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### ARTICLE

# A Critical Analysis of the Cultural Differences of Foreign Employees Working in China: A Case Study of the UK

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### ABSTRACT

This qualitative study proposes how to help cross-cultural communicators identify and address the causes and challenges of the cultural differences they encounter through the factors of cultural differences. The study was compared through a control group and data was collected and analysed by understanding interviewees' professional experiences to date as well as their experience of living in a foreign country. The participants were then asked specific questions using Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory and the concept of culture shock as a framework to inductively categorise the data while explaining through cultural dimensions theory and folk China theory. This study provides new insights for cross-cultural communicators on the cultural differences between China and Britain and provides a new understanding of the cultural differences between China and Britain through the cultural dimension theory and folk China theory. This study integrates the existing theories, especially proves that folk China theory can be used as theoretical support for the cultural dimension of the Sino-British data, and summarizes the current influences and underlying reasons for the Sino-British cultural communicators. In addition, the study provides effective recommendations and suggestions for a new generation.

### 1. Introduction

This section will provide a brief overview of the research topics and papers. The areas covered in this study will be discussed first, then why it is very important to study this topic, and why the author chooses it, the purpose and significance of choosing it.

#### 1.1 Background to the Research

More and more international enterprises are seeking

cooperation with Chinese enterprises, but these foreign enterprises in China are facing more and more problems. China has a completely different culture from the west, which is not only reflected in life but also reflected in business contacts. It is faced with different systems, various pressures from different cultures and living environments<sup>[1]</sup>. Research shows that many successful companies in Europe face many different difficulties and problems when entering the Chinese market and that adapting to the Chinese market can run

counter to the company's initial objectives and ultimately lead to failure<sup>[2]</sup>.

Since Hofstede<sup>[3]</sup> put forward the concept of cultural dimension, more and more researchers have been interested in it. These scholars try to classify culture into tangible and specific dimensions to help people distinguish the similarities and differences between different cultures. At the same time, facing the rapid process of globalization, most enterprises will ignore the existence of culture because they were concerned about economic benefits. Also, Western organizations find it challenging to adapt to Chinese customs, culture, and values. For example, the concept of "Guanxi" in the west is limited<sup>[4]</sup>.

Fei<sup>[5]</sup> pointed out in the research report that China's social form is different from that of European countries. If cross-cultural communicators want to have a long-term and stable development in China, they need to start from the social system. Understanding the formation of Chinese local society is a very important step in understanding Chinese culture.

Nowadays, the literature and research on the cross-cultural communication of enterprises have proved that "culture" will play an extremely important role in it. The increase in the deepening of understanding of Chinese culture will help foreign employees and enterprises in China to develop better in China.

## 1.2 The Rationale of the Research

The reason for choosing this research topic is that the author hopes to provide cultural help to the employees of foreign enterprises in China from different perspectives.

Although culture plays a more and more important role in business communication, in fact, in real trade and daily communication, people still can't understand the root cause of culture deeply because of information inequality, language barriers, and geographical factors, so misunderstanding will become more and more serious. Li<sup>[6]</sup> in today's society, enterprises focus more on short-term economic benefits, while ignoring the influence of culture. To expand the current knowledge, this study will consider the influence of the social system, power structure, social change, and other factors on Chinese culture, and make a comparison between Chinese and English culture by combining cultural dimensions and relevant theories.

Hofstede's cultural dimension and related theories and Fei's "Folk China" will provide a theoretical basis for this study. On the premise of recognizing the similarities and differences between Chinese and English cultures, we can understand and recognize Chinese culture from the root, hoping to help foreign enterprises in China understand the causes behind Chinese culture and help them better integrate into the Chinese market.

## 1.3 Research Aims and Objectives

The overall goal of this study is to dialectically analyse the similarities and differences between China and British cultures, as well as what factors may cause cultural differences, and what are the causes behind these factors, and try to provide solutions and cross-cultural communication models for employees and enterprises in terms of cultural differences.

### Research questions

- Find out the similarities and differences between China and British, and understanding the commonalities and differences between China and British can it help foreign employees in China to achieve better success?
- What factors will cause cultural differences and what are the causes behind these factors?

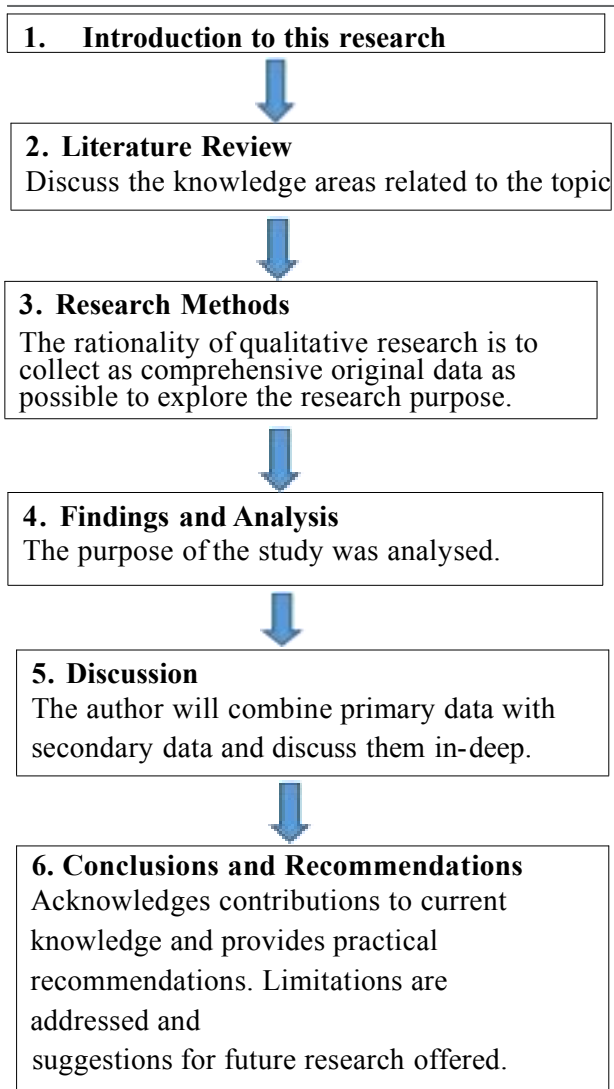
The author hopes to answer research questions by achieving the following goals:

- Review the literature and research on the history and branch of cultural development
- Through interviews, the author tried to find out the similarities and differences between Chinese and British participants, and explore what factors will affect the cross-cultural exchange between China and Britain.
- Use Hofstede's cultural dimension theory and Fei's folk China theory to analyse the perceptions of the differences between Chinese and English, provide unique cross-cultural models for cross-cultural communication workers, increase the theoretical understanding of Chinese culture, and enable human resource managers to develop an appropriate support structure to enhance the cultural adaptability of Chinese and British workers.

## 1.4 Methodology

This study mainly adopts the combination of primary and secondary research. Secondary research is used to better understand the current knowledge system in this field and provide necessary theoretical support for primary research. Primary research includes qualitative research. The purpose of qualitative research is to provide rich data<sup>[7]</sup>. Through semi-structured interviews with foreign employees with working experience in China and Chinese workers with rich cross-cultural communication experience, the original data were collected. During the interview, the interviewees experiences and feelings of cultural differences were deeply discussed, followed by the analysis of contents and data.

## 1.5 Research Structure



**Figure 1.** Structure of the research.

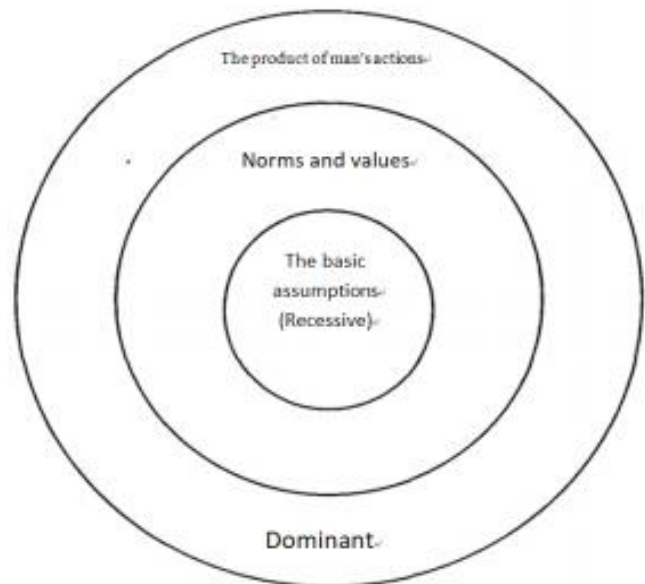
## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Cross-cultural Field

#### 2.1.1 The Relationship between Culture and Management

Trompennes and Hampden Turner<sup>[8]</sup> put forward the model of cultural level, that is, culture has three levels of cultural composition: shallow, medium, and deep. Shallow refers to the dominant human behaviour products, including language, food, architecture, etc. Middle-level culture refers to the norms and values held by cultural groups. The researchers also pointed out that when the norms reflect the group values, the group culture will be relatively stable, and vice versa. Deep culture refers to the basic assumption of a group, that is, the core problem of humans exists. For example, some data show that the Japanese bow more often than other countries, and studies show that the vast majority of people in Japan do so (norms) and show respect for authority (values). But the study further investigated “why to respect authority?” The answer given by the vast

majority of Japanese people is that this question cannot be called a question. They will find this question very strange<sup>[9]</sup>, what is touched on here is the so-called basic hypothesis.



