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AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Chinese immigrants studying and working in Sweden

-A Push-Pull analysis of their motivation and experiences

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# Abstract

This is a qualitative research study, which aims to explore why Chinese students choose to study and work in Sweden and find out what “Pushes” them from China and what “Pulls” them to study and work in Sweden. The “Push – Pull” model was used to analyze the data. A face-to-face interview was conducted with six respondents who have both studied and worked in Sweden.

The results show that there are four main motives influencing Chinese students who to study abroad; personal, academic, economic and social/cultural once. Their most common experiences during their study period were foreign language anxiety, different educational system, adapting to a new life and loneliness.

The motives behind staying in Sweden and work were personal, professional, economical and environmental. Experiences they wanted to highlight from this were: guaranteed breaks, good relations with colleagues, equal treatment for all employees and the Swedish language barrier.

Some other findings, not really expected, were that my respondents’ had been more interested in fulfilling their own desires of studying abroad and less influenced by the opinion of their parents. Their motivation for studying abroad had also changed; the students had begun to take environmental factors into account in their decision to study abroad. The study is finished with a list of some advices for helping Chinese students who want to study and work abroad.

Key words: Chinese immigrants, push-pull analyses, study and work motivation for being in Sweden.

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# Chapter 1 – Introduction

## 1.1 Why Chinese students abroad?

There is an old saying in China: “Knowledge can change your destiny”, which means that if you study hard you can potentially change your life for the better in the future. This is a common conviction among Chinese. Chinese students, therefore, are often under pressure to perform well in their studies.

For millions of Chinese students, a good education is the key to a better life with a career and a higher standard of living in general. A common way to improve their grades is to enroll in extracurricular courses called “Sunday classes”, in order to deepen their knowledge in various subjects. “Sunday classes” includes almost the subjects, such as mathematics, Chinese language, English, physics, chemistry, biology, geography, etc. Students spend a long studying time in school. However, after school, in the evening and weekend, their parents and themselves applied these extra classes in order to get a higher grade in the exam. And the cost of the classes is not cheap. According to Chinese Sina Finance news (2012), there are over hundred thousand “Sunday classes” agencies in China, and the busy season for “Sunday classes” is around March to July every year. Just the extra lessons three months before “Gaokao” exam, each student spends eighteen hundred thousand CNY (China Yuan) for the extra classes on agencies in Beijing. Therefore, the cost of extra lessons is nearly the half of a general family’s disposable income. However, in order to enroll in a top university, one must first get a good result on the “Gaokao” the Chinese college entrance exam.

According to the online news (People.cn 2013), every year since 2000 between 20 and 40 percent of all applicants failed the entrance exam and had to wait until the following year, if they decide to retake it. Competition is therefore very high and not everyone can attend university.

In the last couple of years, studying abroad has become increasingly popular. Because of the influence by globalization, people from all over the world can move relatively free, it leads students to attempt to seek more chance to study abroad. According to China Daily (2012b), China has become the world’s biggest source of overseas students, with more than 1.4 million students studying abroad, by the end of 2011. Lately, some negative sentiments have been reported by the Chinese authorities and by the parents of overseas students, regarding misconduct of studies and bad behavior. Tianjing Daily News (2012) pointed out some students, start taking their studies less seriously when they go abroad. They waste their time and the family’s money and become troublemakers.

However, many parents still plan, for various reasons, to send their 18 years old children abroad after they graduate from high school even they saw the bad news. A lot of students want to get in university and try any ways in order to succeed. One reasons is to be relieved from the harsh pressure of the Chinese educational system. Thus also a lot of parents blindly worship the opportunity to help their children going abroad. Chinese educational system is like a “cramming method of teaching”, studying period is quite long and the schedule is so strict. In a Chinese high school in Hengshui, for example, the students get up to study from 5:30 a.m. to 10:10 p.m., and have only one day off every four weeks! The grades are the most important thing for high school students. The only goal for them is to pass the “Gaokao” exam with high grades. One former student from Hengshui high school said “the teaching methods made students mentally ‘rigid’, leaving them ill-prepared for life beyond high school” (Shannon, 2014).

Another reason is that parents often believe that as long as their children go to study abroad, it will give them a competitive advantage over their peers. The children can get a foreign degree, which can prove their abilities and capabilities, and also the practicability of a foreign language, such as English. Parents very often play an important role in deciding whether their children should study abroad or not. According to statistic, (ICEF Monitor 2012), in 65 percent of the cases the decision to go abroad was made by the students’ parents. In order to give their children a head start in life, they try to send them abroad as early as possible. This endeavor has become a “face project” in many Chinese families.

Thus studying has been a hot topic for discussion no matter what the occasion. Many families originally have no plans of sending their children abroad, but are, however, prompted by friends, co-workers etcetera. The parents very often feel they cannot miss out on such a fashionable trend, especially parents whose children failed the college entrance exam. The discussion from Tianjing Daily News (2012) states that sending the children abroad provides the family with the opportunity of giving their child a proper education and restoring the family’s honor.

Therefore, searching an opportunities to study abroad becomes common for young students. According to Migrationsverket (2012: 7), OECD – Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, show the number of students registered at a university outside of their country of origin has increased from 0.8 million in 1975 to 3.7 million in 2009. EU is one of the main destinations for international students. In 2009, even Sweden, a relatively small country in comparison, received 1.1 % of all students who chose to study abroad (Ibid: 9). Sweden was in the 19<sup>th</sup> place among the countries that admitted the most international students in 2008 (Ibid).

It is quite interesting to understand why a lot of international students choose to come to study in Sweden when it is a small country and have a difficult language. The reason could be Swedish Universities provide a lot of programs in English and some

are ranked among the top 100 universities in the world, Chalmers University in Gothenburg, for example, which also attracted students to study in Sweden (Study in Sweden).

In order to make Sweden even more attractive for international students, some potential measures could be taken, such as increasing the amount of scholarships and exchange programs available for international students, as well as making it easier for students from Third World countries to “change track” and stay in Sweden to work, after their studies (Migrationsverket, 2012: 8).

After few years studying abroad, increasingly students decide not to return back to China. By the end of 2012, according to Chinese web news - Wangyi News (2013), 2.64 million Chinese students had gone abroad, and only 1.09 million of them returned to China after their studies, which means that 1.50 million students did not return. However, according to the Chinese web news - Want China Times (2012), there were a total of 820, 000 Chinese students studying abroad between 1978 and 2011, and 72 percent of Chinese overseas students return to China. Thus the situation has changed in just one year. Hence, It would be interesting to find out what made them go abroad as well as deciding why to stay.

## 1.2 My interests

Since increasingly more students study abroad, I think it would be interesting to find out what reasons “Push” students from China, and what reasons “Pull” them to Sweden. Is it simply to avoid the pressure from the “Gaokao”? Or do they just want to do their parents’ will? I also want to find out how many, if any, of my respondents went abroad as a result of their parents’ decision, and if there is anything special about Sweden that attracts students from China. Since these Chinese students went to Sweden, a country with a very different culture and educational system, it would also be interesting to find out what life experiences and possible difficulties they may have had in the beginning of their studies abroad? And after they get a job, are they satisfied with their working life?

## 1.3 Purpose and research questions

The purpose of this study is to explore why Chinese students choose to study and work in Sweden, what “Pushes” them from China and what “Pulls” them to study and work in Sweden.



Research questions:

1. How do Chinese students explain their decisions to study in Sweden?
2. Why do they stay in Sweden after they graduate?
3. What has the studying and working experience in Sweden been?

## 1.4 Relevance to social work

People migrate for many reasons for example, economical ones. Economic globalization inspires students, highly skilled migrants as well as low-skilled workers, to immigrate to another country, in order to meet the demand for labor force. Asian countries, both developed and less developed, are sending their young people to study in Western universities, in order to advance the Asian economies (Goldin, Cameron and Balarajan, 2011: 15 & 289). Because of the movement, people probably facing a lot of problems, such as unemployment, discrimination, poverty, human rights issues, etc. Therefore, these processes of immigration can be a challenge for social work. To be prepared for action they need knowledge about positive as well as negative aspects of this globalization.

