross-cultural training as performance intervention for expatriate development, some studies have focused on cross-cultural learning as a pedagogical approach to improve expatriate development. Based on the extant literature, social learning theory and experiential learning theory have been mostly discussed and applied to cross-cultural learning research.

Bandura's Social Learning Theory (SLT). Based on social learning theory, learning is affected by observation and experience (Bandura, 1977). SLT assumed that individuals use symbols to predict associated consequences and engage in actions based on their prior experiences. Individuals learn from experiences and actual situations. The consequences of individuals' certain experiences or behaviors help them acquire new learning, which will re-shape and predict their future behaviors. Bandura (1977) also demonstrated that social learning process has four elements, including attention, retention, reproduction, and incentives, which describe how people learn and what they learn through observations and experiences.

SLT and cross-cultural learning. Applying social learning theory to cross-cultural learning, we can assume that expatriates are able to learn through observations and experiences in host culture. They may observe and experience either appropriate or inappropriate behaviors in host country. Learning then occurs through the observations, experiences, and reflections in a situated and actual environment. Gradually, the

expatriates will master the necessary skills to be able to behave appropriately in their host country (Black & Mendenhall, 1990). Also, by learning through observations and experiences, expatriates will be capable to make assumptions, and predict and reproduce appropriate ways of thinking and performing for the future (Bhagat & Prien, 1996). Furthermore, Littrell, Salas, Hess, Paley, and Riedel (2006) also implied that cross-cultural training can be seen as a process of social learning, since expatriates gain social skills through observation and practices; consequences experienced through behaviors and observation facilitate learning; and new behaviors will be produced when expatriates observe other people perform the behaviors.

Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (ELT). Another pedagogical approach that is applied to expatriate development is experiential learning theory by Kolb (1984). The experiential learning theory describes "a holistic process of adaptation to the world" (Kolb, 1984, p. 31). A learner will gain four basic learning abilities tie to the four dimensions of learning dimensions throughout the process of experiential learning. The four learning dimensions include concrete experience (CE), reflective observation (RO), abstract conceptualization (AC), and active experimentation (AE) (Kolb, 1984). These four dimensions of learning shape and present a learning cycle with four phases. This learning cycle describes how concrete experiences (CE) serve as the foundation for observation and reflection (RO), and then subsequently are assimilated into abstract conceptualization (AC). After experiencing the active experimentation (AE) in real situations, learners continuously generate new concrete experiences (CE) (Kolb, 1984).

ELT and cross-cultural learning. Experiential learning theory can be applied to cross-cultural learning and demonstrates how expatriates learn necessary cross-cultural skills and incorporate their transition experiences into their prior experiences and existing mindsets. Experiential learning theory contains a comprehensive set of skills and competencies such as valuing, thinking, deciding, and acting, which are necessary skillsets for cross-cultural learning process (Kayes, 2002). Also, ELT underscores that learning is a process that values difference, self-development, and self-actualization, which perfectly describes the cross-cultural transition that expatriates are facing (Kayes, 2002).

Person-culture congruence model of ELT. The person-culture congruence model of ELT better explains the expatriate's home-host culture interaction and the learning environment that they are situated in (Sims, 1983). Based on this model, cross-cultural learning consists of various learning opportunities that are formed when expatriates are interacting with host culture, experiencing the cultural differences, and learning how to think and behave in a new culture. The extent of congruence between the expatriate individual and the culture will determine the degree to which the learning occurs and how much the individuals acquire for necessary skills or competencies to adjust to a new culture (Sims, 1983).

Cross-cultural learning outcomes through ELT. Based on Yamazaki and Kayes's (2004) study, a set of skills are described as the cross-cultural skills acquired from experiential learning process for expatriates. The skills may include interpersonal skills (building relationships and valuing different cultures), informational skills

(observation, listening, and dealing with ambiguity), analytic skills (sorting out complex information and interpretations), action skills (taking actions and initiatives, and managing others), and adaptive skills (flexibility, adaptability, and coping with stress) (Yamazaki & Kayes, 2004).

Synthesis of Cross-Cultural Training and Cross-Cultural Learning

Based on the discussions above about cross-cultural training and cross-cultural learning, both of these approaches share certain commonalities. Both perspectives underline expatriates' gains in personal skills, self-construction, and interpersonal skills for interacting with others in the host culture. These two approaches also emphasize the impact of host culture and environmental factors that affect expatriates' adjustment and development. The boundary between cross-cultural training and cross-cultural learning is actually rather vague, and often both are used in expatriate development strategies. Multinational corporations may integrate performance interventions and pedagogical approaches, and tailor to specific expatriate development practices based on the expatriates' unique needs and challenges.

Cultural Intelligence: Moderator of Expatriate Success

The discussions on how to define success of expatriates are varied from different perspectives with various purposes. Researchers have identified the success of expatriation based on the end results of the placements, including retention (Black & Gregersen, 1991; Naumann, 1992; Takeuchi, Yun, & Tesluk, 2002), and performance (Arthur & Bennett, 1995), which are mainly the great concerns at organizational level (mostly home organizations). Another perspective is from each individual expatriate;

usually expatriate success is also defined by the individual expatriate themselves.

Individual expatriates tend to focus on their cross-cultural adjustment (Black, 1988; Black, Mendenhall, & Oddou, 1991), and career development in a long run (Shaffer & Miller, 2008).

Cultural Intelligence (CQ)

The last broad area of literature review is cultural intelligence theory, and its significance and applications in expatriate development (Shaffer & Miller, 2008).

Cultural intelligence (CQ) was first described by Drs. Christopher Earley and Soon Ang to identify the ability of individuals to generate appropriate responses to novel cultures (Earley & Ang, 2003). It was demonstrated that cultural intelligence can be applied to accomplish work assignments in global work settings more effectively (Earley & Ang, 2003).

Cultural intelligence refers to an individual's capability to adapt to new and unfamiliar cultural settings successfully (Earley & Ang, 2003). It is a theory positing that understanding the impact of an individual's cultural background is necessary to integrate into new business environment and social context effectively and successfully (Earley & Ang, 2003).

Cultural intelligence consists of three bases: cognitive basis, motivational basis, and behavioral basis (Earley & Ang, 2003). The cognitive basis is viewed as the general cognitive skills that are used to form new conceptualizations of culture-specific knowledge. This facet shows individuals' specific knowledge that they can understand and absorb a new cultural environment successfully based on various types of cues

provided (Earley & Ang, 2003). The motivational basis of cultural intelligence is the incentives of individuals to engage others in the new cultural settings. This facet shows individual's efforts and growth from the cognitive aspect, acquire knowledge, and overcome roadblocks and manage failures (Earley & Ang, 2003). The behavioral basis refers to the individual's actual and adaptive engagement in behaviors in the new cultural environment. This facet shows the individuals' capacity of acting out their behaviors and actions in certain cultural environment (Earley & Ang, 2003).

CQ Applications to Workplace

In recent years, research has shown the increasing attentions to cultural intelligence and its application in global work assignments (GWA) and in ensuring success and job performance of expatriates. Earley and Ang (2003) described the nature of diversity and the role of cultural intelligence to aid expatriate managers with new work assignments in global work settings. Individuals who possess higher levels of cultural intelligence are expected to be more likely to succeed in their international assignments and operations compared to the ones with lower cultural intelligence (Earley & Ang, 2003). After examining myriad factors including work versus non-work, individual versus family, parent versus local unit, and organizational versus national, Earley and Ang (2003) concluded that there is a moderate correlation between cultural intelligence and global work assignment success.

CQ as a Moderator of Expatriate Success

The significance of cultural intelligence for improving expatriate's work performance has been recognized in the literature. Cultural intelligence is proposed to be

positively related to multidimensional constructs of international adjustment including work adjustment, interactions adjustment, and general adjustment (Shaffer & Miller, 2008). Also, culture intelligence will relate positively to expatriate's performance, career success, and expatriate retention (Shaffer & Miller, 2008).

A cross-cultural study indicated the importance of cultural intelligence development in order to lower an individual's stress in international business. Successful international adjustment in a business context depends on the individual's cultural intelligence level (Ramsey, Leonel, Gomes, & Monteiro, 2011). This study also suggested that long-term training for cultural intelligence development is necessary to assist individuals to deal with cultural differences effectively. Thus, cross-cultural training programs need to include both basic regional knowledge training and interpersonal and behavioral skills related to cross-cultural issues through role-playing or to prepare expatriates to fulfill performance expectations (Ramsey et al., 2011).

However, as a fairly new construct, cultural intelligence still needs further research. The extant literature on this topic mainly focused on explorations of a concrete definition and anecdotal studies. There is a need for more empirical studies using multiple methods to gain a better understanding of the relationship between cultural intelligence and other relevant constructs in order to inform practical strategies.

Synthesis and Critique of Empirical Studies on Mainland Chinese Expatriates

As presented above, the conceptual and theoretical framework of expatriate adjustment and development has been established in the literature to identify the international adjustment impact factors, moderator factors, adjustment process, and

training strategies, among other things. For the extant studies, most of the participant samples are either a mixed group of expatriates from different nations, or Western expatriate managers working overseas. It is not clear whether the expatriate adjustment theoretical framework and practical principles can be used to describe or explain experiences of foreign expatriates working and living in the U.S. Specifically related to this study, very few studies have been particularly conducted among Chinese expatriates from mainland China.

In order to synthesize and evaluate the extant literature particularly focusing on Chinese expatriates, the empirical literature search criteria were to include: (1) the research with samples or discussions focusing on Chinese expatriates only; and (2) Chinese expatriates from mainland China, excluding overseas Chinese expatriates, Chinese expatriates originally from Hong Kong (Greater China area), and Chinese expatriates originally from Taiwan (Greater China area). Hofstede (1983) argued that management is culturally bound and not the same around the world. Many theoretical frameworks and measurement instruments were also identified as culturally bounded (Boyacigiller & Adler, 1991). Thus, excluding the studies on expatriates from other nations or mixed groups of multiple nations will be important. In addition, the expatriates who were born and raised overseas or from outside the mainland China, even though having Chinese heritage, are not culturally included as mainland Chinese expatriates either, given the focus of this study. Even though the focus of this study is the mainland Chinese expatriates who work in the U.S., studies on Chinese expatriates

working in Western countries other than the U.S. are also included in this literature review.

The results of empirical study search on Chinese expatriate topics from 1995 to date are shown as below. Only 12 empirical studies have been found focusing on mainland China expatriates only (See Table 2).

Table 2

Research on Mainland Chinese Expatriates

Authors	Year	Host Country	Focus	Major Findings
Shi-xu	1996	Netherland	Training	Language training helps with interactions with host country nationals.
Selmer, Ebrahimi, & Mingtao	2000a	Hong Kong	1) Training; 2) spouse and family support	1) Mainland Chinese expatriates have lower adjustment levels than Western expatriates; 2) Chinese expatriates need more sufficient family and spouse support.
Selmer,	2000b	Western	Performance	Performance review is used

Ebrahimi, & Mingtao		countries	management	more frequently among expatriates and host country supervisors than the other performance management activities.
Selmer, Ebrahimi, & Mingtao	2000c	Hong Kong	Spouse and family support	Chinese expatriates who are accompanied by their spouse or family better adjust to the host culture.
Selmer, Ebrahimi, & Mingtao	2002	various	1) Spouse and family support; 2) organizational support	1) 88% respondents (Chinese expatriates) are not permitted to be accompanied by family in host country; 2) Mentoring and coaching for expatriate training were recommended.
Selmer	2002a	various	Training	Pre-departure training is very important.
Selmer	2002b	Western countries	Training	The study indicated that the use of effective problem-focused coping strategies

				needs to be incorporated in Chinese expatriate training design.
Selmer, Ling, Shiu, & de Leon	2003	various	1) Spouse and family support; 2) communication experiences; 3) HRM issues	1) Non-working spouse and family face loneliness and lack of language skills; the Chinese expatriates stick with family closely; 2) Mainland Chinese expatriates sometimes are not willing to report regularly either in verbal or written ways; they are not close to local staff; 3) Chinese expatriates are concerned with fairness and equity of recruitment and retention policies in their organizations.
Shen & Edwards	2004	various	Spouse and family support	Family-related issues significantly affect expatriates' adjustment.

Shen & Darby	2006	various	1) Training; 2) spouse and family support	Chinese companies researched did not provide training for spouses and families.
Wang	2007	U.S.	1) Training; 2) spouse family; 3) non-work social support	Mainland Chinese expatriates are challenged by lack of training, lack support for family, different learning styles in host organization, and lack of non-work social support.
Ma	2009	Hong Kong	Communications and adaptation experiences	The main source of hardship for mainland Chinese expatriates comes from insecurity about employees' rights and interests.

Based on the empirical studies shown in Table 2, there are some popular topics that have been examined among mainland Chinese expatriates, such as training, performance appraisal, and support for family and spouse. The review of these studies points towards the significant challenges and needs that mainland Chinese expatriates may experience.

Language Training

Although the need for language training has been addressed as a key issue by most of expatriate development studies, the reviewed empirical studies indicated that Chinese multinational corporations do not usually provide language training and cross-cultural training (Selmer, Ling, Shiu, & de Leon, 2003; Shen & Darby, 2006). Among the various training in demand, language training has stood out as the most urgent need for mainland Chinese expatriates, compared to other expatriates from other nations (Shi-xu, 1996). Language training could not only aid Chinese expatriates in improving their communication skills, but would also affect their socialization in Western context and their interactions with other host country nationals.

Interactions with Host Country Nationals

There is a huge demand from Chinese expatriates for more information about effective interactions with host country nationals within the work settings as well as building friendship outside workplace (e.g., Shi-xu, 1996). This challenge is formed due to mainland Chinese expatriates' low level of language proficiency in general or lack of knowledge and skills to overcome cultural differences between the "East" and the "West" (Shi-xu, 1996; Shen & Edwards, 2004). Effective communications with host country co-workers and supervisors are perceived by mainland Chinese expatriates as ways of maintaining *guanxi* in the new work environment (Ma, 2009; Selmer et al., 2003; Shen & Edwards, 2004; Wang, 2007).

Organizational Support

Based on the fact that most Chinese multinational corporations do not provide cross-cultural training (Selmer, Ling, Shiu, & de Leon, 2003; Shen & Darby, 2006), no wonder that mainland Chinese expatriates are in need of support from both host organizations and home organizations (e.g., Selmer et al., 2003). Besides work-related support from organizations, mainland Chinese expatriates have also expressed the need for organizations' efforts in facilitating social activities with host country nationals outside workplace (e.g., Selmer et al., 2003). As building friendships and maintaining *guanxi* are important values within Chinese culture, the importance of further research on these issues was brought up by mainland Chinese expatriates. Such research could allow the researchers to gain in-depth understanding of essence of expatriates' lived experiences.

Research Gaps

The primary limitation of extant literature is that the population of mainland Chinese expatriates who take international assignments overseas has not been well represented. Only 12 empirical studies have been found in the literature. Also, many of the studies researched the samples of mainland Chinese expatriates who worked in Hong Kong, rather than in Western contexts. The cultural distance between China and Hong Kong is narrower than that between China and Western countries.

Another major limitation is that previous studies focused on mainland Chinese expatriates' needs and challenges; however, it is not sufficient to explain the meaning of this phenomenon of increasing presence of mainland Chinese expatriates in the global

market, and how the expatriates themselves perceive their cross-cultural experiences. As noted earlier, given the uniqueness of Chinese culture, exploring the essence of mainland Chinese expatriates' lived experiences will be invaluable for Chinese multinational corporations and host country organizations to better prepare for the cross-cultural transition and more effectively work with mainland Chinese expatriates.

To conclude, much of extant literature on expatriate development has concentrated on reasons of failure and mostly researched expatriates in mixed group of various nations. As a newly emerged phenomenon, the growing population of mainland Chinese expatriates will need to be better represented in the literature. The extant literature on their experiences and needs for expatriate development has produced inconclusive findings, thus deserving further research. A qualitative study will produce thick descriptions to gain a deeper understanding about how mainland Chinese expatriates experience cross-cultural transition working and living in an international context.

Proposed Research and Re-stating the Research Question

Given the limitations of research on mainland Chinese expatriates, little is known about their authentic experiences. A phenomenological research is proposed to understand the essence of lived experiences of mainland Chinese expatriates who worked in the Western context and to elicit expatriate development and management strategies for multinational corporations.

To overcome the research gaps and achieve the purposes of the study, the central research question is: “What are the international adjustment experiences of mainland Chinese expatriates living and working in the U.S.?”

Summary

In summary, this chapter provided a literature review focusing on four broad areas of literature, including dimensions of culture, international adjustment, cross-cultural training and learning practices, and cultural intelligence. Also, a synthesis and critique of extant literature on mainland Chinese expatriates was discussed as well.

CHAPTER THREE: METHOD

In this chapter, a hermeneutic methodology is presented as the appropriate approach to interpret narratives from human experience in intercultural contexts consistent with the research question. The implementation of the research methods and research design is discussed, including data collection procedure, data analysis process, human subject considerations, and quality and rigor considerations. Through interpretation of the rich description of expatriates' narrative accounts of their lived experience, this study aims to provide an in-depth understanding of essence of mainland Chinese expatriate's international adjustment experiences living and working in the U.S.

Research Design Overview: A Hermeneutic Phenomenological Study

The research approach of this study is hermeneutic phenomenological research. Expatriate development research needs analysis of human interactions and interpretations (Cooper, 2011), especially as applied to the experiences of mainland Chinese expatriates that has not been researched much before. The design of phenomenological approach is appropriate for this study, because it is consistent with the study purpose and can answer the research question about essence of mainland Chinese expatriate's lived experiences in the U.S. workplace.

A hermeneutic phenomenological study was implemented to collect and interpret the participants' narratives. In-depth interviews were conducted among a sample of mainland Chinese expatriates who have worked in the U.S. The findings from this study through authentic narrative data will express the multidimensional and socially

constructed realities of expatriate adjustment experiences of mainland Chinese expatriate particularly.

Justification of Research Design

Phenomenological study was chosen based on philosophical, theoretical, and methodological considerations (Van Manen, 1990). The goal of phenomenology is description of the meaning of an experience from the perspectives of those who had the experience before.

Phenomenology is viewed as central to the interpretive paradigm (Clark, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Koch, 1995). It is both a philosophical discipline and a research method (Geanellos, 1998; LeVasseur, 2003; Lopez & Willis, 2004). It is also defined as the study of description and development of formal structure of human consciousness and self-awareness as a preface to philosophy; a typological classification of a class of phenomena; and an analysis generated by phenomenological investigations (Mish, 2002).

Interpretive (Hermeneutic) Phenomenological Approach

Husserl (1970) defined phenomenology as the science of essence of consciousness and the meaning of lived experience from person's point of view. Husserl believed that the meaning of lived experiences may only be revealed by one-on-one transactions between the subject or object of study and the researcher. The transactions involve face-to-face interactions, attentive listening, and observation to create a representation of reality more sophisticated than previous understandings (Husserl, 1970). The goal of Husserl's eidetic phenomenology is description of the meaning of an

experience from the perspectives of those who had the experience before. Husserl's phenomenology is transcendental, which can be understood as conferring meaning by the knowing ego, or self, reflecting on itself. In a discussion of Husserl's philosophy, four constants were described, including ideal of rigorous science, philosophic radicalism, ethos of radical autonomy, and the respect for wonders (Van Manen, 1990). Descriptive phenomenology calls for exploration of phenomena through direct interaction between the researcher and the objects of study (Wojnar & Swanson, 2007). The lived experience described by participants is used to provide universal description of the phenomenon (Tymieniecka, 2003). Researchers are required to bracket themselves and set aside their own preconceptions on the phenomenon along the phenomenological study process. Then the phenomenologists use frames of reference to define and describe the phenomenon through study of texts (Wojnar & Swanson, 2007). The frames of reference include the transcendental subjectivity (neutrality and openness to the reality of others), eidetic essences (universal truths), and real-world transactions (interactions between researcher and participants) (Wojnar & Swanson, 2007). The Husserlian approach aims to maintain the quality of descriptive phenomenology through investigating wholeness of participant's personal experiences and describing the phenomenon universally.