**Figure2.** Cultural level model adapted from Trompennes & Hampden Turner<sup>[8]</sup>.

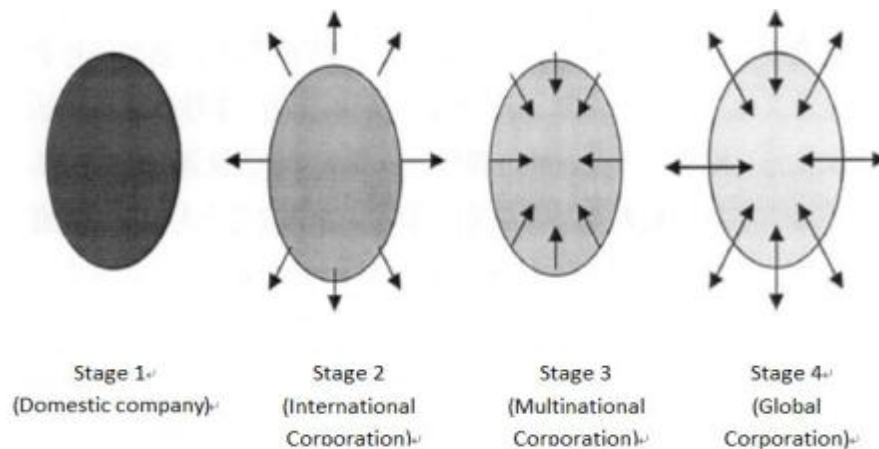
The cultural level model makes it easier for people to understand the levels of different cultures. The shallow culture is convergent, but the deep culture is different. Hofstede<sup>[10]</sup> compares culture to the onion. The outermost layer is a symbol, which can observe people's specific behaviour. The middle level is rituals, which can describe people's attitudes and etiquette. The innermost layer of values refers to people's beliefs and values. A similar theory is the iceberg model<sup>[11,12]</sup>.

Enterprises are composed of people, so enterprises are also inseparable from culture. Research shows that there is a close relationship between culture and enterprises<sup>[8]</sup>. Studies have proved that the wider the business scope of the company, the higher the requirements of the market on the cultural sensitivity of the enterprise, and the growing influence. When an enterprise enters the international “global company” stage, the cultural sensitivity of the enterprise is extremely important, and the cross-cultural challenges and cultural interaction in enterprise management present Omnidirectional<sup>[13]</sup>.

The results of the study show that cultural differences do affect the meeting and business processes<sup>[14]</sup>. Also, Romen and Shenkar<sup>[15]</sup> put forward the theory of national clusters, the reasons that affect the different clusters between China and Britain include job goals, management and organization, interpersonal relationships, and job satisfaction. The study also found that the country's gross national product (GNP) has an impact on the country's values and culture to some extent.

**Table 1.** Changes in international companies adapted from Adler adapted from Adler.

<b>Evolutionary stage of international enterprises</b>				
<b>Characteristics/Behavior</b>	<b>Stage 1 (Domestic company)</b>	<b>Stage 2 (International Corporation)</b>	<b>Stage 3 (Multinational Corporation)</b>	<b>Stage 4 (Global Corporation)</b>
<b>The primary goal</b>	Products/Services	Market	The price	Strategic
<b>Competitive strategy</b>	Domestic	Multiple countries	Multinational	The global
<b>Importance of International business</b>	Less important	Important	Very important	Dominance
<b>Products/Services</b>	Emphasis on product process	Emphasis on process technology	Perfect standardization	Mass customization
<b>Technology</b>	Proprietary	Shared	Widely Shared	Fast and widely Shared
<b>R&amp;d/Sales</b>	High	Falling	Very low	High
<b>The profit margin</b>	High	Falling	Very low	High, but soon down
<b>Competitors</b>	None	A small amount of	Many	Very much
<b>Market</b>	Small	Big	The larger	The biggest
<b>Producer</b>	Domestic	Domestic and major markets	Multinational	Import and export
<b>Export</b>	None	Saturation	Saturation	Import and export
<b>Structure</b>	Set up functional departments	High potential	Multinational business lines	Global alliance
<b>Perspective</b>	Ethnic-centric	Set up an international functional department	Transnational	Global
<b>Cultural sensitivity</b>	Unimportant	Region-centric	Abit important	Very important
<b>With whom</b>	None	important	Employee	Employees and customers
<b>level</b>	None	customer	Manager	Manager Supervisor
<b>Strategic assumption</b>	One good method	Workers and customers	Acheapest method	Many good methods exist at the same time

**Figure 3.** International cross-cultural interaction area adapted from Adler[13].

### 2.1.2 Cultural Differences (Overall)

Cross-cultural management is produced with the cross-border business activities of enterprises. Multinational corporations are facing more and more management dilemmas caused by cross-cultural challenges. With the deepening of economic globalization and the rise of the knowledge economy, cross-cultural management has become more complex and important<sup>[16]</sup>.

#### Cultural dimensions

Iris Varner and Linda Beamer<sup>[17]</sup> point out in the research that cultural communication is a very important link in the communication of multinational companies. The existing cross-cultural communication theories mainly explain and predict the cultural behaviours of specific groups through setting methods and cultural dimensions, to achieve the purpose of formulating corresponding cross-cultural management measures. After years of repeated research and investigation, Hofstede<sup>[3,18,19]</sup> put forward the famous cultural dimension theory, including:

- Power distance
- Uncertainty avoidance
- Individualism / Collectivism
- Masculinity
- Long term orientation
- Indulgence

Some studies have shown that in countries with high power distance, people will have a strict relationship between superiors and subordinates in their work and emphasize different generational relationships in life. Chinese employees are more willing to ask leaders and managers for their opinions at work, and they are always formal at work. Although the Chinese attach importance to communication and have a strong collective consciousness, managers with greater power often manage their subordinates across levels<sup>[4]</sup>. While British employees perform their duties within the scope of work power, they communicate less during work and usually work on an individual basis.

The cultural dimension of individualism/collectivism can be defined as the relationship between oneself and others. In an individualistic culture, the interests of the individual are higher than that of the collective, and people will pay more attention to themselves. Jandt<sup>[20]</sup> and in a collectivist culture, collective interests occupy the dominant position, and people will give up their interests for the common goal of the collective. Hofstede<sup>[21]</sup> pointed out that collectivism is a cohesive group that exchanges loyalty for protection. Although McLuhan<sup>[22]</sup> pointed out that human beings are on the way to Marshall's "global village", especially the development

of mass media leads to the convergence of people's consumption of fashion, values, aesthetic taste, and even has a certain impact on the system. At the same time, in the process of modern culture spreading to the world, the traditional culture all over the world is adapting to and improving itself<sup>[23]</sup>. However, studies have shown that collectivist cultures tend to converge more easily because people need to cooperate in the same context, which requires people to avoid conflicts and emphasize homogeneity as much as possible. In this way, individual differences are rarely seen<sup>[20,24]</sup>. Research shows that cultural convergence can improve the efficiency of cooperation and the quality of communication between employees<sup>[25,26]</sup>. While the British are highly individualistic and pay attention to privacy. Children are taught to have the ability to think and work independently since childhood, which requires them to be independent of others as much as possible, to emphasize the values of self-orientation and self-achievement. Research shows that in countries with high individualism, labour relations are determined by contract, and the determinants of employment and promotion are skills and rules, but in a collectivist culture, labour relations are linked with morality<sup>[20]</sup>.

Compared with the United Kingdom, due to China's strong collective consciousness, the score in long term orientation is particularly high, which means that China is a very pragmatic culture. In a pragmatism oriented society, people will have a strong sense of saving and thrifty behaviour<sup>[20]</sup>. On the other hand, whether it is a personal career development or company development plan, Chinese people are more likely to aim for long-term orientation. Correspondingly, the score of Chinese indulgence is lower, they will generally be more restrained than the British people desire. On the contrary, British people have a high positive attitude towards enjoying life and have a strong optimistic tendency<sup>[21,27]</sup>.

Cultural dimension theory can help people distinguish the similarities and differences between different cultures, and help cross-cultural communicators better position. However, the author thinks that the deficiency of these theories is that it raises problems (different indicators of cultural dimensions in different countries), but do not explain the problems (why the indicators are different)<sup>[28]</sup>.

### 2.1.3 Cross-cultural Dilemmas Encountered (Individuals)

The concept of culture shock was put forward by Kalvero Oberg in 1960. He defined the concept of culture shock as a deep psychological anxiety disorder due to the loss of familiar social communication signals or symbols and the unfamiliar social symbols of the other party. When people go abroad to work, study abroad, and settle down, they often experience different degrees of cultural shock. In multinational companies, due to the "culture shock" of expatriate managers, there are



numerous examples of having to terminate their overseas work and return home. This not only causes huge economic loss and time waste to the company but also makes these expatriates lose the opportunity to show their strength.

Huang<sup>[29]</sup> mentioned that there are three reasons for culture shock:

- Emotional disorder lost their original social status in their cultural environment, resulting in emotional instability.
- There is no way to adapt to the behaviour because the values of the mother culture and some values in the foreign culture are not harmonious or in conflict, resulting in the behaviour cannot adapt.
- It is difficult to adapt to life. In the life of foreign cultures, it is difficult due to the differences in life-style and living habits.

For multinational cultural companies, the Culture Shock problem is not only a problem that managers need to face but also a question of the company's overseas development.