From my point of view, it is very important for a social worker to understand an immigrant's background, such as cultural and religious and educational traditions in order to being able to give adequate help if necessary. Chinese students, as represents from a completely other culture and education tradition, can also highlight their unique experiences for a process of international migration and social integration work (Shier, Engstrom and Graham, 2011: 39). Thus it is necessary for a professional social worker to understand the complex process of international migration.

## 1.5 Central concept

### -Student

With the concept 'student' I mean a Chinese person, studying in Sweden at a university for higher education, for example, bachelor, master and PhD.

### - Gaokao

The "Gaokao" is "China's grueling, ultra-competitive university entrance exam" (Facts and Details, 2012). The "Gaokao" is taken at the end of high school, during three days in July across the whole country. It emphasizes on mathematics, written Chinese, English, science and Marxist thought. Higher score get more options. When students get their scores, they submit to Chinese educational institution, and get a list

of universities who the institution will rank in order of choice. Administrators at the universities can see the scores of the students and decide who can admit for the coming September (Ibid).

The “Gaokao” is a very important moment in the lives of those students, success and failure on the test can mean the difference between wealth and a life of drudgery. Success or failure can also shape the lives of their families and their future earnings (ibid).

## -Migration

Migration, defined as cross-border movement (Goldin, Cameron and Balarajan, 2011: 24), includes internal or international migration. There are four types of internal migration: (1) rural to urban; (2) rural to rural; (3) urban to rural; (4) urban to urban (Wang, 2008). International migration involves movement from one country to another, in other words, it is “a person leaving one state to move to another state” (Andrew, 2011).

It is intrinsic to human nature to migrate, not only to search for food and fulfill the desire to travel and explore, but also to conquer and possess (King, 2012: 4). According to the United Nations Population Division there are, as of 2010, 214 million international migrants in the world, with migrant defined as “people residing in a country different from that of their birth” (Ibid: 5). There were three “core groups” of migration in the past, and these groups have to some extent remained the same: temporary labor migration, settler-migration, and refugee-migration (Ibid: 9). Except these three groups, marriage migration, student migration, retirement migration, high-skilled migration, environmental and climate-change migration, human trafficking and sexual exploitation and “brain drain” are all connected with international migration (Ibid).

Migration is not only the pursuit of personal gain, but also part of a “livelihood strategy” for families to diversify sources of income (Goldin, Cameron and Balarajan, 2011: 96). The direction of movement is mainly from developing to developed countries (Ibid: 190).

As above, students studying abroad belong to international migration. As increasingly more students from developing countries’ finish university studies, they expect future employment and income to rise, leading an increasing number of students to look for opportunities to emigrate. At the same time, as the demand for higher education in developing countries increases, increasingly more youths are studying abroad (Ibid: 202). During the study period, students, such as my interviews, may develop extensive social networks, which can lead them to settle abroad (Ibid: 104).

Migration, such as labor immigration, can satisfy the needs of the current and future labor market, which ensures economic sustainability and growth (Ibid: 107). Developed countries, for example, are already witnessing a contraction in the supply of native low-skilled labor, which has become a trend that will continue into the future. Without migration, these labor shortages will generate a long-term drag on the economies of developed countries (Ibid: p.216).

### -Globalization

It is worth reminding that globalization not only refers to economics, but also imply a relation between social and political transformations, and the emergence of global currents of thoughts (Goldin, Cameron and Balarajan, 2011: 42).

## 1.6 Thesis disposition

This academic study is following the normal disposition of a scientific report; Introduction (the purpose, research questions), Literature review, Theoretical framework, methodology (research method, data processing, data collection, reliability and validity, ethical considerations, etc.), Findings and Analysis, and Discussion.

## Chapter 2. Literature review

This chapter is a review of previous research relating to my research questions. I found seven studies which support my research. Unfortunately any research on Chinese immigrants' experiences connecting to the Swedish context was not available, which make my study even more necessary.

### 2.1 The motivation for study abroad.

Some studies had special interest for discussing the motivation to study abroad. One helped me to get a better understanding of the main reasons for Chinese students choosing to study abroad. It also showed that parents and children are motivated by different reasons (Bodycott, 2009).

In 2007, there were over 700,000 Chinese students studying abroad; Chinese parents believe that a good education will guarantee a better future (Ibid: 353). Chinese parents continue to earmark family income, and seek opportunities for their child to study abroad (Ibid).

Since Mainland China is a Confucian society, children have a duty to honor their parents and respect their wishes; parents' views, therefore, cannot be ignored (Ibid: 355). According to the article, the parents' decision plays an important role. The children may comply with the views of their parents, even though this choice may not be in line with their wishes (Ibid: 351).

According to Bodycott, Chinese students are influenced by two factors – so called “Push” and “Pull” factors; “Push” factors “operate within a country and initiate a student’s decision to undertake study abroad”, these include economic, social reasons and so on; “Pull” factors are “those that make another country attractive to students”. Bodycott (Ibid) lists the 10 “Pull” factors drawing on several previous studies. They are:

- (1) Knowledge and awareness of the institution, its reputation, and general knowledge of the destination country.
- (2) Positive attitude toward supporting international education in the destination country.
- (3) Recommendations and the influence of relatives, parents and friends.
- (4) Tuition fees, living expenses, travel cost and social cost.

- (5) Environment considerations including climate, lifestyle, crime, safety and racial discrimination.
- (6) Geographical proximity to Mainland China.
- (7) Social or educational links to family or friends living in the destination country, or family or friends studying there.
- (8) Immigration prospects after graduation.
- (9) Perceived higher standards of education and employment prospects.
- (10) Availability of scholarships for study (Ibid: 353-354).

I was inspired by these ten factors and made my own “Push-Pull” model, which I describe later as a frame of references for my analysis.

The result of Bodycotts study was that different factors “Push” parents and students to seek higher education abroad. The most important “Push” factors for parents were an inadequate supply of university places in Mainland China and improved employment and immigration prospects. Students, however, focused on the highest priority on higher quality education and the international experience. They were critical of the educational system in Mainland China because the programs are too “rigid” and the pedagogical approach is “traditional”, furthermore the Chinese programs lack a “student focus” and “international experience (Ibid: 358-359).

Another study from Li and Bray (2007) presents Mainland Chinese students’ reasons for choosing to study in Hong Kong and Macau (for mainland Chinese students, Hong Kong and Macau could be viewed as both domestic and international) (Ibid: 792).

The motives for studying abroad were categorized into four groups, based on Li and Bray’s article. They are: Academic, Economic, Social & Cultural and Political. Academic motives are defined by Li and Bray as “the pursuit of qualifications and professional development” and the factors are good quality and reputation of the institution; Economic motives include “access to scholarships, estimated economic returns from study, and prospects for employment”; Social & Cultural factors include “a desire to obtain experience and understanding of other societies”; Political motives include such factors as “commitment to society and enhancement of political status and power” (Ibid: 795).

I was also inspired by these four groups in my own “Push-Pull” model, for example, the “Economic” and “Political” motives, which could help me understand the motivation to work abroad better.

The results of this previous research show that the main motivations for Mainland Chinese students in Hong Kong were different from those in Macau (Li and Bray, 2007: 802).

The top three reasons for studying abroad, cited by Mainland Chinese students in Hong Kong, were the poor quality of the Mainland Chinese higher education (50%), the lack of internationalization (44.9%) and the difficulty of securing scholarships (33.5%) (Ibid: 805). In Macau, the main motivations were economic income (77.2%), competitive ability in the employment market (65.8%), and social and cultural experience (51.0%). The fourth important expected benefit is also different, competitive ability in the employment market (45.2%) in Hong Kong, but academic ability (42.1%) in Macau. Therefore, the Mainland Chinese students in Hong Kong valued more about academic enhancement, and the students in Macau valued more about economic factors, such as competitive ability in the employment market and economic income (Ibid: 802-804).