Hermeneutics comes from a Greek term that means interpretation of texts to gain an understanding on the written word, which is not clear for its universal truths to some extent (Wojnar & Swanson, 2007). Hermeneutics is a method of inquiry to explore the meaning in narratives describing human experiences not only for objective truth about the phenomenon but also the subjective descriptions about human activity of the

phenomenon (Van Manen, 2007). Husserl (1970) used the term *Lebenswelt* (life world) to refer to the concept of one's perceptions of experiences in the world, and phenomenology research is to explore the appearance of world, physical self, and relationships. Husserl (1970) referred to this concept of relative existence as "intentionality."

Hermeneutic phenomenology can also be called interpretative phenomenology. The central ideas of hermeneutic phenomenology were developed by Heidegger, Gadamer, and Ricoeur refining Husserl's descriptive phenomenology (Van Manen, 1990). Grounded in Husserl's philosophy of phenomenology, Heidegger sought to redefine the core mission of philosophy through phenomenology, and interpreted phenomenology as hermeneutical or interpretive (Van Manen, 1990). The main concern of philosophy for Heidegger is ontological, which means that it focuses on the nature and relations of being. Heidegger defined philosophy as the universal phenomenological ontology based on the hermeneutic of human being (Van Manen, 1990). Heidegger transferred Husserl's transcendental idea to ontological concerns for understanding of "Being in the world" (*Dasein*), rather than of the world (Heidegger, 1962). The phenomenon that is uncovered by phenomenology is the meaning of being. Another feature of Heidegger's philosophy is that the task of phenomenology is in destruction (*Destruktion*). This implies that the task of phenomenology is to destroy the traditional contents of ontological concepts until true understanding of the primordial experiences is achieved, and ways of determining the nature of the phenomenon are revealed. Heidegger's phenomenology is a notion of method, and a mode of approaching the

objects of philosophical research, but not a particular philosophical method (Heidegger, 1962).

The main difference between Heidegger's phenomenology and Husserl's phenomenology is that Husserl emphasized description as a basis, but Heidegger focused on understanding (Van Manen, 1990). Husserl focused phenomenology on the eidetic, and his interest was epistemological questions, but Heidegger shifted the foundation of phenomenology to being and he was interested in ontological questions (Van Manen, 1990). Heidegger claimed that his approach allows an examination of the meaning of being, time, and existence (Van Manen, 1990). Koch (1995) summarized key distinctions between the descriptive and interpretive approaches. First, descriptive phenomenology emphasizes describing the essences of phenomenon and the universal truths; while interpretive phenomenology is to understand the phenomenon in the given context (Koch, 1995). Second, descriptive phenomenology is grounded in the belief that consciousness is what participants share; while interpretive approach is grounded in understanding the contexts of culture or practice that participants share in relation to the phenomenon being studied (Koch, 1995). Third, descriptive phenomenology requires an "investigator-free" description on the phenomenon; while an interpretive approach to phenomenological research allows researcher's interactions with participants and co-developing interpretations of the phenomenon (Koch, 1995). Fourth, descriptive phenomenology requires researcher's bracketing, while interpretive phenomenologist may co-create interpretations with participants to increase consciousness of both researchers and participants and to make the interpretations meaningful (Koch, 1995).

Finley (2008) argued that the investigation and description of the world and personal experience and action is not to study the objects or the concept itself, but to describe how the object or concept appears “in our heads.” Finley (2008) stated that our consciousness of objects is in relation to us, which means the subject (us) and object are mutually related together. Therefore, the intentional relationship and the consciousness of participants of the objects (phenomenon) are the focus for phenomenological research (Finley, 2008). In other words, the hermeneutic approach of phenomenology focuses on exploring the intentional relationship between the participants and the meanings of the phenomenon that they are experiencing.

In summary, hermeneutic approach of phenomenology is a research methodology aimed at gaining understanding of the phenomenon or life world through the interactions between the research and the participants based on their respective backgrounds. Hermeneutic phenomenology is to describe human experience of wholeness in relation to the historical, social, and cultural forces that shape meanings of lived experiences (Wojnar & Swanson, 2007).

Hermeneutic Approach for This Study

In this study, the phenomenon is mainland Chinese expatriates working in the U.S. The universal truth and understanding on this phenomenon would not be an appropriate focus for this study, since the researcher is interested in culturally conditioned specificity of the phenomenon. As Wojnar and Swanson (2007) noted, hermeneutic (interpretive) phenomenology is particularly useful for understanding how context influences, structures, and sustains experiences. A hermeneutic (interpretive)

approach of phenomenology is more appropriate for this study, because the purpose of this study is to understand the mainland Chinese expatriates' lived experience by interpreting contextualized human experiences influenced by cultural differences between the East and the West. Those interpretations involve participants' descriptions as well as researcher's understanding and interpretations, which will help to arrive at the meanings and essence of the phenomenon.

Participants of the Research

Ten mainland Chinese expatriates were selected and interviewed as a sample of the population examined for this research, according to the participant selection criteria explained below in this section. The number of participants is acceptable according to experienced qualitative researchers as the minimum adequate number of participants for a phenomenological study (Creswell, 2006; Sandelowski, 1995).

Participant Selection Criteria

The first inclusion standard of this study is the length of work experience. The included participants are mainland Chinese expatriates who have been working or used to work in the U.S. for at least four months. This inclusion criterion of length of work experience as an expatriate is selected considering the transition process of cultural adjustment and reflection. According to U-Curve Theory (1982), it indicated that the first six months of the transition for expatriates can be most challenging socially and psychologically. Thus, it would be ideal if the recruited participants have stayed and worked in the host culture long enough to go beyond the most challenging transition time. So, the Chinese expatriates who have worked in the U.S. less than six month were

excluded. The second criterion of selection is that all the participants are middle-aged adults who are between 30 and 45 years old. The reason for including this criterion is to recruit a relevantly homogeneous group of participants in order to reduce variations of their experiences affected by historical, cultural, and generational issues. The third criterion is that only participants who have not worked in the U.S. context prior to the trip examined are included, which means that the working experiences in the U.S. are new to the participants and they have not been exposed to the U.S. culture in person before. The fourth criterion is that, as noted earlier, both expatriates who have been working in the U.S. over four months and those who used to work in the U.S. may all be included; however, if participants have already returned to mainland China from their expatriate assignment, they should have returned from the U.S. within the past one to two years for the purpose of retrieving accurate memories and reflections. In addition, other factors under consideration as selection criteria include gender, job position in organization, and nature of international assignments received. The recruited participants were balanced regarding gender. In order to recruit participants as a more homogenous group as possible, the participant's job position and nature of their tasks nature were considered when recruiting and were specifically described when presenting the results.

Participant Selection Strategies

The main sampling approach of this study is purposeful sampling (or theoretical, purposive, judgment method of sampling) (Patton, 2002). Purposeful samples refer to the informants who are selected by researchers according to theoretical needs and research directions. During the process, nominated sampling approach was also used. Nominated

samples or snowball samples are the informants who are introduced to the researcher by the sample initially selected and interviewed. Specifically, the Chinese expatriates who are known to the researcher and are considered to be appropriate for this study were contacted and interviewed first, and then they were requested to introduce additional participants for subsequent interviews. Through this snowball and purposeful sampling method, fifteen individuals were identified to be eligible who fulfilled all the selection criteria. Twelve of them responded and agreed to participate in this research. But two among these twelve people decided to withdraw their participation, thus no data were collected from these withdrawn participants.

Characteristics of Participants

The participants in this study consist of ten Chinese expatriates who were originally from mainland China. Their home organizations are located in major cities in mainland China, including Beijing, Shanghai, Chengdu, Chongqing, and Nanjing. These participants have been working or have worked in the U.S. for international assignments for at least four months. The participants are all middle-aged people between 30 to 45 years old. Six of them are male, and four of them are female. An overview of characteristics of participants is displayed below in Table 3.

Table 3

Characteristics of Participants

Participant Number	Gender	Host Organization Location	Job Function	Length of expatriation (by the time of interview)	Returned yet? (by the time of interview) (Yes / No)
1	Male	New York City	Manufacturing	1 year	N
2	Male	New York City	Finances Consulting	1 year	N
3	Female	Washington, D.C.	Media	1 year	Y
4	Male	Virginia (VA)	IT	8 months	N
5	Female	New York City	Actuarial Science	1.5 years	N
6	Male	New York City	Electrical Engineering	2 years	N
7	Female	San Francisco	Electrical Engineering	3 years	N
8	Male	San Francisco	Electrical Engineering	3 years	N
9	Male	New York City	IT	6 months	Y
10	Female	Minneapolis	Finances Consulting	8 months	Y

Data Collection

The data collection approach used for this study is phenomenological unstructured interviewing. In this section, selection of data collection approach and details of data collection procedure are presented.

Interviewing

Phenomenological unstructured interviews were conducted individually with each participant. According to Van Manen's description (1990), the two main aims of phenomenological interview are to gather narrative descriptions to understand the meaning and nature of participants' experiences, and to establish a conversational relationship between interviewer and interviewee to explore the essence of lived experiences. In this study, the goal of individual interviews is to obtain participants' responses on the meaning and essence of their experiences as a Chinese expatriate from mainland China working in the U.S.

The central question asked at the time of interview is "what are your experiences as a mainland Chinese expatriate living and working in the U.S.?" Probing questions were asked only for the purpose of clarifying information and gathering more comprehensive details of the participant's experiences. The participants were informed that they will be able to discuss questions or concerns during and/or after the interview with the researcher.

Data Collection Procedure

An audiotaped interview was conducted with each of the ten participants. Each of the interviews with participants lasted between 50 minutes and 1.5 hours. The transcripts

and field notes taken by the researcher during interviews did not include names or other information indicating the participants' identity.

A recruitment email was sent to potential participants, including fifteen people initially. Three among all the invited expatriates did not agree to participate in this study, and two others decided to cancel their scheduled interviews. Thus, ten interviews were included in the final dataset. For the participants who were located in the U.S., the interview with each individual took place in a public location convenient for the participants close to their office or home (e.g., a coffee shop, or a café). For those participants who were located outside the U.S., interviews were conducted via Skype.

The interviews started with a brief introduction from the research investigator (the interviewer). The participants were given a short verbal summary of the researcher's background in conducting research, and re-stated briefly regarding the background and purpose of this study (this information was also included in the recruitment email). In order to develop an open and safe communication environment and to build mutual trust, the researcher also emphasized that each of the interviewees has a unique experience, and the researcher's best interest is to hear from them about their full range of expatriate experiences according to the interview question, and there are no right or wrong answers. Then, the researcher also explained that the interview will be audio-recorded during the data collection process to ensure accuracy, but they can be assured that their names and any identifiable information will not be attached to any of their comments in this research report to minimize the risk and reduce their anxiety of being identified. Even though the interviews were audio-recorded, the researcher asked for their permission to take notes

during the interviews in a non-distracting way. All of the participants approved. Field notes were taken during each of the interviews and used to verify audiotape transcription.

All the participants are Chinese (Mandarin) native speakers. They had the opportunity to choose to speak in either Mandarin or English accommodating to their most comfortable communication way. Seven of the interviews were conducted in Mandarin, and the other three interviews were conducted in English. For the interviews that were conducted in Chinese, the researcher (Chinese native speaker and fluent in English) translated the text into English. The translated texts were checked with each individual respectively to ensure the accuracy of messages (such as wording) delivered by the participants.

The guiding question asked during the interviews was “what are your experiences as a mainland Chinese expatriate living and working in the U.S.?” Probing questions were asked only when participant’s comments need to be clarified or to ask for examples, for the purpose of gathering deeper and more comprehensive details of the participant’s experiences. After the interviews, unexpectedly, many participants kindly indicated that they enjoyed the interview, not only because their perspective and experiences were valued by this research, but also because they appreciated it as an opportunity for self-reflection. The researcher promised to keep them updated about when this research will be completed and if any publications or presentations may be generated out of this research in the future.

In general, the interviews were conducted following seven stages suggested by Rubin (1995), including creating natural involvement, encouraging conversational

competence, showing understanding, getting facts and basic descriptions, asking difficult questions, toning down the emotional level, and closing while maintaining contact. For example, on the creating natural involvement stage, participants had received emails from the researcher with a brief introduction on some basic information about the research topic and interview procedures. Before the formal interviews, a short informal chatting was done to get the participants prepared for the formal interviews. This helped develop a positive relationship with interviewees. Regarding showing understanding, participants were always encouraged to be open and frank during the whole interviews. It was pointed out that any experiences shared by the participants will be valued by the researcher. On the closing stage, a gift of up to \$30 (e.g., a silk scarf, or a Holiday gift box, wrapped nicely following the Chinese culture norms) was offered to the participants after the interviews to thank for their participation, and maintain contacts for further questions. In addition, all the participants were asked if the researcher could contact them in the future for clarification questions or not, and all of them were willing to be contacted afterwards.

Data Analysis

For this study, the transcripts were analyzed under the phenomenological approach to text analysis elaborated by Van Manen (1990). Van Manen (1990) discussed the fundamental level of human existence described in four domains consisting of spatiality (lived space), corporeality (lived body), temporality (lived time), and relationality or communality (lived human relations). These four domains were used as the initial focus for reading and interpreting the transcripts. The transcripts were read

through at least three times carefully, and checked for accuracy against the tapes. The essential themes were determined by asking questions like “Does the identified essence of this phenomenon represent the overall experience interpreted in each of the life world existentials?” and “Does this phenomenon lose its fundamental meaning without this theme?” Thus, the question of “what the studied phenomenon is” was always kept in mind by the researcher when analyzing the data and extracting relevant themes from the data.

Coding

The transcripts were transcribed by the researcher, and checked for accuracy against the recordings by listening to the audios at least three times. When unfamiliar terms were used by the participants, the researcher checked notes for clarification on the meanings and spelling, and also checked with the participant for accuracy. Content analysis of the transcripts and field notes was conducted. As a phenomenological researcher for this study, the researcher remained open-minded to the narratives of the phenomenon described by participants throughout the data analysis process. The words, sentences or statements that were relevant and meaningful to the phenomenon were identified. Themes or categories were identified as well as subcategories, where applicable. Properties and dimensions of each category and subcategory were interpreted. Data from incident to incident were compared to explore the similarities and differences to fill out the properties and dimensions. All of the incidents or events described by participants were classified until regular patterns emerged, as suggested by

Lincoln and Guba (1985). Besides interview transcripts, field notes were also coded for further data analysis.

Specifically, the data analysis process involved color-coding manually conducted by the researcher for each participant's transcript. Highlights (different colors) were used to distinguish concepts and categories identified, which involved using the same color to highlight one particular repeating concept in the texts and other related concepts that emerged as a category; and then using a different color to highlight each broad concept and category. Then the narrative data were sorted into common themes across the participants. Highlights of quotes for each category and subcategory are included in the findings.

Bracketing

Bracketing is a critical issue and step for phenomenological researchers to keep their own biases and perceptions in check when analyzing narrative data and interpreting understandings of the phenomenon to allow themes to emerge (Creswell, 2007; Van Manen, 1997). This step allows themes to emerge from participant's points of views, not the researcher's. The researcher kept herself from being influenced by literature review findings on the relevant topics, and tried to remain open-minded to any points of views expressed by the participants. When analyzing the data and throughout the whole research process, the researcher was mindful of the need to respect participants' authentic narratives and their cultural perspectives (Creswell, 2007).

Human Subjects Protection

Identifiable information of the participants in the study was kept in strictest confidence. Confidentiality was and will be strictly maintained in this study. All the collected data, including transcripts, audio tapes, and field notes, were used for this particular study. All the materials collected for data were destroyed after the completion of this study. All the information related to sensitive issues will be kept confidential.

An Institutional Review Board (IRB) application was filed by the research investigator following the application procedures and regulations. The University of Minnesota Institutional Review Board reviews project involving human subjects to ensure two broad standards are upheld: human subjects are not placed at undue risk and informed consent is given for their participation. This researcher has obtained the approval by the University of Minnesota Institutional Review Board prior to the data collection process. Participants were informed of risks and benefits of the study in accordance with the University of Minnesota Institutional Review Board guidelines. Consent forms were collected from the participants before their interviews. The researcher have also ensured that the participants had a decent understanding of the voluntariness (at any stage of this research) of their participation. IRB approval was obtained for this study prior to the start of data collection (Appendix C).

Summary

This chapter described the methodology of hermeneutic phenomenology and its appropriateness in exploring the research question proposed in this study. Then the chapter outlined how the participants of this study were selected, and described the

participants' characteristics in relation to the data analysis, data collection, and data analysis procedures. The human subjects' protection issues and ethical concerns of this study were discussed. The next chapter will present findings based on the hermeneutic analysis of narrative data collected from the participants about their international adjustment experiences as mainland Chinese expatriate.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Introduction

Findings of this study are an interpretation of the narratives of ten mainland Chinese expatriates' international adjustment experiences during expatriate assignments in the U.S. The participants' home organizations are located in several major cities in mainland China, including Beijing, Shanghai, Chengdu, Chongqing, and Nanjing. These participants have been working or have worked in the U.S. for international assignments for at least four months by the scheduled interview time. Phenomenological unstructured interviews were conducted individually with each participant. According to Van Manen's description (1990), the two main aims of phenomenological interview are to gather narrative descriptions to understand the meaning and nature of participants' experiences, and to establish a conversational relationship between interviewer and interviewee to explore the essence of lived experiences. In this study, the goal of individual interviews is to obtain participants' responses related to the meaning and essence of their expatriate experiences as Chinese expatriates from mainland China working and living in the U.S.

Based on the data analysis results, three major themes describing the essence of experiences of expatriates from mainland China emerged, including: (1) mainland Chinese expatriate's journey is a developmental and self-exploratory learning process; (2) mainland Chinese expatriates are seeking effective interactions and meaningful integration with host country nationals; and (3) continuous support and learning

facilitated by their organizations are sought by expatriates from mainland China. In the following sections of this chapter, descriptions of the themes as well as representative quotes from participants are presented. In order to provide authentic “voices” from participants, minor edits on the direct quotes were made only when without editing the message was not clear, including grammatical errors.

Theme One:

Expatriation is a Developmental and Self-exploratory Learning Process

One of the most consistent themes emerging from the data was that mainland Chinese expatriates recognize their expatriate experience and international adjustment as a process of self-advancement and a golden opportunity to examine their own unrealized professional capacities, potentials, and cultural values. The learning and development throughout the expatriation process occurs in various aspects of their professional and personal life, such as increased knowledge of local culture and development of cross-cultural skills, professional development and career promotion, challenging but rewarding experiences with excitement, deeper understanding of self-identity and values, and intercultural competency improvement of being able to shift from “knowing” to “doing” among others. These subthemes under theme one are presented and discussed in the following sessions.

Expatriation is a Self-guided Journey

The expatriates in this study demonstrated their flexibility and initiative taken in finding the answers relevant to their international work and personal life. With limited access to formal resources for preparation, most of the participants had to seek out

additional information on their own, especially on their first trip overseas. However, the information and guidance collected may not be thorough or accurate. After their arrival, the participants did not necessarily have more access to needed support. Most of the participants received a half-day or full-day orientation from the host organizations, but this was, as a rule, just a routine orientation for newcomers rather than customized training for expatriates from overseas. Only four of them were assigned a formal mentor, but the rest were basically seeking out assistance on their own.