#### 2.1.4 Countermeasures and Management Mode of Cross-cultural Differences

Gu<sup>[30]</sup> surveyed cultural conflicts in cross-cultural companies in Shanghai. Among 48 multinational companies, 82.2% of respondents believed that cultural differences caused conflicts. The study clarified the prevalence of cross-cultural conflicts in foreign companies in China. Li<sup>[6]</sup> believes that in the cross-cultural business communication between China and the UK, employees' problems tend to focus on language, organizational mode, social form, management model, business model, and business environment. Liu<sup>[31]</sup> and Gu<sup>[30]</sup> believe that the causes of cross-cultural conflicts are also closely related to differences in national personality, way of thinking, way of behaviour, values, and religious beliefs. The study compared to avoid cultural differences and cultural differences on the value of one another's differences, based on mutual respect and complement, to coordinate to help the employee overcome the negative effects brought by cultural differences, and the cultural differences from the existing strategy to discover the useful aspect of the company, to promote the cultural integration within the enterprise and the integration of corporate culture and local culture<sup>[32-34]</sup>. Yu and Yan<sup>[35]</sup> believe that the cultural integration of multinational companies needs to go through four stages: exploration stage, collision stage, integration stage, and innovation stage. Heenan and Perlamutter<sup>[36]</sup> proposed corresponding measures based on the development orientation of TNCs:

- The national culture of the home country of the head office in the centre. All policies and operating procedures

of the company are decided by the senior leaders of the head office.

- Multiple centres. At the same time, several cultural centres coexist. The head office issues policies and operational procedures, and then local subsidiaries decide how to complete them.
- Regional culture as the centre. Branch managers will develop strategies to adapt to the local culture, and the head office acts as a helper and coordinator.
- Global centre. The company's policies and operating procedures are jointly determined by the head office and its subsidiaries.

The research shows that if a company wants to achieve the goal of rationalizing cooperation among its branches, it needs to adopt the third management method, and the fourth management method is the common mode adopted by multinational companies in the advanced stage.

Jiang<sup>[37]</sup> proposed the solution of cross-cultural conflicts for multinational enterprises, including eight points.

- 1) Correctly understand cultural differences and focus on improving cross-cultural identity;
- 2) Consider cross-cultural factors in human resource planning;
- 3) Pay attention to the selection of cross-cultural management talents in recruitment and assignment;
- 4) Strengthen communication;
- 5) Cross-cultural training;
- 6) Build a targeted performance management system and incentive system;
- 7) Pay attention to public relations;
- 8) Build a collaborative culture.

Gu et al.<sup>[30]</sup> conducted an empirical study in which respondents were asked to put forward their suggestions from the four methods:

- 1) Select the right cross-cultural management personnel;
- 2) Improve the training process and content;
- 3) Conduct effective organizational communication;
- 4) Build a common management culture.

The results showed that 62.9% of the respondents chose "to conduct effective organizational communication", 52% chose "to establish a common management culture", 37.1% chose "to improve the training process and content", and 8.1% chose "to select appropriate cross-cultural managers". This study shows that it is of great significance to communicate and establish a common management culture in cross-cultural management. Studies have said to want cross-cultural management for

the vast majority of employees, the first thing is to find similarities between different cultures, as the basis of cultural integration, survey employees with different cultural backgrounds, tolerant of foreign cultures study cross-cultural integration goals, will determine the management idea and the management pattern of carrying out into the various functions of the management of enterprises, and establish the unique cross-cultural management mode<sup>[38,39]</sup>. Chen<sup>[40]</sup> discussed the integration of cultures from the perspectives of building excellent cross-cultural teams and cross-cultural human resource management and pointed out that the advantages of cross-cultural teams should be given full play in cultural integration. In terms of the effectiveness of HUMAN resource management, Chen believes that cultural support is crucial. There are two meanings of supporting culture, one is consistent with national culture, and the other is consistent with corporate culture. Wang<sup>[41]</sup> emphasized that cooperation is the future development trend of enterprises, and pointed out that due to a large number of employees from different ethnic backgrounds and cultural backgrounds, the barriers to cross-cultural management became increasingly obvious, resulting in low management efficiency and declining competitiveness of enterprises. Learning and understanding local culture would largely overcome the deficiencies. Luo's<sup>[42]</sup> research showed that foreign enterprises should conduct modern scientific management mode based on an understanding of Chinese culture.

Although some researchers mentioned that the root of cultural differences lies in the differences between Chinese and Western traditional cultures, they have certain limitations in helping managers of foreign companies in China to reflect on the root causes of cultural differences from the perspective of philosophical depth and the formation of the social system.

## 2.2 Different Cultural Origins

### 2.2.1 Cradle of Culture

Historical research and archaeological discoveries prove that the origin of human culture and culture is diverse, and there are seven cultural cradles on the earth.

- The culture of Egyptian holy scriptures in the Nile River Basin;
- Sumerian cuneiform Culture in Mesopotamia;
- Minoan culture of Crete;
- Hittite culture in Asia Minor;
- Mina culture in the Arabian Peninsula;
- The early culture of the Indus Valley;
- Chinese character culture in the Yellow River Basin.

The first six cultural cradles are distributed from the eastern Mediterranean to the east of the Persian Gulf. These cultures constitute the cradle of Western culture,

while the Chinese character culture is located in East Asia and constitutes the cradle of Eastern culture<sup>[23]</sup>. Jaspers<sup>[43]</sup> (1989) put forward the concept of the "Axis Age".

The birthplace of Chinese civilization is located in the middle and lower reaches of the Yellow River, forming a circle of Chinese farming culture. After many dynasties, Confucian culture has always maintained a dominant position for thousands of years. However, what the West has experienced is the path of integration and renewal of cultural traditions of multiple origins. The origin of Western culture mainly comes from three aspects: Greek culture, Roman culture, and early Christian culture. Although the differences between these three traditional cultures are very large, and there was a sharp confrontation in history, through the baptism of the Renaissance and the Reformation, the continuous integration of ideas and the progress of ideas finally formed Western culture<sup>[44]</sup>.

### 2.2.2 The Essential Difference between Chinese and Western Cultural Philosophy

The essential difference between Chinese and Western cultural spirits determines the difference between Chinese and Western cultures. Since Chinese and Western cultures have different origins and divisions, what is the essential difference between Chinese and Western cultural philosophy? The spirit of Chinese cultural philosophy emphasizes ethics and morality, and emphasizes personal cultivation and virtue, while the spirit of Western cultural philosophy emphasizes knowledge and argumentation, and emphasizes understanding. The mainline of Western culture is Christian culture, emphasizing individualism, contractualism, and liberalism, while Confucian ethical culture constitutes the mainline of Chinese culture, emphasizing collectivism, hierarchy, and the golden mean. The reason for the essential difference between Chinese and Western cultural philosophy is not only related to the cultural branch introduced in the previous article but also related to the different development paths of the social structure of China and the West. Historically, Western countries experienced great ethnic migration, which caused the disintegration of their original blood ties, forming a social structure system with localities as a unit (Engels, "The Origin of Family, Ownership, and Country"). However, China has had a particularly strong blood relationship from ancient times to the present. China's social structure system is based on the blood relationship of the family, which has caused Chinese people to have a particularly strong sense of Patriarchal. This is very different from Western society. Chinese people's emphasis on blood relationships can be found in the rules of symmetry in Chinese characters. In China, there are many names among relatives. The meanings of "bofu", "shufu" and "jiufu" are all different and should not be confused. However, there is only one of these three different concepts in English, which is uncle. This

shows that Western society does not value blood ties as much as China<sup>[45]</sup>.

Feng et al.<sup>[46]</sup> put forward the cultural ecology concept, the so-called “cultural ecology” refers to a nation’s “natural” and “social” integration, (the “natural” refers to people’s survival and development rely on nature, “social” means a person in the process of survival and development of all social relations, including the organization for economic and social two aspects) from the natural environment, economic environment, and social environment. These three levels of cultural ecology constantly form whole through people’s social practice activities and at the same time influence people’s conceptual world in various ways. Only by grasping the complex network relation between people’s natural world and social environment and comprehensively examining the operation law of people’s spiritual culture can we correctly grasp the essence of a nation’s culture. Compared with the “cultural ecology” of European traditional culture, the “cultural ecology” of Chinese traditional culture is qualitatively different.

- First, it is a semi-closed continental - coastal type of geographical environment, different from the open Marine environment.
- Secondly, it is a natural Economy combining domestic industry with crop crops, which is different from industrial and commercial Economy.
- Third, it is a unique social structure that differs from many traditional social models.

### 2.2.3 On the Characteristics and Evolution Path of Chinese and Western Cultural Ecology

China’s civilization is located in the Yellow River and The Yangtze River basin, with fertile land and less competition, so there is no need to conduct too many commercial exchanges, resulting in China’s “quiet” culture, while western culture originates from the Mediterranean coast, with convenient transportation, suitable for commerce, and fierce competition. Therefore, western culture is more “dynamic” than Chinese culture. The literature shows that Chinese culture pays attention to ethics and emphasizes personal cultivation and virtue, while Western culture promotes knowledge and argumentation and emphasizes objective cognition. The differences in social and cultural backgrounds affect the differences in ethics between countries, including the differences in the modes of economic operation and commercial communication. This essential difference causes various manifestations of the cultural difference between China and the West. Therefore, a profound understanding of the essential difference between the cultural philosophy of the East and the West is the basis for managers of foreign companies in China to recognize the cross-cultural differences<sup>[47]</sup>.