According to Li and Bray (ibid: 793), they mentioned one study from Altbach (1998) which present what he called the “Push-Pull” model for international student mobility. I therefore turned directly to Altbach in order to list all the factors.

By help of Altbach (1998: 172-173) a lists of “Push” and “Pull” factors that affects Third World students’ decision to study abroad has been found, please see Figure 1.

Figure 1. ‘Push’ and ‘Pull’ factors from Altbach (1998)

Push factors	Pull factors
(1). <u>Availability of scholarship for study abroad;</u>	(1). <u>Availability of scholarships to international students;</u>
(2). <u>Poor-quality educational facilities;</u>	(2). <u>Good-quality education;</u>
(3). <u>Lack of research facilities;</u>	(3). <u>Availability of advanced research facilities;</u>
(4). <u>Lack of appropriate educational facilities and/or failure to gain admission to local institution(s);</u>	(4). <u>Availability of appropriate educational facilities with likely offer of admission;</u>
(5). <u>Politically uncongenial situation;</u>	(5). <u>Congenial political situation;</u>
(6). <u>Enhanced value (in the marketplace) of a foreign degree;</u>	(6). <u>Congenial socioeconomic and political environment;</u>
(7). <u>Discrimination against minorities;</u>	(7). <u>Opportunity for general international life experience.</u>
(8). <u>Recognition of inadequacy of existing forms of traditional education;</u>	

Source: Altbach, 1998: 172-173)

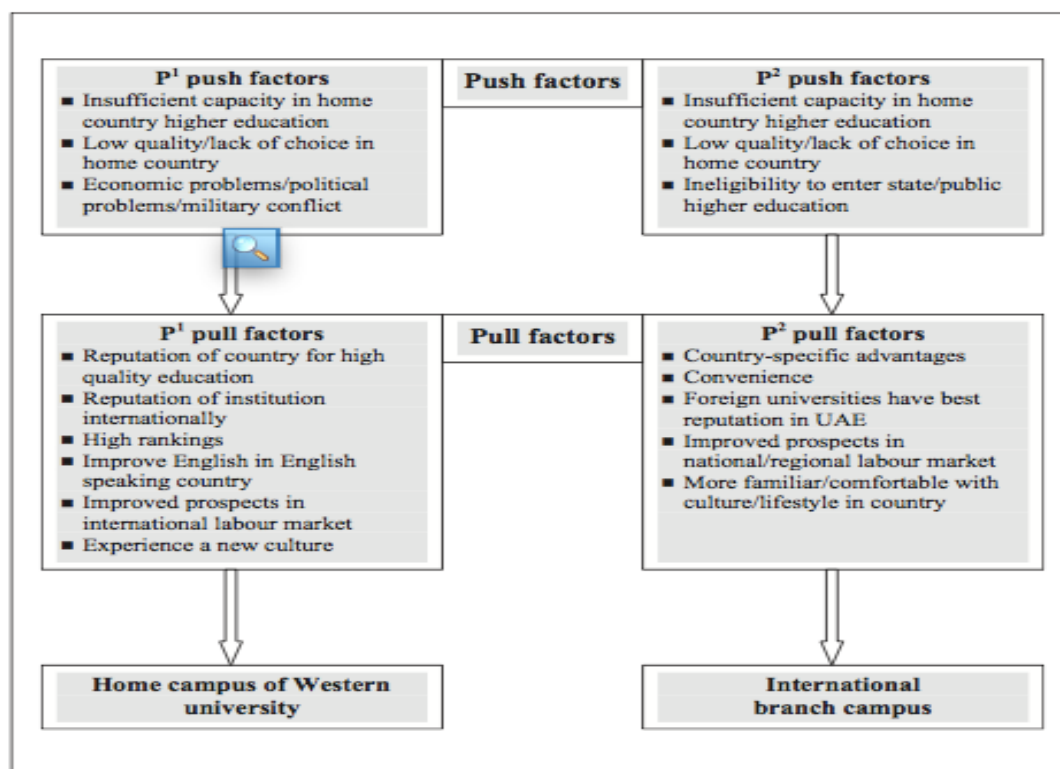
Figure shows factors that affect the decision to study abroad by Third World students. Altbach mentioned that some students were pushed by unfavorable conditions in their home countries; however, some students were influenced by pull factors that included

the prospect of multinational classmates congenial, socio-economic and political environments, and advanced research facilities.

The “Push-Pull” model to understand emigration was also used in a study named “Student Choice in Higher Education: Motivations for choosing to study at an international branch Campus” (Wilkins, Balakrishnan and Huisman, 2012). This study involved 320 undergraduate and postgraduate students who were studying at branch campuses in the United Arab Emirates. The study examines the decision making of both undergraduate and postgraduate students and students of different nationalities (Ibid: 415). It was a quantitative study of students answering questionnaires over a 5-week period.

The findings show that the main motivation for students who choose to study at home campuses are different from those who choose to study at an international branch campus. However, the factors of the “Push-Pull” model did not apply to United Arab Emirates students who studied at international branch campuses. (Ibid: 427). Thus, the authors suggest a revised model for surveying international students’ choice of destination. They came up with two distinct sets of “Push” and “Pull” factors, one of which applies to the home campuses of Western universities, and the other applies to international branch campuses. Furthermore they discovered two key dimensions underlying the “Pull” factors in the revised model, namely convenience and country-specific advantages (Ibid: 427). (Please see Figure 2)

Figure 2. Push-Pull model of international student destination choice (Ibid: 428)



The study also found that students of different nationality have different motivations

and attitudes, which could affect their choice of destination.

One of the two key dimensions – Country attractions of the “Pull” factors gave me the idea to add something to my own model, in order to investigate if country-specific advantages could influence my respondents’ decision to study abroad. Country attraction factors are factors such as safety, pleasure, possibility to maintain close contact with friends and family, greater chance to find a job in the future etc. (Ibid: 420). Thus, I mixed this factor with other factors when I create my own “Push-Pull” model.

## 2.2 The motives to work abroad

Increasingly more Chinese students want to stay abroad after they graduate, which is the reason for the “Brain Drain” in China. “Brain drain” refers to highly skilled people from developing countries that do not return to their country, after going abroad (Baruch, Budhwar and Khatri, 2007: 99).

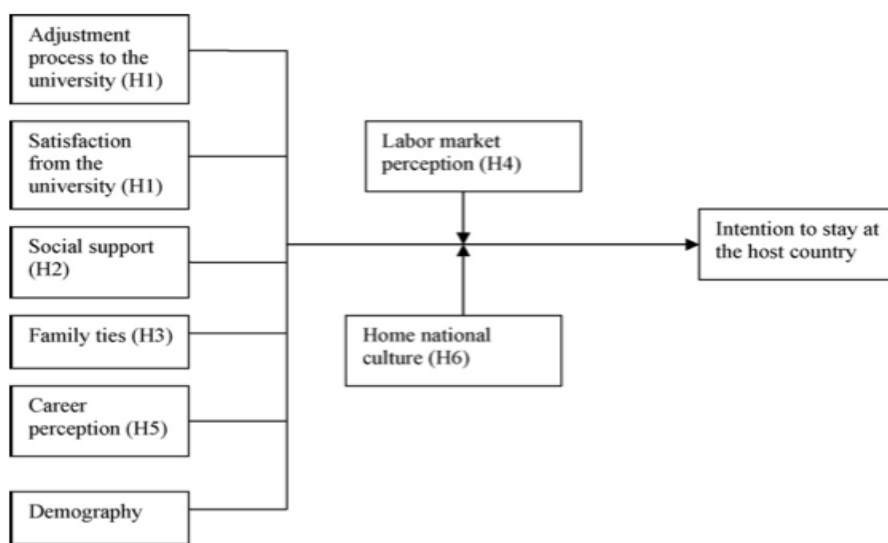
According to that report, most of the “Brain Drain” occurs when immigrants move from developing countries to developed countries, most obviously from Asia to North America and Europe (Ibid).