All the expatriates contacted or tried to get contacts with veteran expatriates from their own companies or somebody else from other companies they knew before departure in order to get advice on expatriation preparation and common mistakes to avoid. Four of the expatriates were the first expatriates ever who were sent to work in the U.S. within their company, which added another layer of difficulty of finding resources:

Working and living in the U.S. is a self-learning process. I wanted support for sure, but the reality is that nobody would have extra time for you, even from my supervisor or other Chinese expatriates whom I came here with. And I did not want to bother people, either. If I, myself, could find out, I would just count on myself. So, I basically explored the process by myself..... Yes, it took a lot of time, and I made a lot of mistakes. But it seemed there was no other better ways to approach this. (Participant #2)

Another participant reflected:

I had to answer phone calls in English. Nobody told me what to do so that I just had to figure it out. However, at the end of the day, there were a lot of gains

out of this. Some learning seemed not to be directly related to my work or my professional technique and skills, but it was very valuable and made me proud of myself. I became more confident when I talked to my colleagues. Even though I might still make the same mistakes, the feelings of seeing myself grow with limited available support are worthless. (Participant #8)

Despite the difficulties of pre-departure orientation and lack of help on-site, most of the participants reported that they developed an awareness of new cultural norms during the international assignments, learned through experiences, and became more tolerant to ambiguity in navigating the complex political and cross-cultural issues on their assignments. They were eager to learn, excited about learning new things, self-motivated, and stayed flexible and reflective especially when facing conflicts or difficult circumstances. The participants viewed this experience of taking initiative and learning to make decisions without much direction as a “valuable life skill”, which they might not be able to acquire in Chinese context.

It's Privileged!: Expatriation is Desirable

For mainland Chinese expatriates, working and living in the U.S. is not only a way to learn more about a new culture, but also a golden opportunity to advance their expertise in their fields that could lead to a progression in their career and personal growth. Expatriation is viewed as a promising opportunity for extensive professional development and career growth as a return. Although the Chinese expatriates were assigned by their home organizations to work overseas, they were all surprisingly willing to relocate and experience foreign cultures. Although they knew the possible challenges

and steep learning curve of performing new tasks in totally new environment, they still thought about this experience as a privileged opportunity.

Over half of the participants in this study stated that the opportunities of taking international assignments are extremely competitive back in their home organizations. One of the Chinese expatriates mentioned that: “I was so lucky that I got assigned for this job. It was not easy, but I can do it!”

Other expatriates also expressed:

I was so happy that I could come to [the company in the U.S.] to work for a year. So many of my colleagues wanted this, and we were competing with each other. My family was very happy too. My wife and my child are visiting me this summer. I am sure I will learn a lot from the American company and my co-workers here. (Participant #3)

As we all know, the U.S. is the best in the technology fields. This is such a great opportunity for me to come here and learn about the advanced technology that I could bring it back to [the home organization]. My colleagues back in China are actually very jealous of me, but [the home organization] cannot afford that many employees to work here. So far, yes, I have been exposed to many learning opportunities and new things, sometimes intimidating, but I am staying strong. Even though communicating in English is not easy, I am trying my best and I love to challenge myself! (Participant #8)

My supervisor and co-workers cared about my career goals and career needs. Especially my supervisor, he asked me about what objectives I have and

what goals I would like to achieve through this year of expatriation. He generously provided me resources, and referred me to other professionals who may be good people to connect with. This could very rarely happen in Chinese workplace, at least for myself. My boss in [the home organization] usually tells me what to do and what I can do for the office and the company, but not to care about the professional development that I want to develop. Over time, I have got used to it. Thus, I felt flattered and much appreciated it, which I was well treated and valued as a unique person. (Participant #10)

One expatriate working in the New York City explained that his home organization is doing business with the host organization in the U.S. His work will be extremely important for the future of the home organization. Thus his home organization relies on him and promised him a promotion to managerial level right after successfully completing his expatriation.

In addition, from Chinese home organization's perspective, sending expatriates overseas seems a strategy to advance expertise and gain experience of international operations:

As my area of expertise is not fully developed in China, I cherished my opportunity to work in the U.S. host organization as an employee and also as a trainee. I was able to learn from my host organization about how the things are done, involved throughout the process, and brought the lessons learned back to my home organization. (Participant #6)

Another participant also shared:

My job needs a lot of travel and relocation. [My organization in China] developed employee rotation plan for us to work in different locations in the world, including offices overseas as well as the offices in different cities in China. I could not spend a lot of time with my family all the time, but I still loved my job. I enjoyed working with different people in different places under different cultures. Given the frequent travel and relocation, I was able to get promoted in a faster pace. The relocation opportunities in [the home organization] are very popular and competitive because of the promotion offers. (Participant #4)

I think generally opportunities of working abroad are desired by everybody. We come here to “*dujin*” [“镀金”, it means “gild gold”]. When we go back to China, we are becoming more competitive than others who do not have work abroad or training abroad experiences. These valuable experiences are highly recognized by [the home organization] and other companies too, at least based on what I know. I tried every single possibility to seize this opportunity. Fortunately, I got this position. (Participant #9)

Developing Intercultural Awareness and Competency

Expatriation for Chinese expatriates is a journey full of learning opportunities and new experiences. Eight out of ten participants used key words, such as “eye-opening”, and “life-changing”, to describe their expatriate experiences. Even though they have also expressed their immediate anxieties and challenges related to living and working in the U.S., this expatriate journey and the international assignments that they were working on

were definitely worthwhile to experience to advance their personal growth and professional development.

Throughout the expatriation process, the Chinese expatriates gained knowledge about the American culture, especially working styles and workplace culture. Some participants mentioned that what they had learned about the new culture prior to their arrival, either through formal training or informal learning, may not necessarily be true in reality. For example:

I've learned a lot. The American culture is complicated, just like Chinese culture. My colleagues here are all different. When I prepared myself for working in the U.S. prior to my departure, I learned that the communication styles are different between China and the U.S. But many American people are not quite direct sometimes, which is different from what I learned about the "direct" communications in America. I made a lot of mistakes because of that notion. It takes time for me to get rid of the wrong impression developed before and be more objective. (Participant #7)

Another expatriate also described her similar experiences:

Before I went to the U.S., I tried all my best to know more about American culture through internet, social media, and other sources. But after I came here, I realized that many things I have learned are not completely true. And my perspectives and experiences are changing. It took long time for me to get a bigger picture of the local culture. When working here, there are new things

for me to learn every day. I am always expecting what is not expected.

(Participant #5)

According to the participants' descriptions, the Chinese expatriates have significantly increased knowledge about local culture, and improved intercultural competency and practical skills throughout their entire expatriation time. The data indicated that experiencing various aspects of the local culture and improvement of their skills and competency is a major part of their international adjustment procedure. It is also a time-consuming process since their knowledge is tested and validated over the time and their perspectives on culture are changing constantly as well.

Multiple ways of skill development were discussed by the participants. For most of the participants, they basically learned by themselves about the local culture, especially for those who came alone. These participants consulted with previous expatriates in their home organizations prior to departure and relied heavily on veteran expatriates. However, as stated earlier this approach helps only to a certain degree, and is also risky since the incorrect information may be received. Those who came to the host organizations in teams, seemed to have access to more support, but mainly support from each other. Therefore, the collected information could still be inconsistent and confusing to the expatriates. In addition, several participants mentioned that having a supervisor or mentor who is knowledgeable about foreign cultures and/or had previous expatriation experience is helpful in providing Chinese expatriates with access to authoritative resources who also show empathy to their circumstances.

One of the participants who worked in the New York City said:

I finally had opportunity to understand the communication style differences between the U.S. and China, direct versus indirect styles. I could not understand it when I heard about it before from other people who used to work here. I just needed to experience it myself to truly understand it. My supervisor helped me understand the differences between direct and indirect styles. She is so knowledgeable because she used to work with expatriates from South Korea before and she had a lot of experience supervising expatriates from other cultures. I was very grateful and felt so fortunate to have her as my supervisor. She also assigned a mentor to me as well to navigate with me step by step during my expatriate journey. (Participants #4)

However, not all participants were lucky to have cross-culturally competent managers or colleagues who can provide accurate information and guidance.

English Communication Barriers Get in the Way

One of the main challenges that Chinese expatriates were experiencing is language proficiency. All the participants expressed that they were concerned about their English skills and did not feel confident to speak up. The difficulties in engaging in conversations with colleagues often impeded social interactions, undermined the Chinese expatriates' self-efficacy, and greatly increased Chinese expatriates' stress level.

I thought I could improve my English skills working in the U.S. But the reality is that there is no time for me to think about how to improve my English. The only thing you can feel is the anxiety and difficulties due to insufficient English skills. I had to jump right in to my expatriate assignments after I came to

the U.S. The daily conversation and work was happening every minute, and nobody would wait for me until my English is improved. (Participant #3)

After several times I could not understand what my colleagues were talking about, they started to avoid talking to me. It was very uncomfortable for me. Probably they tried to avoid me because they might not want to embarrass me. But I actually wouldn't mind making mistakes when talking in English as long as I would have the opportunities to talk to them. Or, maybe they just did not like to slow down their spoken speed, and did not want to repeat what they have said once again if I did not understand. (Participant #9)

The study findings suggest that improving Chinese expatriate's language proficiency may not be as simple as expected but needs further exploration. Improvement of English skills may happen at different levels, such as usage of English in professional situations or in social contexts. Interestingly, some participants felt social level English is more difficult to navigate than professional English; while some others thought more time was needed to successfully master professional English.

As a person who never studied in English-speaking country before, I definitely felt worried and incompetent for my English, both at work and after work. I felt that professional English is easier for me to get used to, since if I remembered the most often used professional terms related to work, I felt more confident when I communicated with my colleagues. However, when I tried to be social after work, it was such a pain that I cannot keep up with people and I did not know what they were talking about, maybe something on the news. I had

hard time to adjust to American people's speed of speaking. Usually people speak too fast for me to understand, and with a lot of slangs. I wish they could talk a bit slower to me, but they didn't. (Participant #7)

Another expatriate shared some different experiences:

For me, how to communicate with colleagues about work in English is the greatest challenge. During my work meetings, every time I wanted to express my ideas, I had to process it in my mind how to say it out in English and then spoke up. But until then, somebody else, usually my American colleagues, would have already said something that was basically the same idea as mine. So it was really competitive for me to survive. I am not saying that I tried to impress anybody by vocalizing my ideas, but I just wish to have the same opportunity and the freedom to express my professional ideas without language barriers. I felt myself like a disable person with speaking disability, which was a very bad feeling and often draining my energy and passion for my work. (Participant #10)

As predicted, English language proficiency is a major barrier for Chinese expatriates professionally and personally. More often, it is the confidence level and low self-efficacy that makes Chinese expatriates hesitant to step out of their comfort zone and be expressive. As one of the participants commented: "Once I was told by my supervisor that 'You are too paranoid with your English, we can understand you and you can express your ideas in English to us. You should definitely be more confident.'"

Cultural Adjustment is Challenging

Expatriates in this study have all more or less experienced culture shock (Adler, 1975) when they encountered cultural differences compared to their own culture, and misunderstanding or misinterpretation in certain unfamiliar circumstances. The participants noted that during earlier stages of their expatriate journey, they felt excited and were amazed by anything new. However, this honeymoon period was not long and was followed by feelings of isolation, homesickness, insecurity, stress and anxiety. Eventually, a majority of the participants in this study seemed to successfully go through the darkest time and dealt with their discomfort by seeking advice, learning and reflection, and family's reassurance. But the whole process of transition indeed took time and was challenging if no adequate support was provided.

Cultural adjustment caused tremendous stress to expatriates. As the participants noted, dealing with stress was a major part of their expatriate journey. They sought effective strategies and additional support from other people or the organization in order to better deal with stress:

I worked with some American expatriates in China before I came to the U.S. I thought I would be able to interact with American colleagues better, since interacting with Americans was not a brand new thing to me. However, it was actually a different story that when you were in American context and when you came here as outside, the dynamic of interactions became different. (Participant #5)

As a new employee, I might have experienced the same stress with other new employees who came to the office at the same time as me, no matter where they are from, either Americans or internationals. But I must have more stress than Americans or those whose first language is English. I wanted to carry on my work duties and completed them well, but many barriers made me feel incompetent and left far behind. I was the only Chinese in my team, and I did not really have any additional assistance or support from my team members or leader. To certain degree, I appreciated this since they viewed me as a person same as them; however, sometimes as an international, who is first time working in the U.S., I did need a bit more extra help. (Participant #1)

Several participants described the transition time as the darkest time with feelings of desperation and struggling with finding solutions to manage stress and anxiety. Some participants frankly expressed feelings of frustration and insecurity during the adjustment transition time. For example, in one of the interviews, the participant stated:

I was so struggling when I just arrived in the U.S. I did not know anybody. There were so many things that I did not understand. English that I learned when I was in China seemed useless. The language, culture, and some behaviors in various situations simply did not make sense to me. Obviously, American colleagues and some local people I know here might hold different values or perspectives towards certain situations, which they either did not see the situation through the same lens as mine, or some contradictions did not bother them in the same way as they puzzled me. I tried to find a resolution to ease the

situations, but the more I tried, the more mistakes I made. I thought about them a lot, trying to figure out what was going on and understand why the conflicts occurred. I usually started from myself, and thought through if there was anything wrong that I did. However, the reality was that it still seemed unresolved given out different cultural background and different ways of understanding things and doing work. I gradually stopped trying, since there seemed no way out, like we are in different worlds. I did not feel confident but desperate. (Participant #8)

Although cultural adjustment process is challenging, after certain time, the participants grew professionally and personally, and started to feel more comfortable working and living in the U.S. All the participants seemed eventually adjusted, but the time for completing the transition varied for each individual. Every expatriate in the study, even the ones who faced difficulties in cultural adjustment for a longer time, recognized the value of this experience, and most of them had wanted to extend their stay. What's more, all of the participants expressed their willingness of taking expatriate assignments again in the future, if available.

Discovering Self-identity: "I Am Learning about China in America!"

As mainland Chinese working in the U.S., most of the expatriates spent a great amount of time during the interviews reflecting on themselves, inquiring who they are in this American workplace, why they came here, and what they have developed through this experience.

As mentioned earlier, many of the participants described this working overseas experience as “eye-opening” and offering them an opportunity not only to know a new culture, but also to learn more about themselves. By working in a foreign culture and interacting with people from another culture, the Chinese expatriates became more conscious about characteristics of Chinese culture and how Chinese culture affected individual’s behaviors. One of the participants shared an example of how he got to know more about cultural differences:

Even though I was struggling at the beginning, I would still choose to come and work here if I am offered another chance. I learned a lot from my colleagues in the U.S. They told me what they knew about Chinese culture and Chinese people. Some things they talked to me were not quite true actually, but some were very interesting that I had never realized but it is true. For example, when I attended business meetings in U.S. workplaces, everyone needs to wear a name tag. In China, we never, at least very rarely, do so. I told this to my colleague when I attended meeting and was wearing a name tag the first time, and he asked “Then, how do people know who you are?” I said: “It seems that it does not really matter who I am. I usually go with a group of people, like colleagues from my office. As long as others know which office we are from, they do not really care who I am. Then, my American colleague seemed very interested and said: “Is it because Chinese culture is collectivist and we are individualist?” I actually was not so sure if this is a good example to show the differences between collectivism and individualism, but the conversation just let me reflect on my

behaviors or habits that may be different from other cultural groups. Also, I learned the terms collectivism and individualism, and explored more after the conservation. Without the inquiries from my colleagues and my own reflection, I would never better recognize my culture values. (Participant #4)

Many participants have expressed that working in the U.S. is not only letting them learn about the American culture and workplace environment, but also providing them reflective opportunities to learn about their home culture from a more objective standpoint. As one of the participant commented: “I am learning about China in America.” Another expatriate explained that the experience of coming to the U.S. expanded his understanding of Chinese culture, which is regionally and culturally diverse even within China but can be underestimated by people who may oversimplify and perceive China as “one culture.” It was pointed out by participants that working overseas is to see cultural diversity, and become more aware of its complexity and multi-layers displaying in real life:

When I was in China, most of people around me were from the same province. But now I get to know people from different parts of China and from all over the world. It is interesting to get to know more about where they grew up and what they have experienced. I found that many of my stereotypes towards other parts of China were naïve because it is not true and I am glad that now I know more about it. I became more interested to know more about the different culture and diversity within our own culture. (Participant #6)

Three of the participants have completed their expatriation and were located in China during the interviews. They also reflected on their re-entry process and self-reflections after returning to China:

I missed the time of working in [the host organization] a lot!! I remembered that during the last few months of expatriation, I felt much more comfortable living and working in the U.S., and be able to navigate the life in a new culture. Then soon, I had to come back to [the home organization]. Eight months was very short, and time flies. After I was back, I was trying to think what has changed for me. I think my horizons of worldviews have broadened, professionally and personally. Also, I become understand better why and how some patterns of my lifestyles have developed over the time. (Participant #9)

I had some hard time to get back to my normal life when I came back to China. I liked the teamwork and the relationships with my supervisor when I was in the U.S. My supervisor and my manager were like my friends. I wish that my boss here at [the home organization] could also be like that. (Participant #10)

The entire process of expatriation exhibited enriched cultural awareness for the Chinese expatriates to better understand their own culture by comparing it with a different culture.

Shifts from “Knowing” to “Doing”

Some participants mentioned that there is always a gap between “I know it” and “I can do it”. Through multiple sources, expatriates are able to learn the host culture, the rules of new workplace, and societal value system. However, “knowing” versus “doing”

are totally different things and time is needed for expatriates to build the skills and capacity to shift from solely knowing toward doing effectively.

I tried my best to learn American culture. But when I try to apply what I know about the culture, I still cannot apply effectively. Sometimes, right after I did something or said something, I realized that I made a mistake. But I still cannot prepare myself better next time when similar situations happen.

(Participant #6)

Before I came here, I learned about the individualistic culture and collectivistic culture, which is that U.S. is a representative of individualistic society and Chinese culture is a collectivistic culture. But they are very abstract concepts, and I did not really understand how it may affect my daily work then. But fortunately, I gradually understand a little bit, and know better how to apply the “rules” in my daily operation. (Participant #7)

Another expatriate also shared a personal story:

Before I came to [the host organization], I sought out information, knowledge, and what I need to prepare to work and live here. But later on, I figured that what I found out was not correct, or at least not 100% correct. I still needed to explore the specific situations, make decisions, try out, make mistakes, and then learn lessons from the mistakes. For example, I heard that in the U.S., you can make friends with your manager, and be frank with the manager about your accomplishments, promotion intention, and challenges. Later I figured that it was not as that simple as what I heard. In reality, it can be very complicated. I

made some mistakes. Even I thought my manager was very supportive, valued my perspectives, and cared about my concerns, I found out that in some organizations like [the host organization], the organization culture is actually very hierarchical. The other day, during a meeting with my supervisor and the team, I made some critical comments that seemed too critical especially for my supervisor. I did not mean to do it, and did not try to offend anybody. I thought that it was acceptable given the “free” culture as I assumed. However, after the meeting, I was kindly warned by one of my colleagues about the inappropriateness. I learned lessons from this experience. I deeply appreciated this unpleasant experience. I could not learn and improve without the mistakes.

(Participant #8)

Expatriate experience is an experiential learning process for expatriates to develop solid knowledge and concrete skills to navigate the new culture and new jobs. The fact is that the knowledge developed through training or informal learning is usually not sufficient for expatriates to navigate their international assignment and workplace culture effectively. “Experiencing” and “learning by doing” seemed to be how the participants developed the capability of living and working in the U.S., which enables the shift from solely “knowing” to “doing.”