## 2.3 Modern Chinese Social Theory

### 2.3.1 Folk China

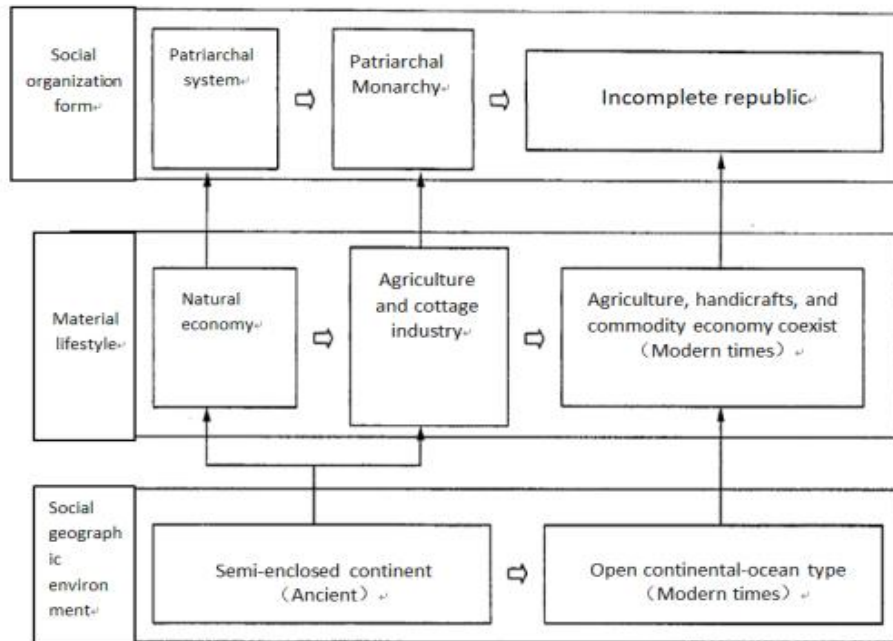
To understand the causes behind the cultural differences between China and other countries, foreign employees in China need to understand not only the process of cultural development but also the social ideology of China since modern times. Folk China’s theory includes such classic views as “the pattern of difference order”, “the difference between men and women”, “the order of the rule of etiquette”, and “blood relationship and geography”.

Fei believes that the political system, economic system, and culture are mutually coordinated and mutually restricted. Studying the relationship among various systems can help people see the “format” of the overall social structure<sup>[5]</sup>. In China, every community has a set of social structures, and different systems cooperate in different ways, so the forms are different. Reflected in people’s life, they are different in words and deeds, various dialects, living habits, and consumption habits.

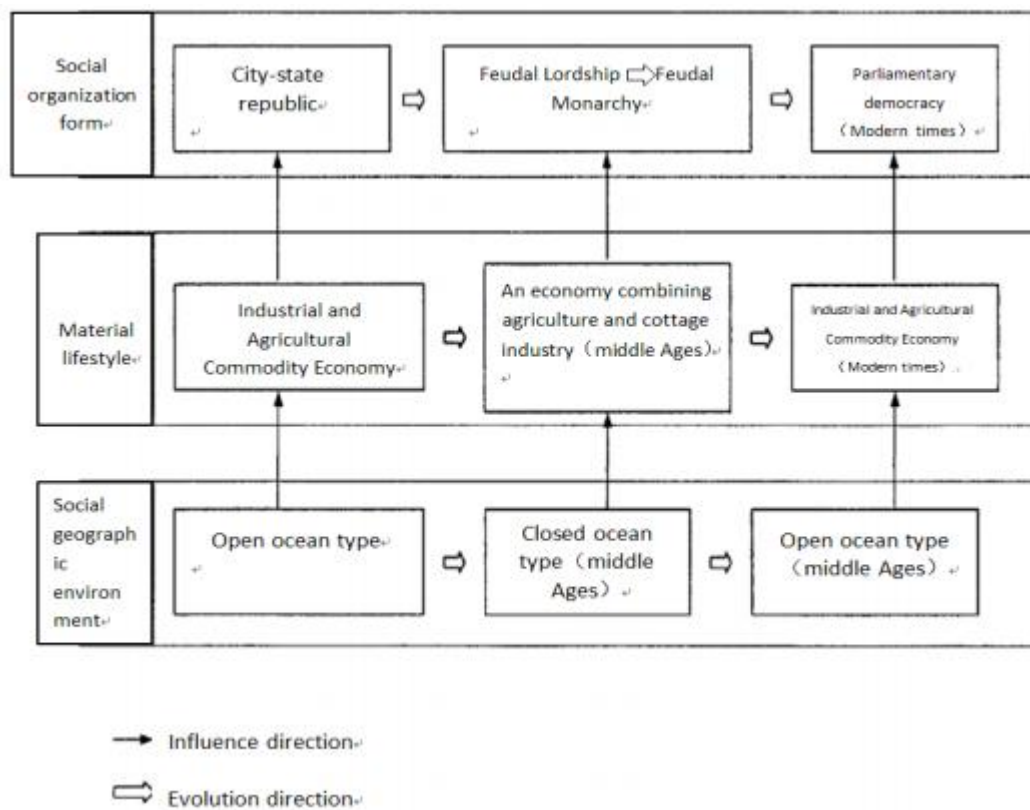
When people are at the level of cross-cultural communication, culture becomes a very vague phenomenon, which is difficult to define accurately. In the process of cross-cultural communication, other factors play a role, including attitudes, beliefs, values, etc.<sup>[48]</sup>. The definition of culture will change with the expansion or narrowing of the scope of communication. Nowadays, the acceleration of globalization will break the old rules about race, nation, or international. When enterprises open up the international market, especially in countries or cities with slow development, in the context of “small culture”, the bridge of communication between people is not necessarily closely related to international and cultural differences, but to other factors. May include the local community, local customs, and other local factors<sup>[10]</sup>. This is one of the reasons why when foreign enterprises come to China, the market research results of each region are different, because of the great regional differences. Fei’s concept of “format” (also configuration, integration) is roughly equivalent to “ethnicity”, which refers to a set of values passed down from one culture to another. Fei relies on different principles to separately determine the format that this community has developed<sup>[5]</sup>. Folk China is a general nature that exists in concrete things and is a concept formed through the process of people’s cognition<sup>[49]</sup>. “Renqing”, “Guanxi” and “Mianzi” are much more localized concepts in China. To help foreigners understand them, Chinese researchers have tried to define them. However, as these three concepts are widely used, it is difficult for foreigners to accurately understand the meaning expressed in various contexts. Chang<sup>[50]</sup> believes that understanding these concepts will help foreign employees better understand China’s grass-roots social system and get familiar with cultural differences.



**Figure 4.** Schematic diagram of Chinese cultural ecology.



**Figure 5.** Schematic diagram of Western Europe cultural ecology on the characteristics and evolutionary path of Chinese and Western cultural ecology adapted from Feng et al.



## “Renqing”

The definition of Renqing refers to the interpersonal exchange behaviour extended by blood relationships and ethical thoughts. Renqing, as spoken by the Chinese, is not only a social emotion with subjectivity but also a resource that can be used for interpersonal exchange. Renqing plays the role of the link between Chinese people's interpersonal interactions and norms<sup>[51]</sup>.

## “Guanxi”

Chinese interpersonal model has the characteristics of the “self-centre”, namely the self-cantered, put oneself have association interaction according to the closeness of others is divided into several concentric circles, and decreasing, from inside to outside of the relationship between different people use different communication rules, have strong “special” and “individual” characteristics<sup>[52]</sup>. From the perspective of social exchange ethics, Huang believes that when the Chinese conduct resource exchange, their cultural characteristics lie in the emphasis on “relationship judgment”, and people tend to communicate with each other according to the category they belong to and the corresponding rules<sup>[53]</sup>.

## “Mianzi”

Ming<sup>[54]</sup> states in his research that preserving “Mianzi” is the first characteristic of Chinese people. Hu<sup>[55]</sup> believed that “Mianzi” refers to the reputation gained by people through social achievements and the recognition of visible achievements by society. Zhai<sup>[56]</sup> defined “Mianzi” as “the sequence of self-evaluation and status in others' minds of individuals after they have made good behaviours”. Zhai<sup>[57]</sup> suggested that “personal status” could be used to express the meaning of the words “Renqing”, “Guanxi” and “Mianzi”. Personal status refers to “the social importance of an individual recognized by others (society) in social interactions”.

According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory, emotional and belonging needs are middle-level needs, but in Chinese society, emotional and belonging needs tend to move down. In other words, emotional and belonging needs can guarantee the satisfaction of physiological and safety needs. One of the important purposes of Guanxi is to be able to help and help others anytime and anywhere. The effectiveness of each individual's system of “Guanxi” determines the possibility and extent of individual access to social resources.

### 2.3.2 Differential Pattern

Differential pattern is also known as the differential mode of association or diversity ordered structure.

As communities, villages, towns, and cities move from closed and single to open and diverse, they are increasingly connected, and elements among them are constantly integrated, which is called the “folk-urban

continuum”<sup>[58]</sup>. Studies have shown that many traditional customs and family and social ties remain close after people leave home<sup>[59,60]</sup>.

Even if a new generation of people is born, the concepts of “Renqing”, “Guanxi” and “Mianzi” still exist. Pan puts forward the concept of “expansion theory”, which means that the purpose of Chinese people is to take good care of their own first and then take care of more people after they have spare power, that is, individuals, families, surrounding groups, countries, This completely conforms to the Confucian moral ideal<sup>[61]</sup>.