One of the aims of this research is “to analyze factors that affect foreign students’ inclination not to return to their home countries”, which is similar to my own research purpose (Ibid: 100). It also uses “Push” and “Pull” models to explain the ‘brain drain’ phenomenon and therefore could help me to better understand the reasons why students decide not to return home.

949 students in the UK and the U.S. participated in the study by Baruch, Budhwar and Khatri (2009: 103). This research used six hypotheses, based on the factors that influence the decision to stay abroad (see Figure 3).



Figure 3. Factors influencing the decision to stay abroad



The result shows that the first five hypotheses received full support; H6 was only partially supported (Ibid: 106).

Here follows a detailed explanation of the six hypotheses

“Hypothesis 1. The decision of foreign students, whether to stay in the host country or return to the home country, will be associated with the level of their adjustment in the host country.

Hypothesis2a. The greater the level of support foreign students receive from their teachers, university, and fellow students in the host country, the greater will be their intention to stay in the host country.

Hypothesis2b. The greater the level of support foreign students receive from their associates in the home country, the greater will be their intention to return to the home country.

Hypothesis 3a. The strength of social ties of foreign students to their family members in the home country will be negatively associated with their intention to stay in the host country after their studies.

Hypothesis 3b. The strength of social ties of foreign students to the family members in the host country will be positively associated with their intention to stay in the host country after their studies.

Hypothesis 4. A weak labor market in the home country and a strong labor market in the host country will be positively associated with a foreign student’s decision to stay in the host country after their studies.

Hypothesis 5. High level of Protean Career approach will be associated with higher tendency to stay in the host country.

Hypothesis 6a. Foreign students from strong emerging economies are less likely to stay in the host country after their studies compared to foreign students from less important emerging economies.

Hypothesis 6b. Foreign students from more culturally distant cultures or countries will be less likely to stay in the host country than foreign students from less culturally distant cultures or countries” (Ibid: 101-103).

One result from this study shows that students from China, Taiwan, Thailand and African countries are more inclined to return to their home countries. Some recent news, however, suggest the opposite for Chinese students since more Chinese students prefer to stay abroad after they graduate.

## 2.3 Experience of studying and working abroad

The research from Cheng and Erben (2012: 477-480) presented one common studying experience for Chinese students, namely language anxiety. This study focuses on the Chinese graduate students who came to the United States for their desired education or to fulfill their personal goals.

The research introduced three interrelated components of foreign language anxiety (Ibid: 127), there are three related performance anxieties: (1) communication apprehension, (2) text anxiety, (3) and fear of negative evaluation. Cheng and Erben (Ibid: 477-478) used these three anxiety indicators in their report and made three anxiety indicators of them which were: (1) Some of the foreign language learners experience frustration and anxiety when they communicate their thoughts through the undeveloped foreign language, especially those who can communicate very well in their own language but may have trouble communicating in the foreign language; (2) During the class work, speech errors can become a great source of anxiety because they are under the impression that their skills in the foreign language are under constant scrutiny from teachers and peers alike; they are therefore anxious of making mistakes. This is the “fear of negative evaluation” anxiety indicator; (3) the last foreign language anxiety indicator is “text anxiety”, which is the regard of any regular every day communication as a test situation. Adapting to a new culture and language is a complex process for new Chinese students who have to undergo many social and psychological adjustments to adapt to the American culture and social norms (Ibid: 481). This also applies to Chinese students that go to Sweden. This study gave me the idea of focusing on the language experience of the third research question of my research, the experience of studying abroad.

Cheng and Erben's research combined a quantitative and a qualitative method, the qualitative method gave me some good ideas on how to phrase my questions for the interviews, for example: "What are the most difficult things for you? Do you feel anything different with your home culture?" (Ibid: 494-495). It might help me detect changes that might have occurred after their adaptation to the Swedish culture and environment.

Except the foreign language anxiety, another common issue for Chinese students studying abroad is the differences in the educational system and the culture in general. Yue and Fan (2010: 1) describe that "there are great differences between eastern and western cultural, educational practices in these two cultural contexts are considerably different".

This study focuses on the learning experience of Chinese students in an Australian university, it aimed to investigate the challenges encountered by Chinese students within an Australian tertiary context, and it examines the influences of two main factors, the English language and cultural differences. They combined both quantitative and qualitative methods and used snowball sampling for the participant recruitment (Ibid: 4).

The article mentions one theory, called "cultural distance" theory, which states "the greater distance there is between the home culture and the host culture, the more cultural difficulties overseas students would experience" (Ibid: 2). In other words, it is more difficult for Chinese background students to adapt to a new environment and culture. The educational system is sure to be largely different because of the disparity between Chinese and Australian culture (Ibid: 3).

The results of this study also showed that almost all Chinese students thought that the ability to speak English was highly emphasized, and cultural differences do indeed influence western and eastern educational styles (Ibid: 1). For the Chinese students, the language barrier and the cultural differences emerged as the two largest challenges (Ibid: 13).

Another previous study by Zhang and Brunton (2007: 125) focuses on "the way in which Chinese international students perceived their New Zealand education and how satisfied they were with their sociocultural and educational experiences". As a result of the rapid development of the education market in the Western world, Chinese students have become the largest group of international students in New Zealand. The study employed a quantitative research method involving 140 Chinese students studying at a range of educational institutions in Auckland.

Six aspects of learning and living experiences have been presented in the findings. The first aspect is educational goals: one main reason for international students studying abroad is the prospect of academic achievements; Asian students pursue different achievements compared to European college students. Asian students pursue

college to meet the expectations of others. European college students, however, pursue college for their own fun and enjoyment. The second aspect is language difficulties. Speaking a foreign language is a source of stress related to problems such as being misunderstood by others, being unable to fully express thoughts and feelings and misunderstanding others. More than half of the participants stated that they thought it was necessary to have at least twelve months of English courses in New Zealand before enrolling in their program course. The third aspect is loneliness. The great distance from family, friends, and familiar environments might cause Chinese students to experience loneliness. The fourth aspect is to "Host National Relations". Some Asian students had no New Zealand friends and were most likely to approach other Asian students. Thus, the quality of the host national relations may not be ideal. The fifth aspect is homestays. Homestays have been suggested as an opportunity to increase intercultural understanding and promote intercultural relations. Homestay situations do enhance the interaction between natives and Chinese students, as well as improving their English. The sixth aspect is leisure activities, such as shopping and spending weekends together with host national friends. The advantage of these activities is that it gives Chinese students more opportunities to foster positive relationships with host national friends. However, 70 percent of the participants were dissatisfied with their opportunities for leisure activities (Ibid: 126-133).

# Chapter 3 Theoretical framework

## 3.1 Theoretical perspectives behind the “Push-Pull” model

Migration can be driven by a set of factors, operating from the country of origin or region, such as poverty, low social status, landlessness, political repression, rapid population growth, unemployment, poor marriage prospects, etc., which force individuals to leave their country and go abroad. Also factors in the new place or country of destination, for example better education and welfare systems, better income and job prospects, good environmental and living conditions, political freedom, etc. can attract the individual to choose a specially country.

These different factors have been combined in an analyses model, called the “Push-Pull” model (Li and Bray, 2007), which my literature study indicated as a very good analysis model for my topic. In order to understand its theoretical framework I will describe its two, most important parts; Ravenstein’s ‘laws of migration’ factors and individual rational-choice theory (King, 2012: 13).