In order to achieve the goal of shifting from “knowing” to “doing”, participants in this study mentioned multiple sources of support that were helpful for them in making the transition smoothly or shortening the time for completing the transition. The sources mentioned included learning from mentors, learning from host national professionals,

learning from mistakes, and various support from organizations for professional development and social interaction. The participants also mentioned that the transition took a great amount of time:

My mentor helped me so much and provided me with solid advices. We built great professional relationship that I did feel hesitant at all to ask her anything that I had confusions. For those concerns that I might feel afraid to talk to my supervisor, but I could discuss with my mentor freely. She always frankly provided me constructive feedback, and I did not take it as hurting my feelings even some feedback was a bit harsh and very direct; because we trust each other.
(Participant #3)

I gradually learned that there is no right or wrong answer to anything, since everything “all depends”. I had several friends who took expatriate assignments before in [the host organization] or other companies in the U.S. When we talk to each other about our experience, it could be all varied or even opposite. I gradually learned that everything and every person may be unique.
(Participant #7)

Family Provides Reassurance and Support

Seven of the expatriates who participated in the study are married and have kids as well. Only one among the seven expatriates was traveling with his wife and a little kid for the entire expatriation period, and others' families were mostly staying in China and some of them just visited for a very short period of time. All of these expatriates

mentioned their challenges and anxieties as expatriates who had spouses and children to take care:

My wife came with me as a dependent, so she could not work at all based on her visa regulations. She had to take a leave from her work in China for my expatriation. Fortunately, my expatriate assignment was just one year. We have a child, and we would love our child to study broad in the U.S. in the future. As parents, we want to come and see this country, and experience it first. So this expatriation experience was also a perfect opportunity for our own personal life.

(Participants #2)

As presented previously, Chinese expatriates are determined and motivated to work overseas in the U.S. to advance their career and promotion opportunities; however, some of the participants discovered additional and more important gains from this experience:

The greatest take-away from my expatriate experience was that I gradually realized that I might have worked too much and should have spent more time with my family than before. Even for my work abroad experiences, I thought I am doing this because I would need to advance my career and get promoted sooner when I get back to China, but I did not even think about letting my family members to visit me here and travel around in the U.S. My wife asked me once and she also wanted our kid to visit the U.S. since they had never traveled overseas before. But I said “no”, because their visit might be a distraction from my focus on work. I actually felt terribly sorry about this. Many of my American

colleagues, they work hard too, but they seem to be able to balance work and family better. They seem to make sure to take vacation time with their family and children, which I highly value but did not do well myself. (Participants #3)

One of the expatriates reflected that he relied on his wife and his wife's presence had positively influenced his transition and performance in workplace:

My wife came here with me and stayed with me for two months, which was extremely helpful. Her English is much more fluent than mine. She helped to deal with the living issues and settling down, like searching for housing, setting up bank account, setting up health insurance, moving in to our apartment, and so on. I just could not imagine how difficult it would be without her at the very beginning of my expatriate assignments. (Participants #7)

Another expatriate also shared:

My wife was actually very helpful because she once carried on international assignments in U.K. several years before my expatriation. Prior to my departure, she gave me a personal and informal orientation of dos and don'ts about working overseas based on her own previous experiences. I found that the advice given by her was extremely helpful, but I also figured how working in the U.S. was different in U.K. However, by all means, my wife's support and insider suggestions were very useful. My wife stayed with me for the first three weeks. She liked to work and live in the U.K., and thought it might be similar to work and live in the U.S., but it's different. So for her, it was a culture shock too. But there were a lot of things that she was familiar, so it was indeed much easier for

her to adjust then I did. She was clearly my mentor in this regard. (Participants #9)

In this case, the expatriate derived not only moral support but also cultural insight from his spouse during his assignment. An expatriate assignment can be an isolated existence if the expatriate cannot find friends. One of the Chinese expatriates witnessed another colleague from mainland China suffering from the loneliness of being on assignment without a spouse or family while enduring the stress of working weekends with minimal support from American colleagues.

Reasons for accepting an assignment change over time when family is taken into account. For expatriates from countries such as China, where families generally have close bonds, being away from parents and spouses can be challenging and frustrating, and thus negatively influence their adjustment and transition to the new workplace in the U.S. For two expatriates among the participants, living far away from their parents was the biggest challenge over other things. Both of the expatriates themselves and their spouses are the only child in their respective families. When the expatriates lived far away from home, the responsibilities of taking care of the four over 70 aged seniors (their parents) as well as their little children all fall on their spouses' shoulders. Both of them summed this up:

I think the biggest challenge was being away from family. My spouse suffered a lot, and the family responsibilities upon her were overwhelming. I could not imagine how much hard work she had done, and she was always supportive for me. But I just felt so sorry for her, and that stress and worries

definitely influenced my work. I did enjoy working there most of the time for the purpose of my professional development, but family is always important to me, too. (Participants #3)

It was notable that most of the Chinese expatriates in this study did not bring their families with them to the U.S. given their spouse's family obligations at home back in China. Most of these families have only one child, and some of these couples are the only child in their respective families, too. Also, all the spouses who could not accompany the expatriates are full-time employees in Chinese organizations. Taking time off for several months even for a couple of years was not even possible. In addition, given the work authorization limitation under the U.S. policy, the dependents could not work in the U.S. Therefore, most of the spouses chose not to come to the U.S., and take care of families in China.

When the expatriate worked overseas, all the family responsibilities fell onto their spouse's shoulders. The spouse needed to stay home and take care of their child as well as both of their aged parents. It was challenging for the entire family to balance out the expatriate's professional career and personal life, which was one of main sources of stress and worries for the Chinese expatriates. Despite all these challenges from work and family, the Chinese expatriates were staying strong, tended to focus on long-term gains, and were still able to gain understandings and support from their spouses and families. The findings point towards the Chinese expatriates' resilience, commitment to professional career, and long-term career visions.

Summary

In summary, Chinese expatriate's journey is a self-developmental process with gains in professional expertise, intercultural competency, and progressive career advancement. Even though they mostly had to learn and explore on their own with limited formal training and guidance, they still perceived this experience as a rewarding and privileged opportunity. Throughout the entire expatriation process, the Chinese expatriates were struggling with difficulties in workplaces and outside work context due to their insufficient English proficiency, lack of knowledge of local culture, and unfamiliar working relationships and communication styles in the U.S. Particularly for the expatriates from mainland China, most of their spouses and families were not accompanied with them and mostly staying in China to continue work and take care of families. The Chinese expatriates indeed suffered from feelings of isolation and loneliness for keeping away from spouses and families.

However, despite all the various challenges, frustration, and stress caused to the Chinese expatriates and their families, the participants of this study showed enormous openness, extreme resiliency, and strong curiosity to new experiences. Even though the transition process was lengthy and frustrating, the Chinese expatriates were taking this stressful experience as a wonderful learning and growth opportunity. Another gem from the findings was that the Chinese expatriates were not only learning about American culture, but also learning about their own (Chinese) through a different lens by living and working in another culture. Eventually, the Chinese expatriates increased their capacity

to deal with ambiguity, to manage stress, and to maintain positive attitude toward work and personal life.

Theme Two:

Chinese Expatriates are Seeking Meaningful Integration with Host Country Nationals

Results of this study indicated that Chinese expatriates were seeking integration and effective interaction with host country nationals during their expatriation. The host country nationals were perceived as key informants about workplace culture and business operations in the host organization context. The participants expressed their expectations on building friendship with host country nationals to better understand the new culture, company details, and integration to American life style. However, it was difficult for the participants to build desired friendships as outsiders. Different communication styles between the U.S. and China and different relationship with supervisors and mentors were all new knowledge and skills for new Chinese expatriates to absorb, which was challenging for them to master within a relatively short period of time. The findings implied that integration among Chinese expatriates and host country nationals is a two-street that involves Chinese expatriates' preparation but also needs host country nationals' acceptance of expatriate's presence and capabilities of effectively interacting with expatriates.

Host Country Nationals Help Uncover Workplace Culture

Expatriates learned the rules of the new work culture and societal value system through experiences with colleagues at the host country operation. Expatriates interacted

with host country colleagues who taught them the subtleties of the culture and unspoken rules of the workplace:

I feel like in any countries, there are always some “hidden rules” in the workplace that are not written but definitely exist. As newcomer to any new workplace, it is so important to know how to navigate those rules and work with them. It’s not a bad thing at all, and it’s just a culture. I think it is a skill to have a know-how as that you are an adaptable and smart person. So, after I came to my host organization in the U.S., I desired to know the “hidden rules” here, because I believe they existed too even in the American culture. What I found out was that they indeed existed, however, the difficult part of the process was that I did not have any source or connection to learn about them. (Participant #10)

The narrative data also indicated that understanding and effectively navigating workplace culture and company politics was important to expatriates’ work performance. Friendship built with local colleagues seemed to provide the key venue to be informed about the company details in a timely manner.

Building Friendship as an Outsider

It took time to establish these relationships. Seven expatriates did not join a team of expatriates on assignment but worked exclusively with the host country colleagues and managers. They seemed to experience a lot of stress and challenges. They often described their experience as “isolated.” Forming friendship with co-workers and neighbors supported them in their professional work and personal life. The three participants, who joined expatriate teams, felt isolation, too. Overall, for the Chinese

expatriates in this study, seeking integration and effective interaction with host country nationals (HCN) is a major element of their expatriation journey.

One participant was struggling with cooperating with host country nationals in the host organization. This participant said:

One of my American colleagues was always bossing me around. He even said: “You do not know about how we do work here, let me tell you and please follow me.....” When I just arrived at [the host organization], my English was very poor, even I am still working on it now, but it was much worse at the beginning. It seemed some of my colleagues did not really care about it and could not understand or imagine how difficult it can be to use English on a daily basis for those from a non-English speaking county, like me. When I was in college, I took very limited English classes, not like the younger generation in China now. It was really hurtful to hear my colleagues saying that. That colleague of mine often just ignored me, and talked very fast with other colleagues when I was around. (Participant #5)

Another participant also stated that:

Because of my poor English, I became a quiet person. I am actually a very talkative person if speaking my mother language. My personality seemed to have changed. I remembered one time during the first week of arrival, my colleague kindly asked me: “Why are you so quiet over there? Join us!” She was just being nice and invited to their conversations, and I would absolutely like to join. However, at that point of time, I just could not because I was not feeling

confident. I did not want to make others feel uncomfortable talking to me, either.

(Participant #8)

Many other participants also mentioned that they do not feel “welcomed” or “included” in the workplace in their host organizations. However, over half of these participants attributed the situation to themselves.

I could not blame anyone else. I am the person who accepted the job offer to work here, so it should be my responsibility to work harder and proactively reach out to my American colleagues. If they could not understand me or support me as the way I expected, that’s fine for me. I had to think positively to feel better for myself too. If there was anything that I could perform well due to my lack of abilities, I had to try to improve myself and do better to change their views on me, and I cannot beg their acceptance with the excuse as a foreigner.

(Participant #7)

In [the host organization], I had two colleagues in my office who were originally from China, but were born and raised here in the U.S., the ABCs [American Born Chinese]. They are bilingual. They can speak a little bit Mandarin. I thought that it would be easier for us to connect and build friendship more naturally. But it was not easy as what I expected. They seemed they were not even interested in Chinese culture at all, and they did not really express any empathy or care to me as I expected. Maybe I expected too much. I tended to ask these two colleagues when I had questions, but they were actually not the ones who were willing to provide help. (Participant #6)

As “outsiders”, the participants experienced support neither from the home office nor from the local community. Expatriates experienced lack of sense of belonging and integration in the host organizations. Many expatriates have expressed that they generally figured out how to navigate the workplace and the local culture on their own. Several participants mentioned that some of their colleagues have approached them proactively, which was a great help in resolving their difficult conditions and reducing unnecessary stress:

One of my colleagues in my office was very nice to me. He is very interested in Chinese culture, and asked me a lot of questions about China. We developed very good friendship. I also learned a lot from him about [the host organization] and American culture. He also told me where to buy furniture and groceries, and where some Chinese restaurants are located nearby. He and his family also invited me to their home to celebrate Christmas last year, which was my cherished memory. His kindness and support made my life much easier. I could be open and honest to him. When I made mistakes or not aware of something that I needed to know, especially about [the company] politics and workplace culture, he always kindly reminded me and gave me constructive advice. I became more confident in my work benefited from his support. He also introduced me to other people in the office and I made more friends through him. I really appreciated this. (Participant #9)

Several of my American colleagues have taken international assignments before in other countries, so they understood what I was going through. They

generously shared with me tips for surviving and thriving based on their previous experiences. When I told them some of my challenges or difficulties of navigating new culture and new job responsibilities, I could tell that they felt for me and they tried to help me. I was so grateful for their understanding and support, and those little things meant a lot to me. I could not imagine I could complete my expatriation without them! (Participant #4)

Based on participants' descriptions, they seemed to feel more confident interacting with host country professionals to build friendships after a certain period of time. The participants mentioned that the determining factor for them to successfully build friendship was the curiosity about each other's culture. The barriers to building friendships included language proficiency and lack of confidence, especially during the early stages of their expatriation. After their English seemed to be improved, their confidence increased accordingly to step out of their comfort zone and proactively interact with local colleagues in order to build friendship.

Navigating Different Communication Styles

Many participants noted their difficulties in navigating different communication styles in business settings:

It seemed that I interacted with people from my home country more than the time with my American colleagues. I felt much more comfortable to talk to Chinese people, not only because of the language, but also they could truly understand what I was talking about. Interaction with Americans was different from communicating with Chinese. (Participant #1)

The participants shared some examples to specify the different communication styles that they experienced:

I learned a word “small talk”, it took me a while to know about this word and what it really means, and then I realized that I was experiencing it every day. Small talks are very common in daily conversations and meetings. I remembered that during every meeting on Mondays, our team usually spent about 15 minutes to talk about what each of us did last weekend, the weather, vacation plans, and so on. Our meeting was only 1 hour. I could not see why we kept doing this and took so much time from the official meeting. At the beginning, I was usually very quiet, listened to others, and waited for them to finish and then start our meeting. It seems to me that in China, we usually jump to meeting agenda directly, and try to finish the agenda items on time. It seems that nobody would share their personal life in a public or work meeting. I would talk to my close friend or a colleague whom I am very close to about my personal life, but would not prefer to do so with everybody publicly. (Participant #7)

Interestingly, another expatriate also mentioned her experiences with “small talk” as a way of building friendship and trust with others, which brought in new perspectives about how people may react to different communication styles differently based on personal preferences:

I liked my American colleagues asking me about what’s going with my work and my life. I remembered usually prior to meetings, my supervisor, the facilitator of the work meetings, always asked everybody to share anything

interesting that we'd like to share with the group. I thought that it was always the most interesting part of the meeting, and I got to know more about each person through those informal and non-work related conversations. Otherwise, I would have no opportunity to get to know each other and bond with others. (Participant #6)

Given the American culture as a "melting pot", working in the U.S. is not always working with American natives but with people from all over the world. Five of the Chinese expatriate participants worked on projects in multicultural teams. Most of them described their experiences working with people from different culture that brought in diverse communication styles. One expatriate shared:

My supervisor in [host organization] was originally from India. He immigrated to the U.S. long time ago. I felt that he definitely has his own communication style that is different from my other American colleagues. It's not a bad thing at all, and I actually enjoyed the diverse experience that I could encounter while working in the U.S. (Participant #2)

The different communication styles between the East and the West also brought difficulties to Chinese expatriates when they worked in teams. A majority of the participants reported that the work pace in America was fast and nobody would intentionally slow down for newcomers. The cultural differences in communication styles add another layer to the transition for Chinese expatriates compared to regular new employees. Several expatriates shared:

For my job, almost all the tasks were group projects. I needed to work with my colleagues, divided the tasks, and reported back to each other by certain deadlines. Due to my English proficiency, I felt bad because I thought I must have been a burden to my other colleagues in the teams. (Participant #10)

In China, I mostly work in teams too, but it seems different here. I think one reason was that my English was not good enough, which made communications between my colleagues and myself a bit difficult. Another thing, I think, was that I did not quite understand the culture and politics in [the host organization] especially during the time when I just arrived. But I had to jump right into my work as soon as I could and tried to shorten the transition time, because I worked there for only six months. I had to get started as soon as possible and fit in to the group. I think that I had tried my best and I did well, but it was just too stressed for me to handle. I wish I could have more time and have access to more support to get used to the working styles here. (Participant #9)

The general pattern of cultural characteristics and communication style differences might not apply to each individual. Working in such a diverse society, it was essential for Chinese expatriates to be mindful that it may depend on a specific situation when navigating their communication with American natives, and try not to make far-reaching assumptions or judgements:

I was told that American people are very direct when communicating. But what I found out was that most American people I interacted with always gave praise and compliments to other people, while Chinese people sometimes may

directly criticize especially if it's from individuals at high level positions to subordinates. How should I understand direct versus indirect communication then? And each individual American that I knew was different too. (Participant #5)

Shifting from Working with Chinese Supervisors to Working with an American Supervisor

Some Chinese expatriates of this study also discussed their experience working with supervisors in host organizations and compared it with working with Chinese supervisors back home. The participants seemed to enjoy the flexibility and self-directedness of their work under the American style of supervision:

Working with American supervisors was different from Chinese supervisors in general. My supervisor in [the home organization] was always strict toward his fellows. But my American supervisor was really nice. The other day, I was preparing a presentation for our clients, and I was very nervous to make any mistake and extremely worried. But she told me: "Don't be too nervous about your work, just enjoy, and it is okay to be vulnerable." I greatly appreciated my supervisor's kindness and support that helped me manage my stress. Some little kind words goes a long way. (Participant #6)

I was so surprised that I was allowed to make mistakes. It probably will never happen in China or generally speaking, making mistakes will definitely lead to unpleasant consequences. However, when I worked in the U.S., I liked the workplace culture and the friendship-like relationships with my supervisors. And

honestly, I did not make more mistakes under this more tolerant environment compared to the opposite. (Participant #9)

Learning to Navigate Mentorship Relationships

Most of the Chinese participants in this study were actively seeking advice from colleagues as perceived mentors. The feedback collected generally helped Chinese expatriates better complete their jobs, navigate the workplace culture, and expand professional networking:

Everybody around me could be my mentor, or at least I was thinking this way at the very beginning of my expatriation. Everybody was friendly, and provided helpful information to me. However, sometimes the information I collected from my colleagues might be inconsistent or even inaccurate. They definitely did not intentionally do so, but this just happened when information were not from authorities. I made certain mistakes because I took somebody's advice but it did not work out very well. I learned that I needed to sort out information and knew better where to seek help as more reliable sources.

(Participant #1)

Not all participants were assigned with a formal mentor. For those who had a mentor, this seemed to be adding another new and rich learning experience. Based on the participant's descriptions, mentorship does not exist in most of the participants' home organizations in China. Therefore, it was even a relatively new concept to many participants. Some of the expatriates have heard about the term, but were not fully aware how exactly it works. Those who were assigned a formal mentor, were confused by the

different roles of supervisors and mentors, and did not fully understand the mutual responsibilities and agreements among mentors and mentees.