Li<sup>[62]</sup> put forward the concept of “provincialism” in his research, that is, Chinese people will first consider themselves and their neighbours. When all the neighbours are satisfied, the residents of this community will consider the feelings of the surrounding communities. When the surrounding communities reach a consensus, the scope of this consideration will be expanded again. Feng argues that the Chinese concept of “home” is broadly defined as a society, a “radiating circle” with varying degrees of affection and responsibility. According to the traditional social theory, everyone is the centre of a social circle, which is composed of various social relations<sup>[63]</sup>. Some Chinese scholars expressed their views on China's social relations, they believed that China's relationship network was characterized by the distance of social relations<sup>[64,65]</sup>, also containing the problem of hierarchical structure<sup>[66,67]</sup>.

### 2.3.3 Rule of Ritual (The Confucian Order)

Fei<sup>[5]</sup> denies that “the rule of man” and “the rule of law” are the opposite. China's rural society is neither the “rule of man” nor the “rule of law”. Fei defines this situation as “no law”. Laws are limited to rules maintained by the power of the state. “Li” is a socially recognized code of conduct, it can be said that following the “Li” behaviour is the right behaviour. If only the code of conduct, is the same as the law, the law is also a code of conduct. The difference between ritual and law is the power to maintain norms. Laws are carried out by the power of the state, while “ritual” does not need such a tangible authority to maintain, and it is tradition to maintain such norms. Tradition is the accumulated experience of society. The purpose of the code of conduct is to cooperate with people's behaviour to complete the task of society, the task of society is to meet the life needs of everyone in society.

“Ritual” is not carried out by external power, but by the cultivation of a person's morals. In a society under the rule of law, if a person does something wrong, there will be legal sanctions. However, in China, if a person does something wrong or violates morality, he or she will first be scolded and spurned by the people around him or her. Those who make serious mistakes will be unable to live a normal life in the local area because they will be condemned by morality all the time. This is another important cause of “face”, “human” and “relationship”.

The same example: if a person does something that violates “Li”, he will lose face in the community and his “Guanxi” network will be destroyed, and Renqing will be reduced accordingly<sup>[5]</sup>.

## 2.4 Conclusions

In this chapter, the author uses a long length to investigate the origin and separation of Chinese and Western cultures, as well as the essential differences between Chinese and Western cultural philosophies, in an attempt to provide some beneficial inspiration for foreign companies in China in cross-cultural management. The author also analysed the existing cross-cultural research shows: the overall existing research focuses on the national culture of “cultural dimensions” analysis, analysis of different national culture dimensions show the root cause of the lack of, especially the lack of philosophical depth analysis, this maybe will make cross-cultural management considering a cross-cultural challenge essence and confused when taking the right solution. The author suspects that the barriers to cross-cultural communication between China and Britain are caused on the one hand by a lack of cultural understanding and on the other by incorrect information received. At the same time, the author considers Fei’s theory of Folk China could help the UK the cross-cultural communicators to understand the causes of differences in Chinese and English, therefore, it is important to understand the subjective definition of cultural differences between Chinese and British cultural communicators, as well as the similarities and differences between The Chinese and British cultures they experience, and what factors contribute to the cultural differences.

## 3. The Research of the Methods

### 3.1 Research Strategy and Methods

#### 3.1.1 Research Strategy

The author chose qualitative research because everyone has different definitions, experiences, and ideas of culture, and the scope involved in the cross-cultural field is too wide to be quantified in many cases. On the other hand, compared with the questionnaire survey, the interview is more flexible and can also get a deep understanding of the research subjects’ ideas, to gain a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the research issues<sup>[68]</sup>. Anderson also mentioned that high-quality interviews can stimulate the interest of interviewees and obtain richer and more reliable information<sup>[7]</sup>.

#### 3.1.2 Research Methods

It has been proved that semi-structured interviews are more flexible than structured interviews and

unstructured interviews because interviewees are allowed to freely express their views, which can lead to an in-depth discussion<sup>[69]</sup>. In the interview process, there will also be an unexpected harvest<sup>[70.71]</sup>.

According to the study, the semi-structured interview is still an easy way to manage and analyse<sup>[69]</sup>. Interviewers can observe the facial expressions of participants and understand their emotions to establish an appropriate atmosphere. A good atmosphere will make the interviewees feel comfortable and enable them to talk freely<sup>[72]</sup>.

still an easy way to manage and analyse<sup>[69]</sup>. Interviewers can observe the facial expressions of participants and understand their emotions to establish an appropriate atmosphere. A good atmosphere will make the interviewees feel comfortable and enable them to talk freely<sup>[72]</sup>.

The dialogue generated in the interview is very complex and needs to be understood in combination with context. Therefore, the author read it again and makes an objective summary during the transcription process<sup>[73]</sup>. The collected data were presented in the form of charts and information classification, and each participant’s discussion is ultimately recorded in detail in “Microsoft Word”.

In the discussion section, the key contents related to the paper’s objectives were analysed, and the theories identified in the literature review were compared and analysed to try to establish potential connections<sup>[69]</sup>. To establish a new cross-cultural model and put forward effective suggestions, repeated content was analysed. The above key content will be put into a concept and conclusions and suggestions were being drawn to answer the research questions.

### 3.4 Limitations

Due to the pandemic, the author respects and understands interviewees who refuse face-to-face interviews. However, because the interviews are conducted through online videos and telephone, other communication methods such as body language and eye contact may be less, which will increase the potential subjective bias<sup>[7]</sup>.

## 4. Findings and Analysis

### 4.1 The Impact of Cultural Differences

The author asked the participants questions about the factors of social status, conflict of values, working style (thinking way, way of solving problems, etc.), lifestyle, living habits, and language. Each participant will think about these external factors. External factors have had a greater impact on them in a foreign country (UK/China). Based on the responses of

Table 2. Sample Group Descriptions: British in China and Chinese in Britain.

British in China					
Name	Age	Current profession	Country working city	Work experience abroad	Education
Bic1	27	Teacher	Taiyuan	1 year	Postgraduate
Bic2	30	Teacher	Beijing	2 years	Postgraduate
Bic3	32	Lecturer	Taiyuan	3 years	Postgraduate
Bic4	38	Department heads	Beijing	6 years	Postgraduate
Chinese in Britain					
Name	Age	Current profession	Country working city	Work experience abroad	Education
Cib1	51	General manager	Beijing	20 years	Undergraduate
Cib2	36	Manager	Edinburgh	4 years	PHD
Cib3	35	self-employed people	Edinburgh	10 years	Postgraduate
Cib4	28	General staff	Edinburgh	6 years	Postgraduate

Table 3. Comparison of Chinese and English cultural dimensions and various behaviours and values, developed by the author

CIB	Very strong	Strong	Medium	Weak	Very weak
Social status		1	1	2	
Value conflict		4			
Way of working	2	2			
Lifestyle and habits		2		2	
Language	1	1	1	1	
<b>Cultural dimension</b>					
Power distance			3	1	
Individualism	3	1			
Masculinity			4		
Uncertainty avoidance			2	2	
Long term orientation				2	2
Indulgence		3	1		
BIC	Very strong	Strong	Medium	Weak	Very weak
Social status				3	1
Value conflict	2	2			
Way of working	2	2			
Lifestyle and habits	2	1	1		
Language	2	2			
<b>Cultural dimension</b>					
Power distance			1	3	
Individualism	3	1	4		
Masculinity			2	2	
Uncertainty avoidance				1	3
Long term orientation		2	1	1	
Indulgence					

CIB= Chinese in Britain

BIC= British in Chin



the interviewees, the author has insight into which aspects affect those most in the field of cross-cultural communication.

The number in the table represents the number of times the participants chose. The larger the number, the more people there are for this option.

## **4.2 Major Influencing Factors**

### **Values**

CIB1: "Differences in values permeate every aspect of life and work."

CIB group emphasizes the values conflict, they generally believe that the conflicts of values are one of the important factors, that cause culture shock when they first came to Britain faced huge challenges as their style and living habits are at odds with the locals, they found that the obvious difference is that British people treat things, people, things and demand and the Chinese people are very different, can do is to respect and adapt.

The not only CIB group, but the BIC group also gave stronger feedback. BIC1 mentioned that differences in the social system led to differences in people's value orientation. "When I first came to China, I was a completely new piece of paper, and everything I saw was unfamiliar".

The BIC group explained that they had lived in Europe for many years, and the cultures, work experiences and social systems of the surrounding countries were similar, but when they came to remote China, a completely new synthesis struck at the values they had been used to for 20 or 30 years. Bic3 emphasized his desire to learn and understand Chinese culture, trying to understand how Chinese people are different from British people. They also admitted that they had learned some knowledge before going to China, but it was not enough to deal with the situation they faced in China.

### **Way to work**

All Bic and CIB agree that cross-cultural processes are strongly influenced by the way each other works and that when a worker works across borders, the factors that influence the work change accordingly. Both CIB2 and BIC4 felt as if everyone was working individually, not as a team.

Even if companies do orientation and coaching, for most BIC and CIB, their cross-cultural experience is limited, so a short period of training alone will not be able to adapt to the big change in the pace and style of work. The CIB group stresses that British workers are more work-oriented and unwilling to sacrifice their working hours to mentor new foreign employees, while the Bic group says they find it hard to adapt to the collective Chinese way of working.

### **Language**

For BIC group, language is another factor that affects them.

BIC1: "Chinglish is what my Chinese colleagues said most of the time, but I think it is not the language that causes the communication barrier, but the thinking logic and word order behind the language."

Compared with CIB, BIC group is more influenced by language. They think Chinese is not as popular as English, and it is not easy to learn and master. However, language is a tool of communication, and how understanding the meaning expressed by the other group is the key.