Here ‘Laws of migration’ are not appealing to the real laws but empirical generalizations, according to King (Ibid: 12). For example one of his laws (No. 2) say that most migration is from agricultural to industrial areas, another (No. 3) says that large towns grow more by migration than by natural increase. He considers these two aspects still are the main forms of population changings in most countries in the world. The individual rational-choice theory, used here, referred to “seeks to explain social behavior by positing the individual as a strategic and calculating actor who makes choices according to rational criteria” (Gilbert, 2008: 10). Rational-choice theory tries to describe people’s locational decision-making, and individuals find themselves when seeking to make a course of action (Castree, Kitchin and Rogers, 2013).

Neoclassical principles of rational choice, for example, utility maximization, differences between countries and regions and course a labor mobility working on the macro as well as micro level. On the macro level, migration could results from the uneven spatial distribution of labor concerning other factors of production, capital above all. In some regions and countries, capital is insufficient but labor, however, is adequate, therefore the wage level is correspondingly low. In other countries, capital is affluent and the wages are high while there is a shortage of labor. Thus the consequence is a migration of workers from low-wage to high-wage countries (Ibid). On the micro level, migration is a result of decisions made by individual “rational actors” who weigh and consider the advantages and disadvantages of moving relative to staying (Ibid: 14).

Individual rational choice can take both advantages and disadvantages into account. On the one hand, immigrants have to compare the advantages and disadvantages of the home country and the host country, and on the other hand, they need to have an idea which option is the most beneficial. If they can get higher salaries and better education and welfare in another country, the benefits of relocating will outweigh the benefits of staying in the home country, but, if immigrants benefit more from their home country, they prefer to stay in their home country. It is therefore worth mentioning that rational choice decision-making is not only about wage and income maximization, but also about income diversification and risk aversion (Ibid, 23). According to King (Ibid), you can also incorporate a set of intervening obstacles, such as physical distance, language barriers and political obstacles that have to be taken under consideration when emigrate. Rationality means “in a thoughtful clear-headed way”, and rational choice theory uses a narrower, more specific definition to mean an individual acts, for example, in order to maximize personal advantage, which is similar as if balancing costs against benefits (Friedman, 1953:13).

Referring to Mazzarol and Sountar (2001: 4), McMahon was one of the first persons to develop a “Push–pull” model from this theoretical thinking during the 1960s and 1970s. The “Push” model, according to McMahon (Ibid), suggests that the student’s decision to study abroad is influenced by the economic situation of the home country and the priority level placed on education by the government in the home country. As for the “Pull” model, he suggests that students are attracted to other countries by factors such as economic prosperity, trade relations between the two countries and possible financial support to international students, such as scholarships (Ibid).

It could be some problem with this kind of rational consideration concerning migration. One is that the every day life in the new country could be of total different from what was imagined. However, the model highlights some interesting aspects, for example, if you want to discover the reasons why international students not choose a special country. Mazzarol, Kemp and Savery (1996) investigated four different sectors: Higher education, English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students (ELICOS), Vocational education and training (VET) and schools education. By combining qualitative and quantitative research methods they found and provided a picture of the underlying dimensions influencing international students choice of study destinations. The first one they labeled “Cost Issues” and referred to such as fees, living and travel costs, the level of racial discrimination, entry difficulties and availability of part time jobs, level of crime and safety, whether an established population of students was present or not and whether the institutions were government administered or not. The second one was “Knowledge and Awareness”, for example, the ease of obtaining information on the selected country, the quality and reputation of the selected country as a supplier of education, student knowledge and awareness of the selected country and the level of recognition qualifications acquired in that country will have at home. Some other factors were “Environment”, for example, an attractive climate, whether it perceived to provide a quiet and studious environment, and whether it was viewed as an exciting place to live in, and

“Recommendations”, for example, the reputation of the education institutions in the country, whether the country was recommended by education agents, and whether it was recommended by parents or relatives. The fifth factor labeled “Social Links”, for example, whether the students had family or friends studying there, and whether they had family or friends living in the selected country. The sixth factor labeled “Geographic proximity” was retained as an independent variable (Ibid: 37-38).

As mentioned in the Literature review Li and Bray (2007) changed these factors in some way by taking away “Recommendations” and “Environment” and instead add two new motives, “Social & Cultural” and “Political” motives. Thus, we can see that over time and the development of research, more factors have been found and more have been incorporated with the original factors.

From my point of view, the advantage of individual rational choice theory does indeed present the main reasons for immigrants’ decision to move. All factors show that not only economics influence immigrants to move, but also marital, political, social status, education opportunities and living conditions, etc. can also affect immigrants’ decision to move. The capital and labor market also affect immigrants’ minds. It is a good tool for understanding immigrants choice and considerations of the benefits of their future. People, however, are not only affected by rational, but also emotional, thought. Chinese families, I believe, are more affected by emotional thought, because Chinese in general have a mindset, which regards filial piety as the most important of all virtues. Therefore students, even if they can have better conditions abroad, still choose to go back to China and their parents. Hence we can see that emotional choice sometimes affect the decision-making when immigrants consider moving or staying abroad.

Even if this “Push-Pull” model primarily was developed to explain the factors influencing migration the model has become the most common tool used for examining and explaining international students’ motivations and decisions (Wilkins, Balakrishnan and Huisman, 2012: 418).

When using it for studying global pattern of international student flows there are at least three stages in the process of selecting a destination for overseas studies. The first stage is deciding whether the student should study abroad or not. At this stage, the student will be influenced by a series of “Push” factors from the home country, mentioned earlier. The second stage is to select a country to study in. In this stage, “Pull” factors, such as determining whether a country is attractive to study in, become important. The third stage is to select an institution. In this stage, a wide variety of additional “Pull” factors determine whether an institution is more attractive than another. Factors such as the institution’s reputation for quality, range of courses, staff experience, market profile, degree of innovation, alliances or coalitions, use of information technology, resources, size of the alumni base and promotion and so on (Ibid: 83).

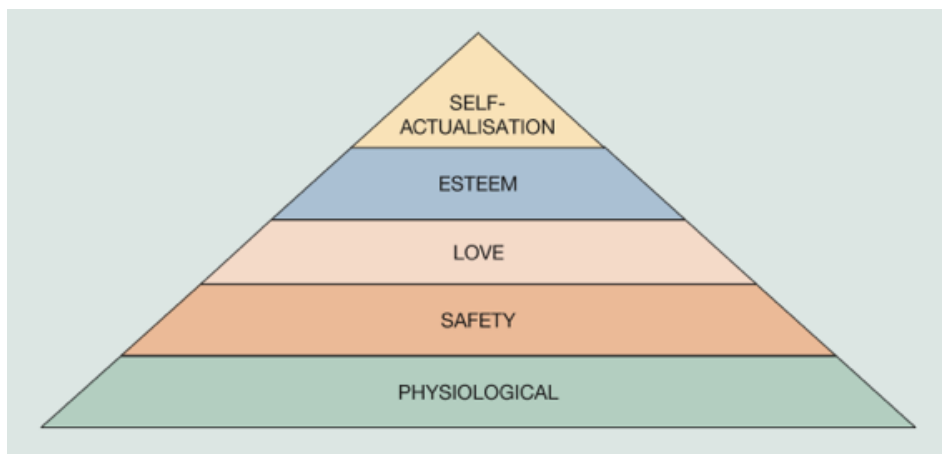
## 3.2 Some limitations

While the basic “Push-Pull” model of international students’ choice is valuable as an explanatory mechanism, however, there are at least two limitations. The first limitation is that both “Push” and “Pull” factors are external forces that impact students’ choices and behaviors even if much depends on the personal characteristics of the students, e.g. socio-economic status, academic ability, gender, age, motivation, and aspiration. A second limitation is that individual students might react to different “Push” and “Pull” factors in different ways (Li and Bray. 2007: 793; Wilkins, Balakrishnan and Huisman, 2012: 418). To catch these aspects in my study I combine the “Push-Pull” perspective with some thinking from Maslow’s Needs Theory (Mullins, 2008: 172).