It was so helpful to have a mentor right beside you and you can ask her questions. But often times I did not even know what to ask, and what was appropriate to ask. Should I talk about my issue with my supervisor or my mentor? If there was something that I did not want my supervisor to know, but I really needed advice, can I talk about it with my mentor? Will she tell my supervisor afterwards? There were always so many scenarios going on in my mind, and I had no idea what would be the best way to approach. Those thoughts might not be even necessary, but the key thing was that I just did not know how mentoring should work. I did not want to make mistakes. I tried to ask some of my colleagues how they worked with their mentors. I got some different answers. Okay then, I think that I would just stop talking about certain issues. Less talking, less mistakes are to be made. Usually, I just waited to see what my mentor asked me and then I answered. (Participant #4)

Also, several expatriates mentioned about their anxiety of asking too many questions that might have taken up too much mentors' time. One of the expatriates shared:

My mentor looked very busy all the time, and he had his own work to do too. I was not quite sure but it seemed to me that this mentorship with me was his volunteer job. I always felt anxious if I bothered him too much, and sometime I even felt guilty and careless. I could see that if I was bolder and more open to my

mentor, I could learn a lot more from him and maximize my gains from this mentorship for my professional development. (Participant #5)

Raising Voices and Seeking Help

Hierarchical differences are one of the major cultural values in China, and it inevitably plays out in workplaces. As an employee at lower level in the organization, he or she may need to respect the boss or supervisor and follow their instructions without negotiation. Many of the participants in this research noticed this cultural difference between the U.S. and China based on their own working experiences with their supervisors. What's more, many expatriates expressed that they preferred the work relationships established with their host organization supervisors:

My supervisor in [the host organization] was so nice to me. She constantly asked me what I needed, what I found difficult to navigate in the office, and what professional development I wanted to experience. She always said: "You are with us for only 6 months, please get the most out of it and let me know how I can help you!" When I heard her words of "let me know how I can help you," I actually did not really know what that meant. Seriously! My boss can HELP me? In China, we always work hard to complete what my boss asks me to do, but rarely ask for help from my boss. Or at least, there will be a lot of things or needs that I would never bring it up to my boss here in China, because I know that he would just let me think through and figure it out, so why bother? But what I sensed from my American supervisor was that she got my back to support me for my work, which I really appreciated. I felt empowered and happy

to go to work every day because my concerns and my perspectives were valued and taken into account. (Participant #2)

Commonly expressed by the participants, when Chinese expatriates needed help during expatriation, they were inclined to ask other Chinese people or people whom they know better, rather than seeking help directly from the authorities, such as their supervisors or mentors. However, the drawback of asking “friends” was that they often found the information inconsistent, which could lead to wrong solutions:

I had other Chinese colleagues who came here with me. I usually talked to them first when I encountered any difficulties or needed help to figure things out. But since we were all new, they actually would not know better than me. I should have asked somebody else from local for help, but it was just difficult at the very beginning to jump out of my comfort zone. (Participant #6)

HCNs’ Capacity and Competency in Working with Chinese Expatriates is Essential

As presented earlier, the participants in this study discussed their preparation for their expatriate adjustment prior to departure as well as post-arrival, such as attending training sessions, seeking advice from veteran expatriates, learning on their own, and so on. Also, they brought up another issue about the importance of their American colleagues’ willingness and competencies in interacting with professionals from another culture:

I felt that I had tried enough, but it was still not working well as I expected. I still felt distant from my American colleagues. It seemed that my colleagues were not interested in my culture or myself as a new employee at all. I

felt excluded when we worked in teams and my ideas and opinions seemed not contributing to our work. But I did have some American friends in my workplace whom I usually asked for help from. The reason was that they were interested in Chinese culture, so we became close naturally given the mutual interests and connection. (Participant #1)

From my American co-workers' perspectives, probably they did not see me as one of them because I would not even stay there for more than a year. So it seemed unnecessary for them to build friendship and networking with me, I was not sure. However, just from my own perspectives, I sincerely wish they could see me as a colleague and welcome me to be part of community. But if they did not see it like that from their side, there's nothing that I could do to change it. (Participant #4)

Host country nationals' stereotypes about China or typical Chinese people might even influence their perspectives and interactions with individual Chinese expatriate. However, on one hand, the information that they had might not be true; and on the other hand, each individual Chinese expatriate can be very different too. Overly simplified generalization could lead to misunderstandings, bias, and unhealthy workplace culture. Misunderstandings can often hurt feelings for certain people, as reported by the participants in this study:

Working overseas let me be more aware about diversity and different people from other cultures. I was very surprised to see some of my colleagues, very few, who had stereotyped view on Chinese people. One of my colleagues

was not satisfied with the work that I did, and told me that I should behave more like a Chinese, saying “Chinese people are hard-working, do they?” I was very upset, and thought it was very offensive. (Participant #9)

The longer I stayed in the U.S. and the more I had interactions with my American colleagues, the more I got to know how people from other cultures see Chinese people and their perceptions toward Chinese culture. But, I found out that actually many things that they talked about or some predetermined perspectives they held were outdated, like about twenty or thirty years ago, and not correct at all. China is changing so much and it is not like that anymore. (Participant #10)

At the same time, the participants revealed that some of their prior knowledge and perceptions on American culture or American people were not necessarily correct, either. Regional knowledge gained through informal sources, such as social media or other people’s individual experiences, could be misleading or exaggerating the real situations.

Summary

Chinese expatriates are challenged by the need to understand different expectations of their supervisors and mentors, and the learning curve of absorbing and navigating different communication styles. Results derived from study data emphasized the importance of host country nationals’ intercultural competency and capacity for working with Chinese expatriates. It is important to further explore how the U.S. employees, as host national professionals in this study, react to Chinese expatriates. The preparation for expatriation needs to be conducted from both ends of the interaction, in

order to make two “ends” meet in the middle. Organizational level efforts need to be made by the host organizations to facilitate training or learning events to assist host country nationals with strategies of working with Chinese expatriates effectively. Unique to Chinese expatriates, it is necessary for American supervisors, mentors, and all host country nationals to better understand some basic Chinese values, such as *guanxi* that they bring into their work and interactions. The Chinese expatriates’ highly valued interpersonal relationship (*guanxi*) and their need for establishing and sustaining those relationships can motivate them to proactively interact with people in the host organizations. But it might also impede their moves of seeking help, raising voices, and interacting with host country nationals due to the worries about ruining any established relationships or the concern for saving face by avoiding unnecessary mistakes during the interactions.

Theme Three:

Seeking Continuous Support and Learning Opportunities Facilitated by Organizations

The analysis of participants’ narratives shows that the expatriates were seeking organizational support based on their needs at the different stages of their expatriation process. The participating Chinese expatriates were also learning to clarify their expectations to be realistic about available support from organizations in the U.S. and home organizations back in China. According to the participants’ experiences, these expatriates expected to receive more and just-in-time training from both host organizations and home organizations in order to better prepare for their international

assignments and ease the transition in host country. In addition, social support facilitated by host organizations, which is non-work related social opportunities, was also desired by the Chinese expatriates.

Organizational Support is Essential

The Chinese expatriates in this study were assigned by their home organizations to come to the U.S. and work in America carrying on international assignments. They were expecting that their organizations could provide more support for them. The organizations were perceived to play a key role in providing needed information and supporting the expatriates for various aspects of their professional and personal life in the host country. Organizational support, including organizational level support and support gained from supervisors and mentors, were all highly appreciated and desired by the Chinese expatriates:

I appreciated my host organization to care about my own career interests, career planning and development plans, and professional development needs. Back in China, I was so used to expecting my supervisor to assign me tasks and let me know what I need to do, how to do it, and what kind of support I will get. After I came to my host organization in the U.S., at the very beginning, I was very surprised that my supervisor always asked me what I would like to achieve throughout this expatriate experiences, and what's my career interests and strengths. I was wondering, why would my own interests and future plans matter? I was waiting to follow her instructions and command to do my work. I really appreciated this approach and her support. (Participant #3)

I had a lot of flexibilities for conducting my work based on my strengths and skillsets. I remembered about the first debrief meeting with my supervisor to discuss my work process, I was so nervous that I did not know if my boss would like it or not. Fortunately I received very positive feedback, and my boss provided constructive feedback based on his previous experiences and expertise, which greatly helped my future work. The other day, for one of my projects, I asked my supervisor directly: “What do you think is the best for me to do [project]?” Then he answered: “There is no best way to do, since there are multiple ways. I’d like to let you find the way that is you think is the best for yourself.” I was inspired by what he said, but at the same time, I ended up spending more time on it and justified why I thought it the best approach to take for the project. At the end of the day, I learned a lot and I loved how my supervisor supported and advised me. (Participant #8)

Beyond supervisor or mentor’s support, many participants noted that at organizational level, more support such as training offered by the organizations were particularly needed:

[My home company] is a multinational company. When I just arrived in the U.S., my American colleagues assumed that the work conditions in my home company in China would be the same as here, but I would say it is not. Some divisions in my home company indeed have diverse composition of employees from other countries including the U.S., and some manager are Americans. However, it seemed to me that the workplace culture was still greatly influenced

by the Chinese culture and environment at large, so it's different. Also, the division where I work are all Chinese people, and none of us had been working in the U.S. before. [The home company] did not provide any training to us, and the host office in America assumed that I was fully familiar with the operations in the host office, but I was actually not quite ready. It put me in a very awkward position that I did not have enough support for my work and my life in the U.S. (Participant #9)

Lack of Training from Home Organizations

The participants reported that most of the Chinese home organizations did not provide pre-departure support from their organizations. Consultations on their new role or the cultural differences' impact on their assignment were not always available. The two participants who received pre-departure training said that their home organization only provided a very short (a couple of hours) pre-departure session and a short document in preparation for their international assignments. Without systematic training, all the participants had to seek information and learn on their own in preparation for their expatriation. The expatriates realized that home organization support and pre-departure training could help them to get familiar with international operations faster to reduce unnecessary frustration and mistakes at the beginning of their expatriation. Several participants have mentioned: "I wish I would know about it earlier." Even some detailed logistic items, such as how to rent a car, could take tremendous amount of time if necessary information was not available. Any guidance and tips were desired and appreciated by the Chinese expatriates. Even for those who received brief training,

similar comments were also made: “I wish I would pay more attention earlier about what was said during the training.” The participants indicated that they needed follow-up sessions, more self-reflection on their experience, and available ongoing consultation services, among other things:

It always happened to me that I wish I could pay more attention to the training before I went to the U.S. I just did not realize those contents could be this important. I even did not save the handout and the slides. I would strongly recommend my colleagues who will be visiting and working in [the host organization] next year to take the training seriously, even it is a very brief training. (Participant #4)

I did not receive any so-called cross-cultural training from home organization. I was only told what tasks and work I needed to complete in the U.S. organization, who I needed to contact when I got there, and some basic logistics things. Maybe it was because I was the first ever expatriate who joined a U.S. company to work. My home organization actually put a lot of expectations on me. I felt empowered but also very anxious because I had no idea at all what was waiting for me. After I arrived in the U.S., the training, actually just an orientation, that I received from my host organization was also a regular orientation offered to every new employee, not customized to an expatriate who is from a different culture. Maybe I expected too much, but I really wish I would have received more and structured guidance for my expatriate assignments from both organizations. (Participant #2)

The participants understood that training might not cover everything that they needed, and they highly valued the approach of learning by doing and practicing. But an available “go-to person” or archived resources will make a significant difference and provide timely assistance for expatriates throughout their entire expatriate journey whenever they needed. The lack of pre-departure and post-arrival training and support has its costs to the Chinese expatriates.

It’s All about Timing: The Need for Just-in-time Access to Resources

As stated earlier, expatriate adjustment is a long process. The participants pointed out that at different stages of their expatriate assignments, their needs and concerns were different. Often times, the expatriates would not even realize certain items would be important issues until later. Just like the pre-departure training, something they did not pay full attention to turned out to be very important after they arrived in their host organization. When they realized the importance of some resources, these resources might not be easily accessible anymore. One expatriate who saved some training resources from previous training pointed out the importance of availability of the resources:

The other day, I was reviewing my training materials from the pre-departure training session from my home organization in China, I found some very useful resources that I can use now, but I totally forgot that I had learned about all of those at all. If I did not review the materials, I would never know that I actually had those resources. I wish somebody could remind me, maybe my supervisor from my home organization? I also had some thoughts comparing my

personal experience with the knowledge learned, and I wanted to have somebody to talk through but I could not find one. (Participant #7)

Some expatriates also mentioned that online training or resources archived online might be beneficial because they could refer back to these resources anytime, and access the resources whenever they need at different stages. One expatriate said that some other expatriates he knew received online training and virtual mentoring from their home organizations and the host organizations. Thus, both host organizations and home organizations need to make more effort in training Chinese expatriates and fostering cross-cultural learning to ensure expatriate success. Given that the expatriates' needs and concerns at different stages can be different, just-in-time access to training and archived materials are essential to satisfy expatriates' changing needs.

Ongoing Non-Work Related Social Support is Important

Beyond professional training and pre-departure training, non-work related social support was also what the Chinese expatriates were seeking during their expatriation time. As addressed in last theme, one aspect of essence to Chinese expatriate's experience was to integrate with host country nationals. Without organization's support, it is definitely more difficult for Chinese expatriates to proactively integrate with American colleagues on their own. The findings also showed that the Chinese expatriates lacked organizations' facilitated support in social context, such as some social events like happy hour after work.

Most of my colleagues were very nice to me. They graciously helped to me to navigate the workplace. However, I gradually had a sense that it was still a

different feeling of being part of their group. Most of the time I was too shy to ask, and I wish my company could arrange some social events or an official introduction so that I could get to know my colleagues more naturally and easily. (Participant #6)

According to the participants' narratives from this study, social support, such as facilitated social events or informal showcase of Chinese expatriates' prior experience or projects, would be an effective approach for expatriates and American colleagues to integrate and enhance their mutual understanding:

I totally understood that I went to work, not traveling or merely making friends. But as an employee with such great opportunity to work in a foreign culture, I also would like to build connection with my American colleagues outside workplace beyond work-related business. I was not sure if this was a unique thing in Chinese culture that at [the home organization], building positive relationships is very important. Probably it was a bit different in the U.S. companies, but I still believed that having a good relationship with your colleagues like friends and being a good team member were similarly important in American workplaces. So I brought this idea to my supervisor and asked for a short time during staff meeting for me to do an informal presentation about my previous work projects. It turned out to be a great experience and after the presentation, many of my American colleagues showed their interests in my work. That event also saved me a lot of time to socialize and introduce myself to each of my colleagues, definitely better than an email introduction too. (Participant #5)

Summary

The third theme of the findings is that Chinese expatriates are seeking organization-facilitated learning and social opportunities and support to achieve expatriate success. Systematic training and learning activities were insufficient for the Chinese expatriates based on their self-reporting in this study. For most of the participants, expatriation and relocation was a self-exploratory process. Most of them did not receive pre-departure training from home organizations and received just a regular new employee orientation from the host organizations. Organizational support and intentional facilitation of training, learning events, and social support were highly desired and sought by these Chinese expatriates throughout their expatriation time. Especially when the expatriates' challenges and needs are changing over time, just-in-time access to training and archived materials become important and critical to satisfy expatriate's current needs and ensure their success in international assignments.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

Introduction

This Chapter discusses the major findings of the hermeneutic analysis of the mainland Chinese expatriate experience in U.S. organizations. Three major themes describing the essence of expatriate experience emerged from the findings, including (1) mainland Chinese expatriate's journey is a developmental and self-exploratory learning process, (2) mainland Chinese expatriates seek meaningful integration with host country nationals, and (3) continuous learning and social support facilitated by organizations are sought by expatriates from mainland China. Each theme and subthemes are discussed in turn in this Chapter.

Theme One:

Expatriation is a Developmental and Self-exploratory Learning Process

As the findings of this study indicated, the essence of the experience of working and living in the U.S. for mainland Chinese expatriates is a developmental and self-exploratory journey. This journey is full of learning and development, excitements and challenges, and gains in professional development and personal growth.

Expatriation is a Privileged Learning Experience

For self. Instead of viewing expatriate experience as a “sacrifice” or “hard decision to make”, all the participants in this study identified their role or part of their role as an expatriate to be a “learner” or “trainee”. They expected that the completion of their expatriation experience would advance their knowledge and professional expertise.

They were also highly likely to be promoted when returning to their home organizations, since their home organizations highly valued the training they received from global partners and recognized the benefits of expatriation to foster knowledge transfer. This is different from what is usually reported about other expatriates, such as the U.S. expatriate managers working in other countries. For them, organizations often do not realize the value of expatriate experiences, and promotions are not necessarily guaranteed. Based on what the participants described, Chinese expatriates demonstrated that they had seen how the business is run in the U.S. workplaces, and even though what they learned was not always directly related to their jobs, it was still worthwhile to become familiar with business operations in the fields in a global context. The Chinese expatriates were able to constantly absorb new knowledge and learn new things during expatriation, which was viewed as the most valuable part of their entire experience by most of the participants. Their expectations of the expatriation were not only to achieve business results, but also to learn about the new culture and new business strategies, and learn from foreign colleagues to advance their own ability to operate internationally. This meant that the participants positioned themselves as “receiver” which might highly influence how they learned, how they behaved, and how they interacted with host country nationals. The participants articulated that they improved their English proficiency, gained regional knowledge, and practiced intercultural communication skills, among others. Details of specific gains in skills and knowledge are discussed in a latter section of this chapter.

For families. Seven of the expatriates who participated in the study are married and have kids. Only one among these seven expatriates was traveling with his wife and

little kid. All of these expatriates addressed the challenges and anxieties as an expatriate who has spouse and children to take care of. Most of these families have only one child, and majority of these couples are the only child in their respective families, too. Thus, when the expatriate worked overseas, the spouse needed to take care of their child as well as both of their aged parents at home in China, which is unique to Chinese expatriates and may be different for expatriates from other countries. It was challenging for the entire family to balance the expatriate's professional career and personal life. Some previous studies indicated that, for Western expatriates, their spouse's intercultural adjustment has the greatest impact on the expatriate's adjustment to local culture (e.g., Caligiuri, Hyland, & Joshi, 1998; Harvey, 1997; Takeuchi, Lepak, Marinova, & Yun, 2007). Likewise, this study has found that for Chinese expatriates, their spouses' and families' understanding and support provided reassurance for their decision-making for taking international assignments. Family support also helped the expatriates ease the transition and better manage stress during expatriation. As presented previously, the Chinese expatriates were determined and motivated to work overseas in the U.S. to advance their career and promotion opportunities; however, some of the participants discovered more important gains from the experience, which was to let their families (especially little children) to experience foreign culture and lifestyles. Therefore, despite all the challenges and struggles that families might have to go through, Chinese expatriates in this study still perceived their experience as a privileged opportunity, not only for themselves, but also for their families. The Chinese expatriates were willing to

relocate, experience foreign workplace culture, and they believed it could be a good opportunity for their kids.

As defined by Nam, Cho, and Lee (2014), “the expatriate dilemma” refers to the unresolved conditions of expatriates depending on spouse’s willingness to relocate, health condition of aged parents, and education for children among other factors, which determines the success of expatriation (Groysberg, Nohria, & Herman, 2011). The narratives collected in this study revealed that the Chinese expatriates’ consideration and decision-making of taking on international assignments came from a different angle, and they highly valued this experience as privileged experience in a long run. Thus, they were willing to sacrifice short-term drawbacks and expected long-term gains, not only for themselves but also for their families. Therefore, instead of an “expatriate dilemma”, the Chinese expatriates were perceiving these experiences as an “expatriate win-win”.

“Gains” and “Pains”

Gains in regional knowledge and intercultural competence. Chinese expatriates were well aware that advancing their professional expertise and skills is highly important in order to stand out from their colleagues, as a competitive advantage (Chinese Council for Promotion of International Trade, 2009). It is increasingly vital for expatriates to continuously look at ways they can improve their existing skills or gain new expertise while they are taking international assignments. The desire and openness of learning new knowledge and skills allowed the Chinese expatriates to embrace new work environments, contribute to their work performance, and be more resilient when encountering difficult circumstances in the new culture.