### **A personal view of cultural dimension**

Through the six dimensions of cultural dimensions, interviewees can have a general judgment on their own experience and choose the gap between China and the UK. Using China as a reference, the authors asked participants how the various dimensions of the UK compared with China.

The author's data from CIB and BIC are consistent. All participants believe that the British are more individualistic than the Chinese and that the British have a high degree of indulgence. From the perspective of long term orientation, the Chinese are inclined to have a higher long-term goal. As for masculinity and uncertainty avoidance, the data of the two countries are consistent. However, most Bic's think that Britain has a slightly lower power distance than China, and they think that Chinese people live and work in a very restrained and euphemistic way, and there is a sense of hierarchy. In contrast, the CIB group believes that there is no obvious difference in the power distance between China and the UK. They believe that the class concept existing in China still exists in the UK, but the power distance in China is slightly higher than that in the UK.

## **4.3 The Difference between China and the UK**

Participants were asked to express subjectively the cultural differences they encountered by describing their own experiences and cultural shocks.

### **Appellation**

BIC1: "I find it very confusing for Chinese people to call each other. They have very complicated names for relatives and different names for other people. Although it doesn't affect my daily life, I often feel confused."

According to the interviewees, although the difference in appellation does not cause troubles in life, it does not mean that there are no cultural differences and cultural barriers. BIC group will realize the importance of appellation and the identity behind it in cross-cultural communication. CIB2 expresses the same feeling: compared with China, the British call relatives are very simple, I think their family structure is not too complicated.

The participants believed that this was closely related to the structure of social members. In China, there are complex social circles, in which everyone has complicated relationships and different names of relatives. This complexity also includes friends and work colleagues. In the process of cross-cultural communication between China and Britain, the familiarity and understanding of appellation may be an important factor in their acculturation.

Generally speaking, appellation does not affect the cross-cultural life of interviewees, but it does hinder them from understanding the culture of the other party, which shows the importance of addressing and the meaning behind addressing will play a beneficial role for them in further understanding the culture of the other party.

### **Rules and regulations**

BIC3: "Compared with China, the laws and regulations of Britain are more perfect, and there is a unified standard for all people."

However, the legal boundaries of China are very vague and the rules are not clear enough. It feels that there is room for discussion in many situations. The law does not strictly regulate people's behaviour. Instead, law enforcers or standard setters need to make a comparison according to different situations should judge, and treat different people who have different standards.

Most of the participants said that they had to adapt to the new environment, local rules, and some customs. Many times, they encountered difficulties because they did not understand the local laws and regulations, so it was difficult to make timely adjustments. Participants believed that this was not only a lack of understanding of local rules and regulations but also a lack of adaptability in terms of cultural integration.

CIB3 mentioned that the laws on labour rights in Britain are relatively sound, and British workers are more protected in terms of rights and interests. There are also some differences in promotion opportunities in enterprises. Sometimes, China needs to give gifts to its leaders or do a good job in relations, that is, "backdoor" and moral related issues, so that there may be better development space. In the UK, these phenomena will be less. CIB1 also mentioned that British employees are better paid than Chinese employees, including clear regulations on overtime and paid leave. The factors that determine the rising space of employees between China and the UK are also different. The rise of British employees depends more on their abilities. However, in addition to their abilities, the rising space of Chinese employees also depends on whether they know "Renqing" and whether they have a close relationship with their leaders. According to the opinion of most respondents, their adaptation to the new environment is

challenged because they are not familiar with the rules after entering the new environment.

### **Distance**

Almost all participants mentioned the topic of distance. BIC2 believes that in the UK, most colleagues' relationship is limited to work, there is no contact after work, and there are not many social and recreational activities. BIC2 is surprised that Chinese people socialize so easily and frequently that there's almost no sense of distance between people. BIC3 mentioned that in the work, British people will keep a distance. No matter what the relationship between their colleagues is, they will always play a role in the work. However, Chinese people are different. The author found that when some colleagues are very close, they will help each other to work, and sometimes even break the rules to help colleagues who have good relations with them.

CIB2: "The sense of distance is full of my life and work. People pay great attention to the sense of boundary in my work. Everyone will keep a distance and give each other enough private space. At least, I didn't communicate with many colleagues during my work, and I felt that I had not been integrated into it. But working in China, people have no sense of boundaries, and I sometimes feel uncomfortable. In life, my husband has a sense of boundaries. If he uses my things, he will ask for my opinions. Sometimes I feel that he respects me very much, but sometimes he has a strong sense of distance."

How to master the sense of distance with colleagues and friends is very important for BIC and CIB. The cross-cultural experience is not only work but also experience and understanding another culture and another life. Most of the participants found it difficult for them to establish new relationships abroad, and some felt lonely because they could not establish social relations and stay with their relatives and friends in China, which made them feel more distant from others. Such emotions will also affect normal life, increase the difficulty of cross-cultural integration, and slowdown the process of understanding each other's culture.

### **Way of working**

Distance is associated with the way people work. Chinese and British people have very different ways of working. Many respondents gave similar answers.

CIB1: "British employees are highly autonomous and have the ability to complete tasks independently. There is little communication between colleagues, and they maintain privacy at work. On the contrary, Chinese employees generally complete tasks through teamwork and keep close contact with their colleagues in life."

The BIC group said that they need to understand and understand the way Chinese people work to make them more integrated. Otherwise, this contradiction will always exist and become an obstacle to cross-cultural communication. When the interviewees are in the

transnational working mode, they will lose a lot, such as the company of relatives and friends, the familiar environment, etc. However, the discomfort in the work will be magnified, resulting in the uneasiness of cross-cultural communicators.

BIC2: "Although Chinese people's expression is very euphemistic, they are still more willing to work in groups, while British people prefer to work independently and keep their own private space. I think working independently will ensure my work efficiency and improve my ability of self-thinking."

They explained that this is because of different cultures and ways of thinking. In general, the British prefer to work as individuals, while the Chinese prefer to work as a group.

CIB4 believes that compared with the British, Chinese people prefer to regard work as a part of life. According to the interviewees, because the Chinese work in a collective mode and the communication and contact between colleagues are closer, the life and work of Chinese people are integrated. Therefore, the BIC group will feel uncomfortable or not accept this work style when working.

### **Expression**

BIC1: "My students adjust their way of speaking according to my mood. Sometimes I think it's a high EQ performance, but at other times I think they're deliberately restraining themselves."

BIC3: "In terms of expression, Chinese people are more willing to give examples and express their views in a euphemistic way. They will give very open views so that others can participate in the discussion. However, British people are more willing to speak their own ideas directly and use more critical words."

The communication mode of each country is closely related to the social form and culture. The BIC Group, generally thinks that the expression of Chinese people is very euphemistic. Although this is the expression of respect for each other in Chinese culture, misunderstanding often occurs. Because the BIC group is in a cross-cultural environment, they will listen and communicate more carefully, which is possible. In the process of communication, there are over understanding and misunderstanding, or the behaviour of guessing the other party's ideas because of the indirect expression, thus deepening the misunderstanding.

BIC4: "Their way of expression and behaviour is very euphemistic, and they will show humility during the meeting."

The BIC Group believes that this expression of Chinese people is consistent with their work style.

### **4.4 Barriers Caused by Cultural Differences and Solutions**

Based on the experience of the interviewees, this paper collects the countermeasures and solutions of some participants for cultural differences, so as to look at the problems and solutions encountered by everyone from different angles and perspectives.

BIC1: "I think when I am in another cultural environment, my tolerance and acceptance will be higher."

Most participants think that many things they encounter will not cause serious obstacles to them, but will only make them confused, but the confusion and little things will have a negative impact on their lives.

Almost all the respondents mentioned communication. Bic3 believes that although there are differences in language and ways of thinking, through explanation and discussion, many misunderstandings and misunderstandings can be solved immediately. Bic4 said that people will never be well prepared. Although he learned some relevant knowledge before he came to China, he was still unable to deal with all the problems, participants thought this was normal. Communicate with local people and get in touch with local new things. Cib1 thinks that although they will do a lot of preparatory work in business talks, they will still have barriers because of the unequal language and information. They will spend a lot of time on explanations rather than business progress. Due to the different etiquette and culture, they are very careful in the meeting, because they are afraid of offending each other's culture and ruining the business. After all, the primary purpose is to reach an agreement.

Most participants also indicated that they were willing to learn and understand each other's culture to improve their knowledge reserves and adaptability. But at the same time, respondents said they would like to get some help, because the company is not obliged to provide relevant guidance on cultural adaptability, and it is difficult to find such an organization in life. In addition, respect is also a word they often refer to. For unfamiliar cultures and environments, giving the greatest respect is another solution.

### **5. Discussion**

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the differences between Chinese and English cultures and to help Chinese and British cultural communicators understand and understand the barriers in cross-cultural communication through cultural dimensions and Folk China. By studying these questions from the perspective of individuals, the author can get different answers from different age groups, different backgrounds, different identities, and the different influences of cultural differences on individuals. The results show that most of the Chinese and British respondents have similar views on the cultural dimension, which is consistent with the data of cultural dimension theory. According to the different experiences of the CIB group and the BIC

group and the problems they reflect, a lot of the information is consistent with the views put forward in Folk China.

This article proposes a solution to the challenges, differences, and corresponding solutions faced by Chinese and British cross-cultural communicators, and tests them through the literature, especially the cultural dimension theory and folk China theory.