## 3.3 Maslow’s Needs theory

I already had this theory in mind when I started my first study in 2013. Maslow’s needs theory, which states that people are seeking to satisfy needs as a means of achieving self-fulfillment could perhaps be of use when finding out the natural needs and motivations that influenced the respondents’ decision to go abroad. Especially the five main levels of human needs that Maslow’s hierarchy of needs model identify (Ibid: 261) Please see Figure 4.

Figure 4. Maslow’s hierarchy of needs theory.



“Physiological needs” are the physical requirements necessary for survival, such as food, water and air. The basic physiological needs should be met first. The second level of needs is “Safety needs”, which include needs for personal security, financial security, and health and wellbeing. The third level is “Love needs,” also called social needs. This level involves interpersonal relations, such as friendship, intimacy and family ties. “Esteem needs”, sometimes referred to as ego needs, include both



self-respect and respect from others. The fifth level is “Self-actualization needs”, which refers to needs such as: truth, justice, meaning, etc. (Ibid: 180).

The basic point of Maslow is that people always want more and what this is depends on what they already have. Maslow’s hierarchy of needs theory focus on the nature of needs and what motivates them (Ibid: 172). When my purpose in this study also is to find out the nature needs of the respondents and their motivations to go abroad, I thought Maslow’s theory suitable for my study 2013, also could be useful here.

# Chapter 4 Methodology

In this chapter I describe my research method. It comprises an explanation of how the study was designed, the data collection, the data processing and the development of my analyses model. In here is also a discussion over ethical principles as well as over validity, reliability generalization and at the end, a reflection over some challenges I faced with my method.

## 4.1 Research Design

I used a qualitative research method because I wanted to find out the meaning with the students action and decision. (Gilbert, 2008: 35). A qualitative research method could be helpful in finding out my respondents' description of motives for study and work motivation in Sweden. With a qualitative research method, it is easier to follow the reasons and effect, and I can track the respondents through their lives or ask them to tell me about their life histories (Ibid). Through a qualitative research, the respondents can describe as precisely as possible what they feel and experience, and how they act. At the same time, they might find something new and then they can bring this new ideas maybe never noticed before in the interview, it is also a learning process for them (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009: 28-31). A quantitative research had been more difficult by several reasons. One was the rather few, not more than 100 students, that were staying all over in Sweden after finishing their studies and then very difficult to identify. Another was to reach them with a questionnaire battery when I did not know their special language. A qualitative research method, on the contrary, could help me get a deeper understanding of why my respondents want to study and work in Sweden and it also allows the respondents to speak freely.

My qualitative research was based on interviews, which were semi-structured. It means that they were arranged as a "planned and flexible interview with the purpose of obtaining descriptions of the life world of the interviewee with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena". (Ibid: 327). With this method I could obtain as much information as possible, even aspects I have not thought about before starting my study. However, with a guide, the risk to leave the topic was reduced.

## 4.2 Subjects

To find my respondents I used snowball sampling. It is a method of getting samples of numerically small groups in which the respondents can be difficult to find (Gilbert, 2008: 197). The snowball data collection allowed me to asked one respondent if he/she know anyone else with the same situation. For example, "do you know any

other Chinese who finished their studies in Sweden and then stayed to work?” Often they did so I could find another one taking part in my research.

I did twice interviews, one during 2013 and one during 2014 with nearly the same group of respondents. The reason for that I will describe later in this chapter but here I will describe how I found them and how many they were together.

The first time I interviewed my respondents, in 2013, they became all together six persons. When I should interview them again in 2014, one person was too busy for taking part. So the other five let me interview them once again during 2014. Therefore my respondents were six persons, five male and one female in total. Taking confidentiality into consideration, English names were given to the respondents.

They were dubbed Smith, Martin, George, Daisy, Zach and Charlie. Brief information about them is presented below:

- Smith came to Sweden in 2009 to study a master program at Linköping University. In 2011, he came to Gothenburg for an internship. In 2012, he was hired and decided to stay in Sweden.

- Martin came to Sweden in 2005 as a master student in Chalmers University. After he finished his master program, he continued to study for PhD, and later graduated as a post-doctoral in 2012, in the same year, he decided to stay in Gothenburg to work.

- George studied as a master student in Chalmers in 2005, after he graduated; he applied PhD in Switzerland in 2007. In 2010, he finished his PhD in Switzerland and came back to Gothenburg for post-doctoral studies. One year later, in 2011, he started working officially in Sweden.

- Daisy came to Chalmers to study a master program in 2006. She got 2 Master degrees, after her second degree she decided to stay Sweden to work.

- Zach came to Sweden in 2008 to study a master program, after he finished his study he decide to stay to work in Sweden.

- Charlie came to Gothenburg in 2007 to study master program in Chalmers University. He started working in Sweden in 2011.

Thus following group of people became my empirical base of this study. I will explain here why I had two interview processes and how I could use both of them in this study. Since I decided to change my study plan and continue my studies for a second year, I suspended the writing of my thesis for a year. When starting again 2014, it implied an opportunity to, within the same purpose, depend my research questions. As already described it also developed my theoretical frame of reference.

## 4.3 Data collection

The interviews took place in different places often decided by the respondents, for example at their home, café and square.

They seldom last more than one hour and during that time I was allowed to use recorder. Concerning the language problem they did all talked Chinese Mandarin, which also is my own language. When I had finished the two interview processes I had transcribed them to a text, extended around 46 pages.

Since the interviews were conducted in Chinese Mandarin, thus, translate the language was necessary. I did not translate all the data I conducted, only the information I needed.

As recommend in the methodological literature (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009: 135), I started the interview with some opening questions as: “could you tell me why did you choose to come to study in Sweden?” And “could you describe what happened during your studying period?”

## 4.4 Data processing

Here I will describe my analyses models and how I used them. As will be seen from 2013, I structured my data by help of inspiration from Maslow. Then I could use that information by going deeper in the problem area and then also structure data by the “Push-Pull” model.

### 4.4.1 Information from the interviews 2013

The interview questions for the first round interviews in 2013 were inspired by Maslow’s hierarchy needs theory. The information I gathered was about general background information, study motivation, studying experience, work motivation, working experience and the advice for Chinese students when they considering to study and work abroad (Please see Appendix 2). Through those interviews, I got some useful and important information about intermediary institutions, enroll in Swedish university, the chance to gain more knowledge abroad and the chance to study a major of interest. Attraction for work abroad were, for example, the good working and living environment, better salaries, better welfare system, marital relations and the disadvantages from China which made the respondents to decide to stay in Sweden.

#### 4.4.2 Deepening the analyses by help of the “Push-Pull” model.

When continuing my thesis writing in 2014, I wanted to understand more about my problem area and did that by combine some of the thinking from Maslow’s hierarchy needs theory with the new model called “Push-Pull”. Then I could highlight both positive and negative factors when studying and working abroad, and also interpret the respondents more detailed explanations.

Here I will give a short summery of the different factors from 2013, I involved in my analyses in 2014, called the “Push-Pull” model.

“Push” factors from the interviews 2013: Failed the exam in home country; study abroad intermediary institutions; no appropriate work in China; more pressure at work; unequal competition at work; too much limited at work; too much over time work without pay; lower income; insecurity food; bad living environment; bad working environment; bad weather.

“Pull” factors from the interviews 2013: Factors easily to apply Swedish university; consideration of the subject; learn more; get married with local people; lucky to get interview opportunities; consideration of the future for family and child; best play to talents; improve abilities; more freedom at work; less pressure from work; Swedish working experience will be more valuable; less competition between colleagues; like the job itself; more equal with other employee; higher income; good welfare.

This combination of data constituted the basis from which I continued to construct my “Push-Pull” model.