Given the nature of this research, this study is limited in ability to determine what the participants exactly learned, what kinds of knowledge and skills of theirs had improved given the expatriation, and how the learning events they encountered influenced their skill acquisition. However, based on participants' self-reflective narratives, it can be concluded that stress management skills, tolerance of ambiguity, language and communication skills, and openness to new culture were critical traits leading to successful adjustment to the American workplace and social culture. What's more, these skills and traits were gradually advancing toward a highly practical level throughout their entire expatriation journey.

Impact of generic English versus professional English in expatriate adjustment. English proficiency is still the key to expatriate success and also predicts expatriate's self-confidence when operating on international assignments. As shown in Chapter 4, all the Chinese expatriates in this study identified English proficiency as one of the major challenges throughout their expatriate journey in the U.S.

English language plays an important role as the most frequently used language in international business (Crystal, 2003). As the host organizations reported, usually in western countries, the language barrier is one of the most significant difficulty for expatriates to overcome (e.g., Adler, 1991; Goodall, Li, & Warner, 2006; Selmer, 2006; Tung, 1987, 1988). Chinese multinational companies also recognized that English proficiency creates a roadblock and affects Chinese expatriate adjustment and international competitiveness (Chen, 2004; Ma, 2004; Wu, 2008).

However, language proficiency is a complex yet vague term that needs to be explored further especially when customizing language training to different audiences with distinct cultural backgrounds. Among the various types of training in demand, language training has stood out as the most urgent need for mainland Chinese expatriates, compared to expatriates from other countries (Shi-xu, 1996). Language proficiency has been emphasized by numerous studies to point out its foundational role in facilitating successful expatriate adjustment. However, it is still not clear what level of English proficiency is needed by expatriates in order to be able to work in the U.S. The requirement for proficiency levels of English for expatriates versus for those who studies this language for other purposes is different. It also depends on what types of jobs and professional fields the expatriates worked in. This study showed that, for some participants who were working in purely technical positions, the level of language proficiency could be different from those who worked in the positions that required intensive English communication in both workplace settings and social life scenarios. Specifically, some of the participants were struggling more with appropriate use of the professional terminology for work, while some others lacked confidence with small talk and spoken English in social settings. Even though most of them were serving in professional and technical positions, not at high level management positions, effective communications using a second language at workplace was still a barrier that influenced their experience of cultural adjustment and the day-to-day operations. In this study, participants reflected on their own experiences, which varied depending on self-confidence levels, among other factors. It is difficult to uncover patterns of how English

skills influenced the expatriates' international adjustment based on their profile. But what is certain is that simply stating that Chinese expatriates need to improve their English proficiency does not provide meaningful guidance for practice.

Du-Babcock (2007) categorized language into two different purposes of use, the general use and the professional or specific use. This categorization was applied to interpret how English ability may be displayed differently in workplace communications in the business world. This supports what is uncovered in this study. Some of the participants had difficulties of communicating in general English, more specifically, in the ways of communicating that are rooted in the culture. For instance, several participants particularly addressed their experiences about "small talk". They struggled with how to start a small talk and how to utilize small talk to sustain professional relationship with their colleagues. Some others might be more familiar with general English, but were not able to explicitly communicate on work-related issues in English. What's more, the participants emphasized the importance of their knowledge about local culture, such as history, politics, policy, economics, and pop culture, in order to stay relevant and raise a voice during the communications like small talk or around a lunch table. Xu and Du-Babcock (2012) included the ability of effective social interactions as part of the English proficiency, and defined it as "social English" as a complement to both general and professional English, which generates and fosters a positive relationship in both personal and professional contexts.

English proficiency is not only a technical tool for effective communications, but also builds up individual's confidence in social and professional interactions (Xu, 2007).

Particularly for the Chinese expatriates, given the common value of saving face, the confidence that they bring to the business communication is highly important. Proficiency in work-related English communication might also increase Chinese expatriates' associations with host nationals, both in workplace and at social occasions. Chinese expatriates with higher levels of proficiency in professional English also tend to possess a higher level of field knowledge, and consequently have an advantage in petitioning for more organizational support and nurturing more integration with host country nationals (Xu & Du-Babcock, 2012).

Proficiency in English, used for social purposes, can help Chinese expatriates better establish client and co-worker relationships, given the extensive social communication involved in personal images of the expatriates in the perceptions of others. Xu and Du-Babcock (2012) examined the associations between social English and work relationships with local professionals. The results implied that Chinese expatriates with higher level of social English are inclined to interact with local professionals more often, and those who interacted more with local professionals in turn were able to improve their social English better and faster. Xu and Du-Babcock's (2012) study also revealed that general English proficiency is a determining factor, which is significantly associated with various aspects of expatriate adjustment, including coping with stress, relationships and interactions with host organization as well as home organization. Particularly, one interesting finding from Xu and Du-Babcock's study was that even though professional English proficiency is positively and significantly correlated with communication and interactions within their organizations, it is not

correlated with the ability to cope with stress and with job satisfaction. As the current study uncovered, the participants were not entirely satisfied if they were able to communicate in workplace only, as expressed by one participant: “it’s not always about work.”

Applying what is known to actions. Expatriates may experience culture-related challenges in communication beyond their local language proficiency and skills (Peltokorpi, 2010). Some participants emphasized their difficulties of overcoming the gaps between “I know it” and “I can do it”. Through multiple sources, the expatriates were able to learn the host culture, the rules of the new workplace, and societal value systems. However, “knowing” versus “doing” could be totally different things, and expatriates needed time to build the skills and capacity to shift from “knowing” toward effectively “doing.” Expatriate experience is an experiential learning process for expatriates to develop solid knowledge and concrete skills to navigate the new culture and new jobs. Either through training or informal learning on their own, the knowledge developed may not be necessarily sufficient for expatriates to navigate their work successfully. Experiencing and learning by doing is how the participants developed the capability of effectively living and working in the U.S., which enables the desired transformation from “knowing” to “doing”. In order to achieve this transformation, participants of this study addressed multiple sources of support and pathways that would be helpful for them to make the transition smoothly or shorten the period of time needed for the shift. The sources or ways of shifting included learning from mentors, leaning

from other host national professionals, learning from mistakes, and various support from organizations related to professional development and social interaction opportunities.

Numerous studies have explored what skills can be acquired through expatriation, and what skills facilitate expatriate adjustment. Harvey and Novicevic (2001) demonstrated that cross-cultural competency goes beyond knowledge of host culture, and also relies on the capability of communication and effective interaction in the local context. As the Chinese participants mentioned in this study, even when they had been acquiring knowledge through multiple learning sources, it was still not enough for them to effectively communicate and interact with the local people because they cannot apply what they have learned about the local culture into practice. They also mentioned that the adjustment process meant to be a lengthy process for them to move from knowing what the best practice is, to being able to actually do it. As one participant mentioned: "I knew it, but I still made the same mistakes again and again. It indeed took me some time to explicitly apply it to real-life scenarios." This finding echoes Johnson, Lenartowicz, and Apud's (2006)'s argument that expatriates may understand the cultural expectations and culturally appropriate behaviors in the host context, however they do not possess the necessary abilities to implement their knowledge in their daily operations. The participants of this study showed tremendous passion and willingness to learn and adapt to the host culture. However, it was not a natural shift for them to generate effective behavioral change within a short period of time.

Expatriation is a Self-exploratory Journey

As mainland Chinese working in the U.S., most of the expatriates spent a great amount of time during the interviews to reflect on their own journey inquiring who they are in this American workplace, why they came here, and how they have developed through this experience. Many of the participants described this working overseas experience as “eye-opening”, which they greatly appreciated to have. Many participants mentioned this, and one of them put this the following way: “I came here to learn about America and do my work, but rather I learned a lot about myself.” Many participants expressed that working in the U.S. helped them learn about American culture and workplace environment, but also provided them a precious reflective opportunity to learn about their home culture from a more objective standpoint. Their expatriation journey enhanced their self-awareness and enabled self-transformation. Experiential learning theory (Kolb, 1984) explains well the learning process that expatriates are experiencing by underlining that learning is a process that values differences, self-development, and self-actualization (Kayes, 2002).

Resilience of Chinese expatriates. When looking at the narrative data, it was intuitive to focus on areas with identified challenges and pay more attention to what can be done to overcome barriers preventing Chinese expatriates from succeeding in the international business arena. However, as many participants commented, the Chinese expatriates in fact were expanding their capacity and competency, growing professionally and personally, and developing their identity, no matter what challenges they faced. These Chinese expatriates were self-motivated, proactive, determined, courageous, and

talented. Like an old African proverb says: “The rough waters can make a strong sailor.” As one of the expatriates commented: “The training and experience that I gained at my host organization was phenomenal, and it let me better understand my strengths and weaknesses even though I had been in my career for over 10 years. I doubted that I would see my weaknesses this clearly if I did not take this expatriation job.”

Theme Two:

Seeking Meaningful Integration with Host Country Nationals

There was a tremendous demand from Chinese expatriates seeking more information about effective interactions with host country nationals within the work settings as well as building friendship outside workplaces. This challenge is strengthened by Chinese expatriates’ insufficient level of language proficiency in general and/or lack of knowledge and skills to overcome cultural differences between the East and the West (Shi-xu, 1996; Shen & Edwards, 2004). Effective communications with host country colleagues and supervisors are perceived by Chinese expatriates as ways of maintaining *guanxi* in the new work environment (Ma, 2009; Selmer et al., 2003; Shen & Edwards, 2004; Wang, 2007).

Challenges of Building and Maintaining *Guanxi* with Host Country Nationals

Through the Chinese expatriate participants’ eyes, they were not only working in a U.S. company to complete their international assignment. They also sought to build and maintain good relationships with other people in the host organization; like one of the participants said: “It’s not always just about work.” Expatriates learned the rules of the

new work culture and societal value system through experiences of interacting with colleagues at the host country operation. It took time to establish these relationships.

Three of the participants in this study came to the U.S. to work in teams with several other expatriates from mainland China. Compared with these three expatriates, the rest seemed to experience a lot more stress and challenges. They often described their experience as “isolated,” “making a lot of mistakes due to unknown rules,” and “taking a long time to figure things out.” Forming friendships with colleagues and neighbors supported the Chinese expatriates in various aspects of their work and personal life. Those interactions were perceived as informal mentoring by Chinese expatriates where they would benefit from and receive valuable advice. Cooper (2009) argued that knowledge and skills acquired by interacting with others in their host culture as well as home culture contribute to individual’s career advancement and benefits organization development for their companies. The narrative data also indicated that understanding and effectively navigating workplace culture and company politics was important to expatriates’ work performance. And building friendships was the key to be informed about the details of company operation in timely manner. The tighter the ties with host country nationals, the more the Chinese expatriates could expect to be told how to better navigate the hidden rules of workplace culture in their host organization.

Usually the friendship starts with common interests and the host country national’s curiosity about China and Chinese culture. As one of the participants shared about his experience, he built friendship with an American colleague because the colleague used to study Chinese in college, and was familiar with and also interested in

knowing more about Chinese culture. On the other hand, the reasons that kept Chinese expatriates from interacting and integrating with host country nationals included the lack of confidence in their English abilities, and sometimes it was the host country nationals who switched off the conversations if they did not seem to have any interest at all in getting to know about the expatriates.

The findings echoed what have been discovered from extant literature about expatriates' challenges in interacting with host country nationals. Difficulties in cross-cultural communications are often seen during international operations, and are often believed to be an inevitable challenge for Chinese expatriates. Confucianism, as a long-standing tradition influencing Chinese culture, highlights the establishment and adherence to social hierarchy (Tan, 1986). It arranges individual's interactions with other people. Confucian values, such as harmonious relationship, conformity, and interpersonal affect (Chew & Lim, 1995) inevitably have strong impact on interpersonal relationships in workplace. Along with *guanxi*, another concept that plays out in Chinese workplace is interpersonal affect. Interpersonal affect was conceptualized as a like-dislike reaction (Zajonc, 1980). "Affect" is an involuntary reaction that reflects interpersonal relationships (Zajonc, 1980). Individuals are more likely to "like" those who hold similar values based on their own perceptions, to engage with them, to befriend them, to assist them in completing certain tasks, and to effectively work with other people (Tsui & Gutek, 1984). Lefkowitz (2000) also argued that perceived similarities of values influence the degree of affective interpersonal relationships with other people. Antonioni and Park (2001) further indicated that similar values that are perceived by individuals can

lead to positive interpersonal affect among them even among the people who are from diverse social or cultural backgrounds. This intention and reaction also applies to behaviors and interpersonal interaction in workplace as well. In the case of mainland Chinese individuals working in the U.S. who grew up under the traditional value influences, the Chinese expatriates may inevitably bring the Confucian-based values and behavioral patterns developed in Chinese workplaces to the U.S. workplace. However, those values may not be necessarily accepted by American colleagues, which may result in conflicts, misunderstandings, and miscommunications. Chinese expatriates may prepare themselves with basic intercultural knowledge and understand the cultural differences, but may not be able to shift their behaviors and values smoothly. It might generate misunderstandings, conflicts in workplace, and unsuccessful establishment of social relations.

Managing Barriers of Working with Supervisors and Mentors in the U.S.

Quite a few Chinese expatriate participants in this study mentioned that “mentorship” was a new concept for them. Even for those who participated in mentorship programs and found it highly beneficial to have this resource, it did take time to figure out how to work with mentors, and what is the difference between a mentor and their supervisor. Thus, for mentors who work with foreign expatriates, it is critical to clarify the expectations and roles for both mentors and mentees taking into account that the mentorship is a cultural concept (Cooper, 2010) and can be understood differently in different contexts.

In contrast to the expatriate populations that are well-represented in the literature, such as American expatriate managers working overseas, this study's participants were Chinese expatriates who were not in managerial level positions. They had supervisors at host organizations, and some of them also reported to supervisors at home organizations in China as well. The data showed that shifting between working with an American supervisor and a Chinese supervisor may cause discomfort given the different expectations and communication styles. When conflicting information was received from both ends, the expatriates felt stressed and insecure. One of the participants mentioned: "Who should I work for right now? I was a little bit confused. I did not want to ruin relationship with any of them." Dealing with such role ambiguity is an essential cross-cultural skill for expatriates to develop and utilize for problem-solving.

Another barrier that the participants of this study commonly experienced was the lack of understanding how and when to seek help and advice from mentors. Several of the participants were unsure when and how seeking advice would be the most appropriate. On the one hand, they did not want to offend their mentors if questions they asked or the ways of asking those questions were not appropriate. On the other hand, they sometimes felt guilty bothering their mentors because they might have taken up too much of their mentors' time, especially if mentoring was not part of the mentor's job responsibilities. The roadblock develops when two major aspects of the Chinese value system, saving face (*mianzi*) and *guanxi* work simultaneously playing role in working relationships, supervision and management practices, and decision-making process (Farh, Tsui, Xin, & Cheng, 1998; Wang, Wang, Ruona, & Rojewski, 2005). Influenced by the

two values, Chinese expatriates might tend to avoid the potential conflicts or offenses if they are not 100% sure if what they do or what they say is appropriate. The Chinese expatriates expressed their anxiety, even guilt, they commonly felt when trying to bond and seeking advice from American colleagues including their supervisors and mentors. Since providing advice and lending help might not be their colleagues' obligation, the Chinese expatriates felt hesitant to approach them, trying not to be rude. It is also the last thing that Chinese expatriates may want to see if they are being direct but actually may ruin a long-term relationship with their mentors or supervisors. All these worries stopped the Chinese expatriates from speaking out or asking for help when they actually needed this. To be a Chinese expatriate facing the unfamiliar communication styles of host country nationals, the effective strategy will be to manage the stress, jump out of their comfort zones, learn by doing, and learn from mistakes. However, to master these skills is not an overnight project. Constant self-reflections and assistance from others and the organizations are essential.

Host Country Nationals' Readiness for Working with Expatriates

Numerous studies have been conducted to discover various aspects of challenges that expatriates may experience when interacting with host country nationals. The importance and strategies of developing expatriates have been emphasized in extant literature. However, instead of addressing the deficiency of expatriates, very few of them tackled this issue from the other end: what host country nationals need to be prepared to foster smoother interaction with expatriates. Previous research has indicated that the support and cooperation from the local colleagues is extremely important to the

expatriate's satisfaction with the assignment as well as for the organizational performance (Yu & Huat, 1995). Many participants of this study expressed their frustration with building friendship with the host country nationals as an "outsider", and indicated that they still failed even they had tried very hard. It is not sufficient and even unfair to only expect expatriates to make an efforts at adjustment without preparing the host country nationals for the presence of foreign expatriates in their organizations.

As the Chinese expatriates highly valued social relationships, the participants in this study indicated that they usually expanded their work relationship to build on towards good social relationships with their American co-workers. This finding is supported by Byrne's (1971) theory of similarity attraction demonstrating that the similarities, such as common interests, enhance the bonding and attraction between individuals. Such bonding affects the communications, social behaviors, and interactions among them. Therefore, when host country nationals perceive the expatriates to have commonalities with them, such as common manners, similar values, and similar habits, they are more likely to treat the expatriates as "in-group" persons and also are willing to lend help by sharing critical information. This phenomenon is also described as "homophily" (Gupta & Govindrajan, 2000; Vance & Paik, 2000) demonstrating how individuals share information when possessing similar values and traits. The more similarities found, the more likely is that the flow of information between individuals will increase. The concept of "interpersonal affect" can also explain why the like-dislike reaction occurred (Zajonc, 1980). Individuals are more likely to "like" those who hold similar value systems based on their own perceptions, to engage with them, to befriend

them, to assist them in completing certain tasks, and to want to work with them (Tsui & Gutek, 1984). Accordingly, when the host national professionals view the expatriates as “outsiders” who are different from themselves, they may withdraw from sharing experiences and not being open to interacting with expatriates in work contexts as well as social situations (Aycan, 1997; Toh & DeNisi, 2007). Participants from this study revealed that common interests among Chinese expatriate and host national professionals may pave the way toward building positive relationships.

In extant literature, the discussions about willingness of host country nationals to provide support to expatriates have been started about a decade ago. “Lack of acceptance” was discovered in previous studies that found that expatriates often have the feeling of lacking cooperation and support from their local counterparts (Yu & Pine, 1994). Usually, it is because the local employees are simply disinterested in expatriates’ work and life, and perceive that interactions with them have nothing to do with their own work obligations (Yu & Pine, 1994). Similar findings were also drawn from this study: some Chinese expatriates felt that the American colleagues just do not care about their work. What’s more, in the eyes of the host national professionals, the presence of expatriates sometimes is even a threat which could lead to fewer advancement opportunities and less remuneration for themselves (Yu & Pine, 1994). As the participants mentioned, the views and even stereotypes about the nationalities may influence their views on Chinese expatriates. From a wider environmental perspective, the international standing of a country could be a factor influencing expatriate managers’

adaptation (Hatch, 1983). Expatriates who are from undeveloped countries may feel more pressure or even discrimination from their colleagues (Hatch, 1983).