### 5.1 Culture Shock

According to the research data, the respondents are more or less affected by the external environment, whether it is a BIC group or CIB group, they are very affected by values and working methods. Besides, some participants in the sample group are still influenced by language and lifestyle. This is consistent with previous studies<sup>[6,29-31]</sup>. The main factors leading to cultural conflicts have not changed, and the influence forms of cultural conflicts are the same as the research results<sup>[8,10,11]</sup>. The influence of shallow forms will be weakened (language, social status, lifestyle), and the hard to change deep forms (code of conduct, values) are still the root causes of differences.

### 5.2 Cultural Dimension

The theory of cultural dimension is regarded as a framework to measure the cultural differences of different countries. Hofstede believes that culture is a psychological process shared by people in an environment, which can distinguish a group of people from others. According to the data provided by the interviewees, the responses of participants to feedback on masculinity and uncertainty avoidance between China and the UK are completely consistent. In terms of individualism and indulgence, the score of Britain is much higher than that of China, while that long term orientation of China is much higher than that of Britain. These data are consistent with Hofstede's research. However, interestingly, in terms of power distance, the CIB group thinks that there is no big difference between China and the UK, while the BIC group thinks that the power distance of Britain is lower than that of China, but it is not as big as that in Hofstede's study. This may be consistent with a view in Folk China's theory that China's power is different. For example, the power in a group only exists in this group, while there is another power in another group. If a person breaks away from a certain group, the power will not restrict the person. Therefore, for the cultural environment in China, the power distance may not be the same as that in Hofstede's study and Hofstede's theory tends to be average. He assumes that every culture has typical members, but this is not the case. In addition, whether the power distance can be applied to family, relatives, friends, and the relationship between superiors and subordinates at work is not clear. Another reason is that Hofstede

collected data from China's Taiwan and Hongkong, China, and did not collect data from the Chinese mainland<sup>[74]</sup>.

### 5.3 Differences between China and Britain

#### Appellation

The research shows that BIC groups are confused about appellation in China. Behind the different appellations are the difference between the social systems and social structures. In cross-cultural communication, people will be strongly influenced by nonverbal communication within the culture. Intercultural communicators need to understand their social structure, cultural environment, and even local customs and religions, and study cross-cultural communication cultural exchange must recognize the importance of this multifaceted nature<sup>[45,75,76]</sup>. Pointed out that China is based on the blood relationship of the family, while Britain is a social structure system with local units, one of the differences is the difference in the appellation. However, the interviewees mentioned more about the confusion of appellations encountered by unrelated people in their work and life. This phenomenon can still be found in previous research<sup>[5]</sup>.

In China, because of the pattern of differential pattern, the composition of social relations is more complex. The appellation relationship in China is not limited by age, gender, and identity. For example, "Mr" can also refer to women in certain circumstances. BIC Group can't understand their position in each relationship structure, so they can't find the exact appellation. However, in the CIB group, the interviewees said that they would not be troubled by appellation.

#### Rules and regulations

The BIC group thinks that the laws, regulations, and rules of the UK are more perfect, and they think that the imperfect laws in China may make them lose some sense of security. Rule of in Folk China Ritual can explain the differences in rules and regulations mentioned by the BIC group. China's rule of rites society relies on traditions and customs, as well as the mutual restriction between people to restrict and regulate each other. It can be understood that law is not a necessity in some areas of China. Although the study<sup>[77]</sup> shows that China is accelerating the process of legalization, there is no evidence to show the etiquette order will disappear in a short time. The moral issues raised by the respondents were also reflected in the research<sup>[78,79]</sup>. One of the reasons is that "Renqing", "Guanxi" and "Mianzi" are full of interpersonal communication. Interviewees said that to succeed in China, in addition to their ability, they also need to have a good relationship with relevant



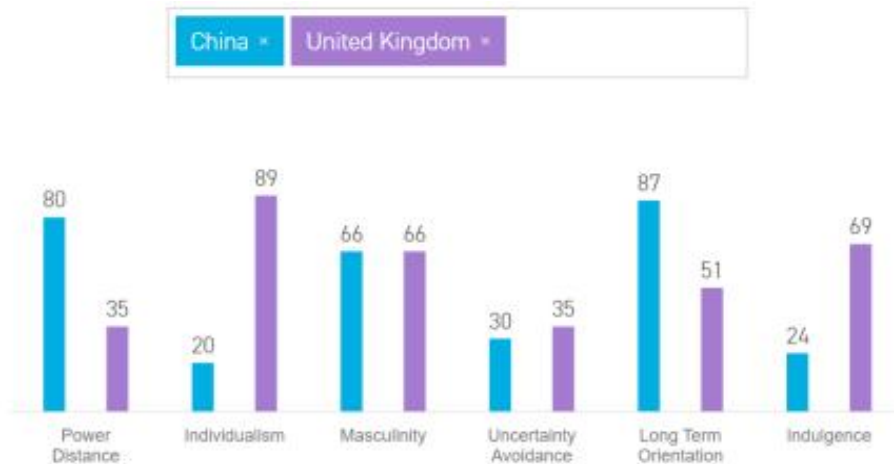


Figure 6. China and United Kingdom cultural comparison adapted from Hofstede<sup>[3]</sup>.

personnel, and the distance from others “Guanxi” has become the capital for resource exchange, which is different from living in the UK. This shows that BIC groups need to engage in extra social activities in their work and life to earn social resources.

On the other hand, the BIC group may always face the challenges of laws and regulations. Researchers believe that the BIC group should try to understand the operation mode of local society rather than familiar with Chinese laws and regulations. Dreama<sup>[76]</sup> has proved that cross-cultural communication mode needs to be combined with local social and cultural forces, and each social culture or regional culture will provide a conceptual basis for cross-cultural communication.

### Distance

The results show that both BIC and CIB groups need to make a complex assessment of their sense of boundary with others in the new environment, and the difficulties encountered in the assessment are usually due to the inability to master the current relationship with others and the lack of understanding of local culture and customs, which is consistent with the previous research conclusions<sup>[5,64,65]</sup>. According to the interviewees' narratives, Chinese people tend to work in teams, while British people prefer to finish their work independently, which reflects the difference between individualism and collectivism in work mode<sup>[21]</sup>. In addition, BIC and CIB groups also have different definitions of the boundary between work and life. All participants believe that Chinese people are more willing to integrate life and work together. CIB group emphasizes that when they live in the UK, they do not need to have extra social contact to maintain their “Guanxi” and “Renqing” with others. The interviewees believe that this is due to Environmentally-caused behaviour, research has also proved that this is the social way to live in China<sup>[51,53,63,67]</sup>. Therefore, the mode of lifework integration of Chinese refers to that they can obtain

social resources from the social life/work to help them solve their work/life difficulties. They need to obtain other people's “Renqing” and “Guanxi” through social activities, so Chinese people are more willing to draw closer to each other.

BIC who was interviewed said that British people are self-centred and they prefer to keep their distance from others, although research shows that Chinese people are also self-centred<sup>[5,61,80,81]</sup>, research<sup>[5,61,64-67]</sup> further elaborated that the difference in distance and boundary between China and Britain is that British people do not need to obtain social resources through extra social interaction, while Chinese people need to exchange “Renqing”, “Guanxi” and “Mianzi” through social intercourse, which leads to the difference of sense of boundary between Chinese and British people.

### Way of working

Most of the respondents intend to stay in China/UK for a long time, so they attach great importance to the relationship with their colleagues and try to adapt to the local working style, which is helpful for their future careers. The two groups of interviewees have experienced the difficulties caused by the different working styles of their colleagues. The difference in work forms has become the main challenge they encounter in their work. They believe that China and the UK are different in their working methods. There is a sharp contrast between the highly cooperative mode of Chinese collectivism and the independent work form of British individualism, which is inline with the previous conclusion consistent<sup>[10,44]</sup>. At the same time, the study shows that another reason why the Chinese prefer to work cooperatively is because of the cultural factors of the differential pattern. Compared with the British people, Chinese people have a strong sense of “group spirit”, and they are more willing to seek the help of colleagues at the same level (in the same department and position) to complete tasks<sup>[66,82]</sup>.

In addition, they emphasized the necessity of enterprise training and the importance of the boss' s organizational decision-making power, which is a very efficient way to solve the problems of cooperation and communication between them and local employees, also see<sup>[83,84]</sup>. Most BIC and CIB believe that in addition to the support of the environment and organization, they should also take the initiative to adapt to the local work style. Research shows that it is easier to integrate into the work environment with a positive attitude to adapt to the foreign culture than to wait passively<sup>[85]</sup>, but some studies show that intercultural communicators' excessive compliance with the local environment will make them more likely to lose themselves and face greater challenges.

### Expression

Studies have shown that without understanding the communication patterns within a group, it is difficult for people from different cultural backgrounds to understand the differences or similarities between this communication and other groups<sup>[86]</sup>, survey results show that some interviewees pay more attention to their own words because of their different ways of expression, while others will over-interpret and explain. Although everyone' s coping style is different, everyone will use different methods to resolve the differences brought about by the way of expression. Research believes that this solution can alleviate and avoid conflicts, but it does not touch the root of the problem, that is, the differences in expressions brought about by cultural differences<sup>[1,84]</sup>.

On the one hand, research has proved that behind the implicit expressions of the Chinese people is the “Mianzi” culture. Chinese people are more willing to retain their ideas in the process of communication, thus giving each other more space to express themselves. The implicit expression is a good way to respect each other' s “Mianzi” and to draw closer to each other' s “Guanxi”<sup>[5]</sup>. Euphemism is more in line with the personality and cultural characteristics of Chinese people<sup>[53]</sup>, while the rational thinking mode and high individualism of British people make them more willing to express their views in a direct way<sup>[87]</sup>, which is consistent with the data collected in the interview.