#### 4.4.3 My extended “Push-Pull” model

This model is based on Li and Bray’s four groups of motives, and two more groups of motives summarized and developed by me through Mazzarol, Kemp and Savery’s (1996: 37-38) study and one key dimension – country-specific advantages from Wilkins, Balakrishnan and Huisman (2012: 427).

Furthermore, it has to be pointed out that motives and factors are different, but related, things. Motives are more summative and put all the factors together into different categories whereas factors focus on the options for “Push” and “Pull” model. In other words, motives include factors, but factors do not include motives.

Here I present the model more in details concerning its two kind of groups. The first (1) is about motivation for studying abroad and the second (2) one is for motivation of working abroad.

## (1) “Push-Pull” model for study abroad motivation

*Personal motives.* They were more focused on individual reasons (inspired by ‘Recommendation’ and ‘Social Links’ from Mazzarol, Kemp and Savery (1996: 37-38),

*Academic Motives.* They included “pursuit of qualifications and professional development” (inspired by Li and Bray 2007: 79)

*Economic Motives.* It included access to scholarships, prospects for employment and estimated economic gain from the studies, etc. (Li and Bray 2007).

*Social & Cultural Motives.* They were, for example, a desire to obtain experience and understanding of other societies (inspired by Li and Bray 2007).

*Environmental Motives.* They were factors that attract students to come to the host country and includes climate, life style, criminality, safety and racial discrimination (inspired by Bodycott 2009 and Marrarol, Kemp and Savery 1996).

*Political Motives.* They “embraced the factors as commitment to society and enhancement of political status and power” (Li and Bray 2007: 795).

## (2) “Push-Pull” model for work abroad motivation

*Personal Motives.* The same as those for studying abroad.

*Professional Motives.* In this group, all factors were related to work. The reason I chose this group is because the respondents described a lot of reasons related to these motives. They were considering their future career before they found a job. They considered things like pressure, freedom and valuable working experience etc.

*Economic Motives.* It includes prospects for employment, which is similar to economic motives for studying abroad. Additionally, economic motives also include economic returns from work.

*Environmental motives.* They were climate, lifestyle, levels of criminality, safety and racial discrimination (inspired by Bodycott 2009).

*Political Motives.* These were the same as the factors for studying abroad.

By help of this extended “push-pull” model it was easier for me to process my data in adequate categories.

## 4.5 Reliability, validity and generalization

Kvale and Brinkmann (2009: 327) define reliability as “the consistency and trustworthiness of a research account”. One important aspect to reach this is if my respondent really had the experience I searched for. All of them had study experience in Sweden, and all of them stayed in Gothenburg to work after they graduated. Since they have both study and work motivation, as well as study and work experience, I believe they are reliable for this study.

Another important aspect was language competence, which I had and could really understand what they meant.

Validation should permeate the whole research process, from the first thematizing, designing, interviewing, transcribing, analyzing, validating, to the final reporting (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009: 241-249). When I started the research, I took had some difficulties, such as not finding enough respondents, into consideration; when designing the research, I tried to infringe as little as possible upon the integrity of my respondents, in order to make the interviews valid. I made summaries of the answers I got from the respondents, I did, however, make sure that they agreed to my summary. I used the recorder to record their answers and tone of voice, which made it possible for me to listen to my transcription as much as I want, and prevent any possible misunderstandings of their answers.

Subjectivity cannot be avoided in qualitative methods. The opinions of the respondents can be personal and, since I only had six respondents, their opinions may not be representative of Chinese immigrants in general. However, their experiences could be seen as an illustration of how students from China think about emigration. Since I had five male respondents, one female respondent, from the perspective of generalization, I lack of the female respondents, I missed more voice from this group. Another perspective of generalization is that my “Push-Pull” model may not be very comprehensive.

## 4.6 Ethical Consideration

“Ethics is a matter of principled sensitivity to the rights of others” (Kvale and Brinkmann, Ibid: 146), thus, no matter what, potential ethical issues or direct ethical issues should be taken into consideration from the very beginning of the research to the final report. In other words, ethical consideration should permeate the entire research process (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009: 62).

When I designed my research, I considered ethical principles such as informed consent, respect of privacy, safeguarding of confidential data, and deceit and lying (Gilbert, 2008: 146-147).

First, the informed consent must be obtained. The respondents were informed of the purpose of the study, and of their right to decline answering any questions or terminate the interview altogether without giving an explanation. After they were informed of their rights, I asked for their permission to conduct the interview.

Likewise, before starting the interview, consent should be obtained. No participants were forced or deceived during the study. Confidentiality and anonymity was always promised and guaranteed, all participants were therefore granted a feigned name in my report. The permission to use audio recorder should be obtained as well. When translating and transcribing the data, one has to remain loyal to the respondent words and not alter their meanings. When publishing the results, untrue and deceptive statements should be avoided and a neutral and non-biased attitude should be upheld. (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009: 63-74; Gilbert, 2008: 150-154)

Since ethical considerations are important for any study, my respondents were granted confidentiality, anonymity and respect, in order to ensure that their personal information would not be leaked. For that reason I decided not to ask too tough or intrusive questions, to make sure no harm would be done to them. I had to transcribe the data verbatim to maintain transparency and avoid false and deceptive statements.

## 4.7 Reflections over my method

Advantages with my qualitative method for my study to percipient the reasons why Chinese students want to study and work abroad, was the kind of different and not always planned information they gave. It was also easier to follow the reasons and effects after the data has been collected when I could re-listening a lot of times and find even more information. The advantage of the face-to-face interview was also that the facial expressions and body language could be observed through the interview, if the questions were inappropriate, I could change the question during the interview in order to minimize the harm. Flexibility of the face-to-face interview was also the advantage of qualitative method, since me and my respondents could meet at any time, any places, and was not limited by the time and we could stop any time we want.

Disadvantages with the method were that some potential respondents were not so interested in this topic and did not take part in my study. Perhaps they had preferred to fill in a self-completing questionnaire rather than participating in a face-to-face interview.



# Chapter 5 Findings and analysis

In this chapter the results and analysis will be presented together. It is structured by help of the three research questions.

## 5.1 Motivation for studying abroad focusing on Sweden

According to the new “Push-Pull” model, six motives could govern people’s decision to study abroad. In the tables below I give an overview of the division of the result:

Those marked with a little “x” means agreement and those with a big “X” means strong agreement. For each factor, **Bold** – the thicker words, represents “Push” factors while normal font represents “Pull” factors.

### - *Personal motives for studying abroad*

Table 1. Personal motives for studying abroad

	Parent's view	Failed the exam	<b>Study abroad intermediary institutions</b>	Future immigration	Recommendation from parents, relatives and friends	Know someone who lives/lived in the destination country
Smith					X	X
Martin				X	X	X
George	x				X	X
Daisy		X	X			
Charlie						

The previous study by – Bodycott (2009) states that parents’ decisions play an important role and cannot be ignored. In my study, however, only one respondent mentioned that parents’ opinions influenced his decision to study abroad:

*“ When I was considering studying abroad, my parents’ opinion only accounted for about ten percent. They were supportive of my decision go abroad to study and experience new things. My opinion, however, accounted for eighty percent in my decision to go abroad. The remaining ten percent were the opinions of my friends. (Gerorge).*

Since China is a Confucian society, traditional Confucian moral values are often advocated (Bodycott, 2009: 351). As mentioned in Chapter 2, children have a moral duty to honor their parents and respect their wishes. Therefore, I suspect that the other respondents were subconsciously influenced by their parents’ views, even though none of them mentioned it. Alternatively, it could simply be that the other respondents are very independent, considering the fact that are able to live and study abroad and are mature and confident enough to face any future challenges on their own. Thus making the view of their parents’ less important.

When Daisy failed her university English test, she decided to take The International English Language Testing System (IELTS), and since her grade was good enough for going abroad, study abroad intermediary institutions recommended her to do that. Since she did not know anything about Sweden, the information provided by the institution played an important role in her decision to go abroad.