However, empirical studies on this issue are still very rare. In a study conducted on American expatriate managers working in China, it was reported that Chinese host country nationals' readiness and reactions to American expatriates play a critical role in the expatriates' cultural adjustment and performance in international assignments (Varma, Pichler, Budhwar, & Biswas, 2009). The Varma et al. study particularly uncovered how Chinese social traditions, like *guanxi* and collectivism, affect Chinese employees' reaction to expatriates from overseas. However, depending on the foreign expatriates' level of intercultural awareness and competency, it may not be easy for them to identify their Chinese colleagues' (host country nationals in this study) core cultural values and traditions, which is perceived as an important influence on the expatriates' daily work and social life (Fish & Wood, 1994). Interestingly, Chinese host country nationals are curious and welcoming foreign expatriates in Chinese organizations. This proactive approach is helpful in assisting foreign expatriates in going through transition smoothly in Chinese organizations (Varma et al., 2009). Unfortunately, the Chinese expatriates from this study were not experiencing the similar amount of welcoming from their American colleagues. What's more, the host country nationals in American host organizations also had certain expectations of the foreign expatriates in terms of how they should blend in as "outsiders" or a "minority". The expectations may not be fully met because the expatriates' intercultural awareness and intercultural competency may vary, which is highly likely to result in derailment of expatriate assignments (Solomon, 1994).

When thinking about expatriates from the East to the West, it is not comparable with the situations when Western expatriates are working and living in China. Therefore, extant research findings may not apply to the population being studied in this study, who are Chinese expatriates from mainland China working in the U.S.

Another cultural specificity is that work relationships and social relationships overlap in China, and broadly saying in East Asian countries (Yg & Huo, 1993). However, the interaction and relationship in workplace and social context may be more distant in the Western context. Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1998) described two domains of culture, diffuse versus specific cultures. In diffuse societies (such as China, and France), it is important to build close relationships in business life, and work and family life are also intertwined. However, the U.S. culture falls into the domain of specific cultures. Contrary to Chinese culture, American people tend to keep home life private, and clearly separate it from public life. Thus, both Chinese expatriates to the U.S. and the local American professionals should adjust their expectations, recognize the cultural differences and social traditions, understand the effects of these differences on work-related tasks, and predict the possible challenges and conflicts that may arise when they cannot shift to culturally appropriate behaviors. However, the fact is that the Chinese expatriates, who are traveling from the East to the West as outsiders, had prepared themselves for the transition, while most of their counterparts in the U.S. organizations had not. Consequently, no matter how much effort the Chinese expatriates invested into blending themselves into the new environment, the intercultural

communication and collaboration among Chinese and American employees may still collapse due to the lack of preparation from the American colleagues' end.

Findings from this study reinforced the importance and necessity of host country nationals' readiness for interacting with expatriates. American professionals, as host national professionals in this study, are expected to understand the uniqueness of Chinese expatriates and be competent to interact with Chinese expatriates in order to achieve the organizational success. It follows that there is a need to formally prepare host national professionals with effective intercultural strategies for interacting with their incoming expatriate colleagues. The preparation for intercultural encounters needs to be conducted from both ends of the interaction, in order to make two "ends" meet in the middle. Host country nationals' efforts and also the host organizations' facilitated learning events are needed.

Theme Three:

Continuous Learning and Social Support Facilitated by Organizations are Sought

Based on the fact that most Chinese multinational corporations do not provide cross-cultural training (Selmer, Ling, Shiu, & de Leon, 2003; Shen & Darby, 2006), no wonder that mainland Chinese expatriates are pointing out that they are in need of support from both host organizations and home organizations. Besides work-related support from organizations, mainland Chinese expatriates are also in the need of organizations' efforts in facilitating social activities with host country nationals outside workplace. As building friendships and maintaining *guanxi* are important values within

Chinese culture, the importance of further research on these issues was brought forward by the Chinese expatriates in this study.

The narratives from mainland Chinese expatriates revealed that they were actively seeking organizational support based on their needs at the different stages of their expatriation process. They would like to receive a clear and realistic explanation of expectations from the U.S. host organizations. The participants who received well-structured organizational support, either work-related or non-work-related, reported that this was critical to their adjustment. The participants also mentioned that timing of those organizational offerings and support will make a difference and ensure the effectiveness of adjustment. In addition, assigning a formal mentor or an informal mentor is beneficial for participant's adjustment; however, the capability and preparation of the mentor working with expatriates from mainland China matters and plays a critical role and determines if the mentoring relationship is successful or not.

Influence of Organizational Support on Chinese Expatriate Adjustment

Many studies on expatriate adjustment have greatly improved our understanding of the expatriate's experiences and adjustment patterns and guided management strategy in reaction to increased global personnel mobility (Li & Jackson, 2014). However, majority of the studies were focusing on the expatriate's gains and changes in awareness, attitudes, skills, and experiences and work performance, while rarely putting emphasis on the impact of organization and its influence on expatriate adjustment (Li & Jackson, 2014). Takeuchi (2010) described the current mainstream approach of studying expatriate adjustment as "expatriate-centric" (p. 1041), and argued that this individual-

based approach may underestimate other factors that also play critical or mediating roles in expatriate adjustment, for instance organizational support and its influence (Takeuchi, 2010). Although individual adjustment to a new culture and new work environment relies on personal characteristics, such as expatriate profile, prior knowledge and experience, and openness to new environments, the adjustment process for expatriates is often initiated, facilitated, mediated and reinforced by organizations (Li & Jackson, 2014).

The discussion about organizational influence on expatriate adjustment and performance has been recently started in the literature. But most of these studies examined the relationship between organization support and outcomes of expatriate adjustment, which has displayed perceived “linear” relationships among factors such as organization support and adjustment outcomes (e.g., Li & Jackson, 2014; Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al. 2005). Insights gained from previous studies create more opportunities for further research on issues such as what support is specifically sought by expatriates and how organizational support needs to be managed to provide positive influence on expatriate adjustment fed into their unique needs. Given a focus on the relatively broad suggestions for organization strategies and anecdotal outcomes of organization’s influence on expatriate adjustment, solid guidance for organizational support and management strategies is still not available (Lazarova & Thomas, 2012).

The findings of this study contributed to a better understanding of Black, Mendenhall and Oddou (1991)’s three categories of international adjustment, and their application to Chinese expatriates’ adjustment experiences, consisting of their

experiences in general, and work, and non-work related interaction adjustment. Furthermore, this study contributes to extant theory by elaborating how the three categories are interrelated and may reflect differently on expatriates from a particular culture. The major factor that leads to expatriate failure is lack of understanding of the host culture and ineffective cross-cultural interactions (Johnson, Lenartowicz, & Apud, 2006). Effective expatriate training and development programs will need to create and facilitate meaningful opportunities for expatriates to be exposed and learn about the new culture (Yamazaki, 2010) and to interact.

This study showed that most of the Chinese home organizations did not provide sufficient support on organizational level. It is consistent with previous studies that report on inadequate organizational support such as selection and training preparation for Chinese expatriates, and financial or psychological support for expatriate's spouse and families (Shen, 2006; Shen & Edwards, 2006), which may result in failure of expatriate assignments. Without sufficient support from organizations, Chinese expatriates are like "an abandoned boat in the ocean." They are highly likely to face imbalanced work and life situations, high level of stress, and poor performance for the international assignments.

Sending Expatriates for Training and Learning

As China is a rising star in international markets, majority of the Chinese multinational corporations have recently initiated their internationalization strategies and are testing out how to navigate the global marketplace effectively. Chinese organizations report lacking internationalization experiences and strategies (Yu & Wei, 2013). Without

well-prepared expatriates who are capable to carry out international assignments, it is impossible for Chinese multinational corporations to compete against global competitors from developed countries and developing counterparts (Selmer, 2002; Shen & Darby, 2006; Wang, Freeman & Zhu, 2013). For a relative newcomer to the global market, internationalization involves an intensive effort to learn from developed countries in the market and advance their own competitive advantages. Chinese organizations are devoted to expanding international operations in order to create opportunities for participating in the global market for growth. With respect of “talents” as the most important competitive advantage, Chinese multinational corporations believe that sending expatriates abroad will bring advanced knowledge and skills back that will benefit the home company’s global expansion. Chinese multinational corporations have noticed that global business-related knowledge and skills has been reversely transferred from expatriates to the home organization in China, which is constructed as “reverse knowledge transfer” as a common strategy among Chinese multinational corporations for continuous growth towards international expansion (Zhang & Edwards, 2007).

Investing in expatriates is a worthwhile effort to develop workforce with multiple skills and global mindset. Previous studies indicated that Chinese multinational organizations are aiming at advancing skillsets for the talents to enhance competitive advantages for future international expansion operations (Yu & Wei, 2013). The findings from this study echoed extant literature about the “learning” mindset that Chinese expatriates as well as their home organizations in China hold throughout the expatriation process with the purpose of advancing knowledge and skills to further their international

expansion. This learning mindset may positively influence their behaviors and decision-making when they are in the host country organizations.

Thus, many Chinese multinational corporations where the participants of this study work view the host organizations as a “training center,” and expect the host American organizations to train their expatriates on site; however, the drawback of this strategy is that they might overlook the necessity and importance of providing pre-departure training and continuously accessible resources at their home organizations which could also greatly contribute to expatriate success. One of the reasons for the lack of formal expatriate training may be that the Chinese organizations highly value on-the-job training as the most effective way of preparing workforce with essential practical skills (Yu & Wei, 2013). Consequently, pre-departure training may be underestimated by the Chinese home organizations.

Social Support Matters: Go Beyond Work-related Training

The study findings provided insights from first-hand narratives about identified challenges and needs faced by Chinese expatriates working and living in the U.S., and to which extent Chinese expatriates interact with the host country nationals, the multicultural teams, home organizations and host organizations, and the general cultural environment in the U.S. Contributing to the existing studies that usually focused on pre-departure training and/or on-the-job training for expatriates in their home and host organizations, the findings of this study emphasized training and support from organizations at multiple stages, including pre-departure training, support during expatriate assignments, and facilitated social support outside workplace.

This study reflected the application of Bandura's (1977, 2002) Social Learning Theory and added new insights to future research in this area. Learning should not only be viewed as a continuous process of interaction of an individual with his or her environment, but also in light of the fact that Chinese expatriates value building fond relationships with American colleagues and are eager to expand social networks locally.

When more resources and support from organizations and supervisors or mentors are available to expatriates, it will be easier for expatriates to successfully complete their international assignments during expatriation (Lee, Veasna, & Wu, 2013). It is hypothesized that expatriates who receive more support from organizations or from their supervisors or managers or mentors may feel more motivated, more satisfied, and will achieve better performance in international assignments. The organizational support may also shorten and ease Chinese expatriates' transition and adjustment to new environment and workplaces.

Expatriate Training and Mentoring Customized to Mainland Chinese Expatriates

Although the need for cross-cultural training has been addressed as a key issue by most of the expatriate development studies, the reviewed empirical studies indicated that Chinese multinational corporations do not usually provide cross-cultural training (Selmer, Ling, Shiu, & de Leon, 2003; Shen & Darby, 2006). Based on the discussions above about cross-cultural training and cross-cultural learning, both of these two approaches share certain commonalities. Both of the perspectives underline expatriates' gains in personal skills, self-development, and interpersonal skills for interacting with others in host culture. These two approaches also emphasize the impact of host culture and

environmental factors that affect expatriates' adjustment and development. The boundary between cross-cultural training and cross-cultural learning is actually rather vague, and these two strategies are usually combined and used in expatriate development strategies. Multinational corporations may integrate performance interventions and pedagogical approach together, and tailor them to specific expatriate development practices based on the expatriates' unique needs and challenges.

The importance of cross-cultural training has been growing in recently years, because of the increasing frequency of cross-cultural interactions globally. As mentioned earlier, Brislin (1990) implied that interactions among diverse cultural background people are dramatically increasing because of the increasing global mobility and international transfers. International interactions may include business trips to foreign countries, global assignments, and workings with people with diverse cultural backgrounds (Black & Mendenhall, 1990). However, cross-cultural diversity may impede the effective communications among people from different cultural contexts. For example, expatriates may experience culture shock during early stage of visiting a new country or an unfamiliar cultural context. Befus (1988) defined the culture shock as a transition period during which individuals may suffer from anxiety or loneliness in a new culture, or experience transformative personal growth. Cross-cultural training or education is essential for expatriates to adjust to a new culture effectively.

Although many organizations do not prepare for expatriation formally, cross-cultural training provided is still effective in increasing expatriate's knowledge of the host culture, advancing cross-cultural adjustment, and enhancing expatriate's work

performance in international assignments (Mesmer-Magnus & Viswesvaran, 2008).

Various cross-cultural training models have been developed, and the training process has also been discussed in various ways. In general, previous studies presented that cross-cultural training needs to be planned longitudinally throughout the expatriate's whole expatriation and repatriation journey across stages of pre-arrival, on-site, post-arrival, and re-entry. Also, the training design needs to be complete and should carefully consider the individual differences between expatriates. In addition, many studies have discussed the various training contents that should be covered in order to deliver effective and thorough cross-cultural training.

Systematic expatriate training. Although only a few of the expatriates interviewed reported that they received fragmentary pre-departure training, like English classes and information briefings, both host organizations and home organizations lacked systematic and mandatory training. Even though some expatriates felt relatively more confident after learning on their own through information seeking and informal learning, it is highly desirable that the Chinese expatriates receive on-going and systematic training ideally from both home organizations and host organizations as part of their professional development activities.

Expatriate training has been viewed as an effective method to foster international adjustment in global environment and international business operations (Mendenhall, Dunbar, & Oddou 1987; Tung 1987). Wenger (1998) advocated a modified social learning theory, as "the social theory of learning", which explains the learning process as experiencing, learning through practicing, belonging, and becoming. Learning is not an

isolated or independent event but is rooted in the environmental context full of lived experience and social engagement with the outside world (Wenger, 1998).

Guided by social learning theory and the social theory of learning, expatriate's training and learning should also be viewed as a process. Instead of providing one-time event format of training, like most of the participants in this study experienced, the training should be systematic, and geared towards the adjustment cycle of expatriates since expatriate's transition certainly does not happen overnight and cannot be fully resolved through just one-time training. Most of the Chinese expatriates in this study mentioned that they constantly learn by themselves through observing others, asking questions, and practicing and experiencing. However, the effectiveness of informal learning cannot guarantee high impact learning. It is suggested that effective training should be provided at all adjustment stages (Littrell et al., 2006). Since expatriates have different experiences at different stages, pre-departure training cannot prepare expatriates for every possible situation which is likely to be encountered in the host country within their international assignment. Feldman and Bolino (1999) contended that on-site mentoring, for instance scenario-based guidance and psychosocial support is positively correlated with the degree of socialization for expatriates and leads to positive attitude toward professional work as well as living condition. Support and guidance from culture experts and professionals in the field throughout the entire expatriation journey can be a great help for Chinese expatriates in smoothly completing the transition, such as setting timely check-in and goals, debriefing and reflection sessions with mentors and/or supervisors and fellow expatriates. In order to provide these just-in-time training and

learning events, organizational support and intentional facilitation as well as collaboration among home organizations and host organizations are highly needed.

Customized Chinese expatriate training. Chinese expatriate training is significantly different compared to the mainstream in expatriate training discussed in Western international management literature. The main theme of expatriate training argues that expatriates of Western companies are the source of the transfer of knowledge and competence for international business operations. This is consistent with findings from this study, that is, Chinese home organizations highly recognize American organizations' expertise and global operation experience and send Chinese expatriates over for "training". Thus, existing western-dominant literature often focuses on expatriate pre-departure training conducted in the U.S. to prepare expatriate managers for overseas operations in other countries, and the training contents mainly focus on enhancing foreign language basic skills, intercultural awareness, and cross-cultural competence and skills (e.g. Black & Mendenhall, 1990; Caligiuri & Tarique, 2012; Earley, 1987; Tung, 1982). Contrarily, when non-American expatriates (like Chinese expatriates in this study) come to the U.S. who may not have access to structured pre-departure training in their home countries, the post-arrival training provided by host organizations becomes more important. Based on what is learned from the Chinese expatriates' experience through this study, each organization may need to customize their training towards specific needs of expatriates who may be at different stages in terms of prior experiences and intercultural competency level.

Summary:

Elements of Mainland Chinese Expatriate's International Adjustment

Given the limited research on mainland Chinese expatriate's adjustment and experiences in a Western country, little is known about their authentic experiences. This phenomenological study revealed what expatriation in the U.S. actually mean to them, and what their experience and concerns mean to human resource development professionals in order to be more devoted to providing meaningful support.

Figure 4 displays the various elements of meanings of Chinese expatriate's international adjustment answering the central research question: "What are the international adjustment experiences of mainland Chinese expatriates living and working in the U.S.?"

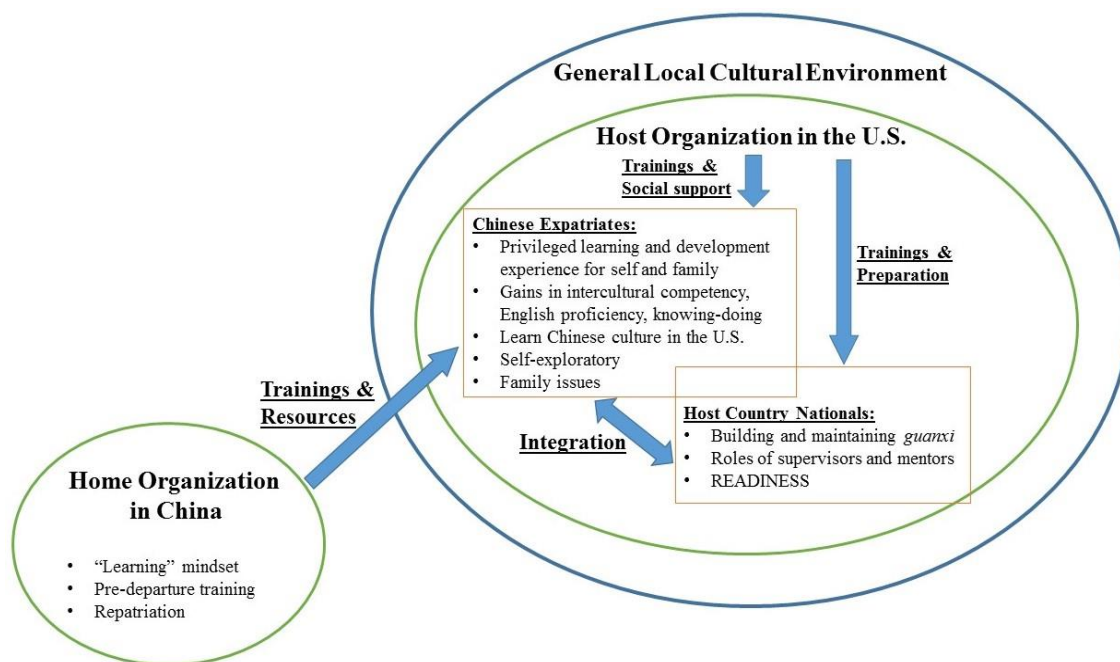


Figure 4: Elements of Mainland Chinese Expatriate's International Adjustment

Figure 4 showcases the three themes that emerged from the study results describing the essence of Chinese expatriates' international adjustment experiences working and living in the U.S. First of all, the mainland Chinese expatriate's journey is a developmental and self-exploratory learning and development process (brown square box on the left). Highlights of this process include: (1) the Chinese expatriates gained professional expertise, intercultural competency, English proficiency, and progressive career advancement, even though they mostly had to learn and explore on their own with limited formal training and guidance; (2) the Chinese expatriates were greatly challenged by their insufficient English proficiency, lack of practical skills to navigate work and life in a foreign culture, and dealing with the stress with spouses and families not accompanied; (3) despite all the various challenges, frustration, and stress caused to the Chinese expatriates and their families, they still perceived this experience as a rewarding and privileged opportunity.

The second element in the framework is host country nationals. As another major theme that emerged from the data, mainland Chinese expatriates seek meaningful integration with host country nationals (two overlapping square boxes). The results reinforced the importance of host country nationals' intercultural competency and capacity for working with Chinese expatriates to achieve employee integration. At the host country nationals' side, the data suggested the need of increasing host country nationals' readiness for interacting with Chinese expatriates, better understanding of Chinese expatriates' expectations and challenges working with American supervisors and mentors, and improved awareness of Chinese values in building and maintaining *guanxi*.