On the other hand, collectivist Chinese people will voluntarily yield to each other in conflict to respect each other' s “Mianzi”. Research has confirmed that Chinese people avoid conflicts in many ways. Moreover, Chinese employees are more likely to be affected by social face when they avoid conflicts with their superiors than when they have conflicts with western managers. Therefore, they should consider each other' s feelings as much as possible before conflicts occur, and put forward suggestions tactfully<sup>[4]</sup>. Participants' discussion on the relationship between expression and individualism was similar to the previous studies<sup>[21,87,88]</sup>. The expression of collectivism is implicit and needs to be combined with

the language and cultural environment, that is, high context, while the expression of individualism is on the contrary. People emphasize stating their views clearly, which is a typical low context.

## 6. Conclusions and Recommendations

### 6.1 Conclusions

#### 6.1.1 The Differences between Chinese and English Cultures and Their Causes

The focus of this study is to analyse what causes the cultural differences between China and Britain and the causes behind them. First of all, the author analyses the differences in the process of cultural development between China and Britain from historical materials and a large number of documents and finds that the existing theories focus on the analysis of cultural dimensions while ignoring the analysis of cultural roots, such as values, social structure, philosophical spirit, and geopolitical culture on intercultural communicators. After the data acquisition provides theoretical support. Then, this study investigates and analyses the factors of cultural differences between China and Britain from two aspects. The “culture shock” of the personal aspect aims to refine the interview of interviewers through language, lifestyle, work style, and other factors, while the “cultural dimension” of the collective aspect aims to evaluate the overall differences between Chinese and English cultures and verify whether there are errors in cultural dimensions in today' s Chinese and English cultures. And then through the way of the control group interview, we can more clearly find the cultural differences between China and Britain and pave the way for further research.

This study shows that work style and values are the main factors that affect the life of Chinese and British intercultural communicators in foreign countries. Although language and lifestyle may also affect the target group, with the growth of cross-cultural experience, the impact of these two factors will be weakened, which shows that the factors influencing the cultural differences between China and Britain still come from the deep-seated culture. In the following research, the author classifies and summarizes five factors that cause the cultural differences between China and Britain: the complexity of appellation, the differences in the concepts of laws and regulations, the sense of distance, and the differences in working methods and expressions, which have caused a big cultural impact on Chinese and British intercultural communicators. However, the results show that compared with the BIC group, the CIB group is easier to integrate into the British cultural environment, which is mainly due to the complexity of Chinese social structure and the large differences between “small cultures” in different regions.

Secondly, the theory of cultural dimension can provide a wide range of help for cross-cultural

communication between China and Britain, such as masculinity 、uncertainty avoidance 、individualism 、indulgence and long term In terms of orientation, Chinese and British intercultural communicators have given similar answers to the cultural dimension theory, but for the score of power distance between China and Britain, the results shown by the research are somewhat different from Hofstede's theory of cultural dimension. BIC and CIB emphasize that the actual gap in power distance is not as large as in the study.

### **6.1.2 The Influence of Folk China Theory and Cultural Dimension Theory on Cultural Differences between China and Britain**

The purpose of this study is to analyse why the five cultural differences pose challenges to Chinese and British cultural communicators through cultural dimension theory and folk China theory.

The results show that in terms of the appellation, the differences between Chinese and English are caused by the differences in family structure and social role orientation, that is, the height of power distance and the pattern of a different order. Compared with British people, Chinese people have more honorific titles and more complex relationship structures, which will lead to confusion and confusion of BIC groups. Secondly, the existence of "Mianzi", "Renqing" and "Guanxi" makes Chinese people need to consider other people's views and feelings in terms of rules and regulations, working methods, distance, and expression. They need to think from a collective perspective, and at the same time need to obtain resources from different social groups. Therefore, Chinese people are more dependent on social interaction than British people, and this phenomenon can also be used as Individualism/collectivism. A particularly typical example is the promotion pattern. The promotion of a British company needs to examine personal strengths and skills, while the promotion of Chinese employees not only requires personal strength but also requires a good relationship with surrounding colleagues and leaders. Finally, the research results show that the BIC group is more susceptible to cultural differences than the CIB group, the BIC group needs to face many challenges when integrating into society, because the society in which the Chinese live is more dependent on relationships ("Guanxi") to maintain(every group, company, and different region have different relationship patterns and rules), and the British society needs to rely on the law to function normally (all companies have unified rules and standards).

Generally speaking, China's social structure and blood relationship are more complex than those of Britain, and the laws and regulations of Britain are more strict and detailed than those of China. In addition, compared with British people, Chinese people need more

teamwork and social interaction to complete tasks and obtain social resources.

### **6.2 Recommendations**

This study puts forward some constructive suggestions to help intercultural communicators and human resource managers to improve their career success and enhance their cultural adaptability. These recommendations are primarily directed at British workers/companies operating in China.

From the perspective of cultural roots, the concept of "harmony" in Chinese culture is one of the core ideologies, which embodies the characteristics of service, inclusiveness, and systematicness of Chinese people. The "gentleman and elegance" in British culture reflects the characteristics of British people to do things seriously and abide by rules while maintaining the ability of independent thinking. The author puts forward a small communication framework combining folk China theory and cultural dimensions.

From a personal point of view, reducing cultural differences still requires people to stand based on understanding and respect. First of all, cross-cultural communicators need to recognize their advantages and international situation, deeply understand personal career preferences, family needs, personal motivation, future planning, and talent market demand standards, choose jobs voluntarily, and deeply understand local culture and local enterprise characteristics before going abroad. Secondly, foreigners need to learn to balance the relationship between themselves and their colleagues and friends, understand the deep meaning of relationship orientation, and correctly use social resources to establish their high-quality social circle. In addition, the extra social interaction in China often distracts people's attention. Intercultural communicators need to think about what is necessary and unnecessary in their daily life and work and optimize their interpersonal relationships. Finally, the British people in China need to understand the Chinese thinking mode, establish relationships with residents and friends, learn local customs and precautions in social contact, and learn at the same time the sense of participation.

From the perspective of human resource managers and organizations, firstly, managers need to timely investigate the ability of employees, arrange foreign practitioners for suitable positions, and give full play to employees' maximum ability. Second, regularly organize foreign employees to carry out vocational training and professional knowledge guidance, establish the essence of cross-cultural challenges and actively respond to the strategy, to improve the cultural adaptability of employees. At the same time, the enterprise can learn

Table 4. Chinese and British cultural communication and behaviour characteristics table developed by the author.

	China	Britain
Interpersonal relationship	Extended family system	Free choice
Behaviour style	“Guanxi” orientation	Independent action
Thinking mode	Discussion principles before pragmatic	Self-oriented
Space concept	Strangers: courtesy and respect. Acquaintances: mutual dependence	Give each other enough private space
Rule consciousness	“Guanxi” and “Renqing” are mixed in laws and rules	Strictly abide bylaws and regulations

different management modes and operation forms through foreign employees, to improve the training standards and broaden the development ideas of enterprises. This is a two-way return development. Thirdly, to establish an inclusive and diversified working environment, managers should consider establishing the concept of “harmony but not uniformity” in cross-cultural management. Based on respecting and recognizing the cultural differences between China and Britain, the formation and development of “harmony” should be carried out. Through reasonable communication, establishing effective relations, taking into account the “Mianzi” of both sides and respecting each other, the cultivation of harmony should be carried out through good relationships with colleagues and enhance the core competitiveness of enterprises. In particular, it should be noted that HRM needs to help employees understand and adapt to Chinese “Mianzi”. On the one hand, HRM can explain the meaning of “Mianzi” to employees through different actual workplaces, to help employees analyse different meanings in different situations. On the other hand, HRM can emphasize these special terms in the training session, and use metaphors and associations to help employees deepen their memory. For example, “Mianzi” is the combination of Chinese self-esteem and vanity, or “Mianzi” in China is related to social identity, status, prestige, etc., or it can be compared with the “culture of honour” in the United States.

### 6.3 Limitations and Issues for Future Research

Despite research providing a new solution to the cross-cultural communication between China and the UK, and helping the Chinese and British cross-cultural communicators to adapt to the cultural environment better, this study still has limitations.

First of all, the researchers realized that the sample size of this study is small, and the participants are mainly concentrated in the population with high education. Therefore, this factor may lead to researchers being unable to discuss in detail the impact of cultural differences on all BIC and CIB populations, and the impact of each factor affecting cultural differences on BIC and CIB groups. Due to the limited number of sample groups, expanding sample groups will play a better role in exploring and analysing cultural differences between China and Britain.

Secondly, although the participants have been engaged in cross-cultural work from one year to 20 years, most CIB participants have shorter working hours and may have different views on the cultural differences between China and the United Kingdom and meet different challenges. In addition, most of the BIC respondents are engaged in the education industry, and the possible cultural impact is not comprehensive. For future research, Chinese and British intercultural communicators will have more opinions when they are engaged in different types of occupations or with an increase in work experience. The followup survey will enrich the research data.

Finally, the researchers admit that the interviewees may be disturbed by the recent epidemic or other events, but the researchers also believe that this is also an unavoidable emergency in cross-cultural communication, which means that the challenges that Chinese and British intercultural communicators need to face are multifaceted, and they need to adjust themselves according to the international situation and the general environment of the times.

Generally speaking, the researchers hope to have further discussion on the cultural differences and solutions encountered by Chinese and British intercultural communicators, to consolidate the theoretical basis of these results. In addition, the author hopes to continue the topic of the paper for further discussion and a larger sample size to verify the contents mentioned in the paper.

### Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest.

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