Organizational level efforts are needed by the host organizations to facilitate training or learning events to assist host country nationals with strategies of working with Chinese expatriates effectively.

The third element of this framework is the host organizations. Chinese expatriates are seeking host organization-facilitated learning opportunities and social support to help them achieve expatriate success (the inner circle on the right side). Systematic and customized training for Chinese expatriates are suggested by the data. Organizational level support and intentional facilitation of those trainings, learning events, and social support were highly desired by these Chinese expatriates throughout their expatriation time. Since the expatriates' challenges and needs are changing over time, just-in-time access to training and archived materials is extremely important and critical to satisfy expatriates' needs and ensure their success in international assignments.

Another major element of the framework is home organizations (circle on the left side). The Chinese expatriates interacted with their home organizations much less than with their host organizations, especially after they arrived in the U.S. and started to work. However, the findings showed the importance of pre-departure training and continuous available support from home organizations, such as periodical debriefs and accessible resources, play a critical role in expatriate success. Influenced by the "learning" mindset, Chinese home organizations may overly rely on the American host organizations to train the Chinese expatriates sent by them, and set high value on the knowledge transfer upon the expatriates' return to benefit their own companies. However, reality might not meet the expectations. As the data suggested, home organizations in China also need to

develop and implement customized training programs or learning activities provided to new Chinese expatriates, make resources accessible whenever needed, and seek collaboration with host organizations to maximize the expatriation's contributions to organizational success and mutual development.

In summary, mainland Chinese expatriate's expatriation journey is developmental and self-exploratory learning process; while numerous challenges and demands may have hindered their process of transition and transformation, meaningful integration with host country nationals and intentional facilitated organizational support are sought to help with overcoming the challenges and achieving expatriate success.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This phenomenological research aimed to explore the essence of Chinese expatriates' international adjustment experience working and living in the U.S. Along with limitations of this study, recommendations for practice and future research are presented in this Chapter.

Recommendations for Practice

When traveling from the East to the West, Chinese expatriates are still vulnerably positioned. They need to devote themselves to adjusting to the new culture, and accommodating their communication and behavioral styles to the American styles. Given limited research that is focused on this particular population, recommendations for HRD practices are presented below.

First of all, to foster Chinese expatriates' development and self-exploration, it is needed for organizations to recognize the self-actualization of Chinese expatriates and the commitments that they invest into the expatriation process professionally and personally. The practical implication for both home organization and host organization is that high quality of training is expected for professional development, and expatriates are ready to embrace new environment despite challenges they may experience.

Second, at the individual level, language ability is still a huge challenge for Chinese expatriates. Language proficiency and its impact on expatriate's work and social circumstances is a complex phenomenon. Findings of this study and previous research have emphasized the importance of social English proficiency. Professional English and

social English may be equally important for Chinese expatriates to ensure success in expatriation, and they should be well prepared with organization's assistance and support. The findings of this study also deepen the understanding of Chinese expatriate's needs by highlighting the importance of understanding cultural differences in communication beyond technical English skills. When preparing Chinese expatriates with English proficiency, it is necessary and critical to incorporate content related to local culture comparisons with Chinese culture, as well as social English practice using vivid real-life scenarios.

Another major recommendation at individual level is to further research on family support for mainland Chinese expatriates. Due to the previous One-child Policy and the recent change to Two-child Policy, family support for Chinese expatriates is worthy of a further and closer examination that will contribute to the extant literature and provide practical implications for human resource development practitioners.

Third, host country nationals' readiness and competency of interacting and communicating with Chinese expatriates matters. The findings of this study suggested that host country nationals' intercultural awareness and competency could significantly influence Chinese expatriates' transition and success of expatriation. Without host country nationals' welcoming, acceptance, understanding and interaction, Chinese expatriates in host organizations could not adjust to the new culture and feel satisfied with their work. The fact is that host country nationals' intercultural awareness and competency may be varied, consequently, their readiness for working with Chinese expatriates varies, too. Host organizations will need to facilitate relevant projects or

training to prepare local host country nationals with basic knowledge and essential skills for working with Chinese expatriates effectively before their arrival. After their arrival, continuous social support with facilitated events is also highly desired by Chinese expatriates to constantly build positive relationship with local host country nationals, based on results of this research.

The fourth aspect of recommendations is related to the customized training for Chinese expatriates. The findings imply that Chinese expatriates need to gain local knowledge and cross-cultural competency to better perform in international business operations. It is highly desired to receive formal training from their organizations and mentoring in a systematic approach throughout the expatriation. This training can involve both pre-departure training and post-arrival training in order to facilitate the development of expatriate's perceptual skills for better understanding of management practices in the U.S. and communication styles of local host country nationals. Besides regular training items for new employee orientation, culture-specific training with contextual contents and scenario-based critical incidents are particularly valuable to Chinese expatriates. For example, cultural context training, conflict management training, and communication styles training emphasizing cultural differences between China and the U.S. can be implemented. The context-specific examples showcase the culturally appropriate ways of initiating interactions with locals, carrying on meaningful dialogue with host country nationals, and will help Chinese expatriates in clarifying misinterpretation and misunderstanding of the host country working environment.

Chinese multinational corporations should enhance their cross-cultural training programs and mechanism for expatriates to better adapt to cross-cultural workplaces.

Fifth, at the organizational level, this study provides practical recommendations for Chinese home organizations and U.S. host organizations. Since the Chinese multinational corporations highly value host organizations' training and nurturing of Chinese expatriates, this creates a common ground to encourage knowledge and experience sharing among talents and organizations to foster their cooperation in international business. Expatriates who return to their home organizations are an important source of information and new knowledge, but the Chinese multinational corporations have to develop specific plans to let expatriates reflect out their learning and experiences in a systematic way, rather than through one-time debriefs. The expatriates can be a source of expertise whom the Chinese multinational corporations continuously consult with. Future research could focus on how to better assist Chinese expatriates and the organizations to develop strategic training and planning to encourage sharing and transferring knowledge and skills. The findings also suggest that the American host organizations need to deepen their understanding and update their knowledge of Chinese workforce, such as their motivation for taking international assignments, and their current sources of frustration and stress. The host organizations can better prepare the host country nationals with basic cross-cultural communication skills for effective interactions with incoming expatriates. Also, given the high level of stress that Chinese expatriates may experience in the U.S., professional counseling services or mental health professionals with expertise in intercultural focus needs to be available and directed to

expatriates in a culturally appropriate way. Home and host organizations can also provide expatriates' spouses, especially those who accompany expatriates staying in the U.S. with necessary support, such as organizing and facilitating authentic and meaningful intercultural interactions with local people and local environment. Skills in coping with stress can be a predictor for expatriate adjustment. From the organization's perspective, providing mental health services and psychological well-being consultation can enhance Chinese expatriate's capabilities of coping with and managing stress.

Sixth, systematic evaluation on Chinese expatriates' experiences, satisfaction, and gains and losses needs to be established and implemented. In the extant expatriate development literature, evaluation issues have only been addressed related to evaluating cross-cultural training programs. Limited data has been collected to holistically understand and evaluate expatriates' experiences and how expatriates transfer knowledge and skills learned through expatriation back to home organizations. A longitudinal approach of systematic evaluation will contribute to the organizational learning aligning with the organization's business needs and strategize for future expatriation planning and maximizing expatriate development.

Last but not least, the narrative data, presented in this study will be beneficial for Chinese expatriates themselves to refer to. They may see experiences similar to their own; therefore they will be assured and be able to reflect on all the negative emotions and feelings, which may help them to better manage stress and stay optimistic. For new expatriates who are preparing for their trips, these findings are also helpful as a guide to what to expect. Even through the expected challenges may still not be avoided, Chinese

expatriates can learn from others, be open-minded, and mentally prepared for upcoming possible experiences.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

As a qualitative study, based on a limited number of interviews, this dissertation is limited in its ability to tell a full story about Chinese expatriates' experience. Future research can adopt both qualitative and quantitative methods to obtain a deeper understanding of the experience of Chinese expatriates from mainland China in Western countries under the massive expansion of Chinese multinational corporations. Quantitative studies can be conducted in order to increase generalizability of the results to broaden understanding of Chinese expatriates' experience and its essences. A longitudinal research is also suggested in order to capture what learning and development occurs, and how things change over time. With increased perceptual skills and practice, expatriate's self-reflection may change, even towards the same events. Thus, to explore the experiences over a longer period of time will be valuable in obtaining a more authentic understanding of the meaning of Chinese nationals' expatriation in Western countries.

This study only interviewed mainland Chinese expatriates. The findings about Chinese expatriates and their host country colleagues indicated that it is worthwhile to also research on host country nationals including supervisors and mentors and organizations for their perspectives and concerns about working with Chinese expatriates. Chinese expatriates' competency with working in the U.S., host country nationals' readiness, and organizational support and strategies for international management can be

better explored. A multi-level research design is therefore warranted. One focus of future research can be the host country nationals. Given that the population of this research are Chinese expatriates, it remains unknown how American professionals who worked with these Chinese expatriates reacted to the presence of expatriates from mainland China. This study presented Chinese expatriate's voices, but the circumstances under which host country nationals proactively or passively interact with Chinese expatriates and their concerns warrants further examination. The motivation of American host country nationals interacting with Chinese expatriates may be varied and needs further investigation.

Another focus can be particularly on organizations. A couple of existing studies were based on case studies in Chinese multinational corporations to explore their expatriates' experiences overseas. But the focus of the studies was still at the individual level. Future research therefore may study more about why and how Chinese organizations prepare expatriates and when the expatriates return, how they may utilize knowledge shared by expatriates and transferred to local management practices. It will be valuable to see if sending expatriates overseas would enhance organizations' competitive advantage and enable them to outperform their competitors, and how to maximize the expatriation practices strategically aligned with the organizations' business needs. What's more, such studies also provide new ideas to investigate the intercultural awareness and competency at team level and organizational level in both home organizations and host organizations. The results of such studies may help explore the impact on organization's managerial practices, workplace culture, leadership style,

organizational politics, organizational learning, and interactions among employees and expatriates.

Another avenue for future research could focus on high impact learning and training practices for Chinese expatriates, or broadly saying for expatriates from Asian countries working in the Western environment. Rather than just improving intercultural awareness, which is predominantly addressed in cross-cultural activities, personal or self-leadership, self-maintenance skills, and ways of improving self-efficacy and tolerance to ambiguity of intercultural differences, among others, can be better explored for particular populations of expatriates. In addition, investigations focused on a deeper understanding of how individual's personal goals aligned with the organizational goals throughout the expatriation will contribute to the extant literature and guide international human resource development practices. Due to the regional differences in China, cultural background and prior experience of each Chinese expatriate can be quite different. Future research can pay specific attention to the nuances among individuals and should not treat everybody in the same way. In doing so, research can provide authentic description of expatriates' and their organizations' experience and concerns to influence organizational change initiatives to achieve individual well-being and organizational success.

In addition to the aspects of Chinese expatriate experience revealed through this study, there are many other potential but unknown aspects of their experience that have not been mentioned. For instance, repatriation experience of Chinese expatriates back to

China, and actual impact of expatriate pool and deployment on organizational change and initiatives are worthwhile to examine.

Conclusion

Mainland Chinese expatriate's journey is a developmental and self-exploratory learning process. To make smooth transition, the Chinese expatriates are seeking meaningful integration with host country nationals, and continuous support intentionally facilitated by their organizations. Various aspects of their experience describing the essence of Chinese expatriates were displayed, and suggestions for practices and future research were also discussed in previous chapters. The present findings contribute to the understandings of the main challenges, needs and experiences encountered by mainland Chinese expatriates when working in the U.S. Different from the common challenges faced by expatriates from Western countries, Chinese expatriates possess some particular concerns due to the cultural distance between China and the U.S. Given the short history of internationalization of Chinese multinational corporations, preparing talents with international capability and increasing competitive advantage in global market is essential. Sending expatriates overseas is one of the major strategies to achieve this goal. In addition, Chinese organizations' cultural values and management practices are often different from those of organizations in Western countries. Such differences may increase ambiguity and uncertainty for Chinese expatriates in navigating the local culture and work environment, which may significantly increase their anxiety. This study will help home organizations and host organizations better understand Chinese expatriates' challenges and difficulties. This study contributes to extant literature with limited

research on Chinese expatriates from mainland China by better understanding their experiences, challenges, contributions to global market and organizational initiatives.

Contributing to the extant literature, this phenomenological study has provided more information and knowledge about the Chinese expatriates working under a Western context and more specifically of the challenges, needs and concerns that the Chinese expatriates encountered when they operated on international assignments. The findings are helpful for individual expatriates, the leadership team in the organizations, and human resources departments, whoever need to work better with Chinese expatriates and enhance their work performance and job satisfaction. The efforts and initiatives undertaken based on the research will in return reduce premature return of overseas expatriates and improve the performance of Chinese multinational corporations' business overseas.

The Chinese expatriates working in Western countries are growing and flourishing. The interviews with the participants explicitly described their authentic experience, a sense of meaning and purpose, social relationships with others and the environment, emotions, dilemmas, and a sense of achievement during expatriation. One of the primary contributions of this study is to amplify the voices of Chinese expatriates in the process of multinational corporations' internationalization. Hearing the Chinese expatriates' first-hand voices offers human resource development scholars and practitioners a rare opportunity to understand the Chinese expatriate experience from the inside. Individuals' lived experiences are powerful. Stories and first-hand accounts provide a concreteness and refreshing perspective that large-scale surveys may miss. The

Chinese expatriates did not speak with a single voice from a single view. Various combinations of experiences contribute to expatriate's development. By listening, the researcher had a lot to learn, and the participants had much to say. The stories that the Chinese expatriates shared invited readers to see their experiences, growth, resilience, courage, and activism that are developmentally shifting people's perspectives and behaviors to foster integration with this population and nurture business development and success.

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Appendix A: Research Invitation Email

To: Mainland Chinese expatriates

From: Xi Yu, University of Minnesota

Subject line: Expatriate Development Research – Recruitment for Interviews

Dear XXX,

My name is Xi Yu. I am a Ph.D. student at the University of Minnesota in human resource development program. I am seeking participants for my dissertation research of exploring the essence of Mainland Chinese expatriates' lived experiences working and living in the U.S. Participation would involve an interview of approximately 1.5 hours to 3 hours in length. The contents of interview focus on participants' descriptions and interpretations of their international adjustment and working experiences in the U.S.

The confidentiality of this research is maintained strictly. You can be assured that the research report will not name individuals. The final analysis of interviews with expatriates will be presented in the form of a dissertation to University of Minnesota faculty. The University of Minnesota Internal Review Board for Graduate School Research has approved this project and will ensure any sharing of my research report in academic publications or conferences will be done in such a way to maintain participant anonymity. If you have any questions regarding confidentiality, please feel free to contact the researcher, Xi Yu, at yuxxx637@umn.edu.

I am looking forward to hearing back from you. If you would like to participate, **please respond to this email by XXX**. Then I will send you consent form and set interview date/time with you. I greatly appreciate!

I look forward to learning about your experience!

Sincerely,

Xi Yu

Appendix B: Consent Form

Project Title: From East to West: A Phenomenological Study on Mainland Chinese Expatriates' International Adjustment Experiences in the U.S.

Principal Investigator:

Xi Yu, doctoral candidate at University of Minnesota-Twin Cities

Tel: 612-206-1810

Email: yuxxx637@umn.edu

Description:

This research is to explore the essence of Mainland Chinese expatriates' lived experiences working and living in the U.S. Potential subjects for this research are Mainland Chinese expatriates who have been working or used to work in the U.S. for at least 4 months. Participation will involve an interview of approximately 1.5 hours to 3 hours in length. The contents of interview focus on participants' descriptions and interpretations of their international adjustment and working experiences in the U.S.

Confidentiality:

The confidentiality of this research is maintained strictly. You can be assured that the research report will not name individuals. The final analysis of interviews with expatriates will be presented in the form of a dissertation to University of Minnesota faculty. The University of Minnesota Internal Review Board for Graduate School Research has approved this project and will ensure any sharing of my research report in academic publications or conferences will be done in such a way to maintain participant

anonymity. If you have any questions regarding confidentiality, please feel free to contact the researcher, Xi Yu, at yuxxx637@umn.edu.

Right to Withdraw:

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You may choose not to participate without any adverse consequences to you. You have the right to stop the participation at any time. Should you choose to participate and later wish to withdraw from the study, you may discontinue your participation at this time without incurring adverse consequences.

IRB Approval:

This study has been reviewed and approved by the University of Minnesota Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB has determined that this study meets the ethical obligations required by federal law and University policies. If you have questions or concerns regarding this study please contact the Investigator or Advisor.

Investigator:

Xi Yu

Tel: 612-206-1810

Email: yuxxx637@umn.edu

Advisor:

Dr. Alexandre Ardichvili

Email: ardic001@umn.edu

Statement of Consent:

By signing this consent form you agree to participate in the project entitled, From East to West: A Phenomenological Study on Mainland Chinese Expatriates' International Adjustment Experiences in the U.S.

Signature

Date

Appendix C: IRB Approval Email

10/7/2015

University of Minnesota Mail - 1310E45083 - PI Yu - IRB - Exempt Study Notification



Xi Yu <yuxxx637@umn.edu>

1310E45083 - PI Yu - IRB - Exempt Study Notification

1 message

Xi Yu <yuxxx637@umn.edu>
 To: Xi Yu <yuxxx637@umn.edu>

Mon, Mar 24, 2014 at 5:53 PM

----- Forwarded message -----

From: <irb@umn.edu>
 Date: Wed, Nov 6, 2013 at 11:24 AM
 Subject: 1310E45083 - PI Yu - IRB - Exempt Study Notification
 To: yuxxx637@umn.edu

TO : ardic001@umn.edu, yuxxx637@umn.edu,

The IRB: Human Subjects Committee determined that the referenced study is exempt from review under federal guidelines 45 CFR Part 46.101(b) category #2 SURVEYS/INTERVIEWS; STANDARDIZED EDUCATIONAL TESTS; OBSERVATION OF PUBLIC BEHAVIOR.

Study Number: 1310E45083**Principal Investigator:** Xi Yu**Title(s):**

From East to West: A Phenomenological Study on Mainland Chinese Expatriates' International Adjustment Experiences in the U.S.

This e-mail confirmation is your official University of Minnesota HRPP notification of exemption from full committee review. You will not receive a hard copy or letter.

This secure electronic notification between password protected authentications has been deemed by the University of Minnesota to constitute a legal signature.

The study number above is assigned to your research. That number and the title of your study must be used in all communication with the IRB office.

Research that involves observation can be approved under this category without obtaining consent.

SURVEY OR INTERVIEW RESEARCH APPROVED AS EXEMPT UNDER THIS CATEGORY IS LIMITED TO ADULT SUBJECTS.

Appendix D: Sample Interview Questions

Unstructured Interview -- Interviewing Question:

What have your experiences been like as a Mainland Chinese expatriate living and working in the U.S.?

Possible Probing Questions (only for the purpose of clarification and seeking rich data):

- What are your perceptions on success and failure according to your expatriate adjustment experiences?
- What are the authentic needs and anxieties for you and your family along your expatriate adjustment journey?
- What did you seek for the cross-cultural training offered to satisfy their needs and reduce anxieties?
- What have your experiences interacting with host country nationals (HCNs) been like?
- What have been challenging you to build and maintain *guanxi* with your managers or co-workers in host organization?
- What supports or efforts have been provided by your host organization?
- What support would you like to obtain from your host organization to assist you with better expatriate adjustment experiences?