*“At the beginning I want to study in Denmark, then I asked an intermediary institutions, they suggest me to study in Sweden...” (Daisy).*

It has become increasingly common in China to consult a study abroad intermediary institution, because they are a valuable source of information to aspiring university students who want to go abroad.

Three of the respondents agreed that the factors by Mazzarol, Kemp and Savery (1996) and Bodycott (2009: 353) played a very important role in their decision to study abroad, they are: “Recommendation from parents, relatives and friends” and “Know someone who lives in the destination country”. George, for instance, mentioned that

*“I came to Sweden because my friend recommended it. My friend had studied in Sweden before, so he knew more about the country and the university... that is why I choose to study in Gothenburg in Sweden”.*

Although information is available in abundance on TV and the Internet, many students like to hear a firsthand account on the country, before they decide to go there. Thus, the importance of recommendations from someone you know is quite obvious.

- *Academic motives for studying abroad*

Table 2. Academic motives for studying abroad

	Inadequate education opportunities	Recognition and dissatisfactory education quality	Poor quality educational facilities	Lack of research facilities	Lack of internationalization	Good reputation of the university	Good education quality	Positive attitude for International students	Easily to apply	Consideration of professional / subjects	Get foreign degree/ consideration of the benefits of the foreign degree	Increase knowledge / learn more
Smith							X		X	X	x	
Martin		X					X		X	X	X	X
George		X	X				X		X	X	X	X
Daisy												X
Charlie					X	x	X		X	X	X	X

The main reason that “Pushed” two of the respondents to study abroad was the inadequacy of the education offered at Chinese universities. George and Zach mentioned:

*“I thought the quality of the education offered at Chinese universities is not that good, which is the main reason I wanted to study abroad” (George).*

*“... a lot of people thought that it is not worth to studying master program in China, or the quality of the studying is not good enough, they are wasting their three years...” (Zach).*

And, according to University World News (2012), the quality of Chinese higher education suffers a serious decline; which might be one of the fundamental reasons

for the rise in Chinese students studying abroad. Another important reason could be the enrollment boom at Chinese universities. It is, however, worth pointing out that before the expansion, college attendance rates in China were very low by International standards (Yeung, 2013). In order to stimulate and sustain economic growth in China, higher education has become an important part of national development strategies. In 1999, the Chinese government announced that they were going to increase the university enrolment. Since Chinese universities have gained more autonomy and more private colleges have been established, there were 1,770 institutions of higher education by 2000, and about three percent were private colleges (Ibid: 4). “The rapid expansion has generated some concerns about a lower quality of tertiary education partly both because expenditures have not increased sufficiently for faculty and the infrastructures and operation in the burgeoning and more diverse institutions has not been carefully monitored in many colleges” (Ibid). Colleges and universities focus on four-year programs, which require all students to take a highly competitive standardized National College Entrance Examination – “Gaokao” in order to get the chance to go to university. As mentioned in the first chapter - introduction, the competition is so intense not all students get the chance to go to the top universities in China. Many students, therefore, have no choice, but have to choose a university that matches his/her “Gaokao” grades.

Interestingly, all my respondents are graduates from good universities in China, and thus, the “Inadequate education opportunities” factor cannot have had any impact on them, since they have had a lot of opportunities to study a Master or PhD in China, if they wanted. In summary, lower quality of tertiary education and increased competition in the National College Entrance Examination could “Push” students to go abroad to find another chance to improve their knowledge and pursue higher education.

As for “Pull” factors, there are three main reasons for my respondents to study in Sweden. The good quality of Swedish education is the first reason that attracts students to come to Sweden. George, for example, he thought that:

*“When I was considering which country should I go, I considered Germany, Switzerland and Sweden, the reason why I choose to study in Sweden is because the quality of engineering profession in Chalmers University is really good...”*

According to Swedish Higher Education Authority, it is a must for students, employers and society that higher education in Sweden maintains a high standard. Swedish Higher Education Authority has the task of evaluating all higher education in Sweden, in order to make sure that the quality of the courses and programs at every higher education institution always maintains a high enough standard to ensure and meet the goals set by the government.

The second reason that attracts students to studying in Sweden is the possibility to

study one's ideal subject in English at a Swedish university. According to the official website of The University of Gothenburg, 32 courses are offered in English. Charlie, for example, mentioned:

*“The main reason for me to study here is because the professional, the program I studied more closer to my original major, and it is a professional taught in English”.*

The third reason is the advantage of obtaining a foreign degree also been taken into consideration. According to BBC NEWS BUSINESS (2012), a foreign degree gives overseas students a much better competitive advantage when they return to their home countries. Martin, for example, mentioned that:

*“At that time, I thought that if I go back to China after my study with a foreign degree, it could help me get more opportunities when I looking for job in China”.*

From my point of view, a foreign degree is important not only to Chinese students but their families as well. On the one hand, it shows that the student is capable of obtaining a foreign degree, and, on the one hand, it is a source of pride for the whole family. Obtaining a foreign degree is thus important for Chinese students.

The fourth reason is students can learn more abroad. Four respondents mentioned that they could learn more in Sweden. George, for example, mentioned:

*“When you go abroad, you can gain new knowledge you never even heard of before, you can increase your knowledge”.*

According to the official website of Sweden (Sweden a), Swedish universities are encouraged to think creatively, critically and independently. This combined with the Swedish universities' emphasis on developing students' ability to seek new perspectives, could give students a competitive advantage.

In additional, I also think the ranking of universities is also an important factor when considering a good quality education and future prospects, and since Swedish universities are ranked highly in the world, the first realization among Chinese students is that the quality of education is higher in Sweden.

- *Economic Motives for studying abroad*

Table 3. Economic motives for study abroad

	Availability of scholarship for study abroad	No tuition fee	Can afford to travel expenses/ living costs	Good welfare in host country	Can stay to find a job in the future	Get scholarship from university
Smith		X	X		x	
Martin		X	X			
George		X	X			
Daisy		X				
Charlie		X	X		x	

From this table, it is obvious that all the respondents thought that no tuition fee was the most attractive reasons for them to study in Sweden. Martin and George, for example, mentioned that:

*“We do not need to pay the tuition fees, just need to pay for basic living expenses” (Martin).*

*“No tuition fee is the main attraction of Swedish education for students.” (George).*

Before 2010, Sweden was one of the few countries in Europe that offered international students free education. In 2010, however, the Swedish parliament passed a law that mandates students from non-EU/EEA countries to pay tuition fee and application fees, starting in the academic year 2011/2012. Bachelor and master students are required to pay tuition fees; only PhD students are exempted according to website - Scholarships 4 Development. The average decrease of students from low-income countries was over 90 percent. According to The Local Sweden’s news in English (2012), between 2010 and 2011, the number of students from Pakistan and India declined by 91 and 85 percent respectively. It is evident that tuition fees strongly influence students’ decisions to study abroad. Thus, before Sweden imposed tuition fees, some students could afford their living costs.

In order to admit more international students, the Swedish government took measures, such as offering scholarships, to counter a precipitous drop in enrollment of non-EU/EEA students (Ibid). (2014). In fact, tuition fees have changed Sweden’s international student population.

In addition, the affordable living costs also “Pulled” them to Sweden. According to the Pie News (2012), the average student’s living costs in Sweden are around 750 Euro per month, which is lower compared to Germany (770 Euro – 1000 Euro), Norway (1150 Euro) and the UK (1200 Euro).

The lack of tuition fees and affordable living costs encourage students to study abroad, Charlie, for example,

*“No tuition fee is the most important reason I chose to study in Sweden, because I have to consider the financial issues, I did not ask for financial support from my parents. I have to support and finance my studies myself, the lack of tuition fees therefore reduced my financial stress”.*

Tuition fees and living costs are the main issues for Chinese students and parents. Support from the family is the main financial support for students studying abroad, and since many students come from not so wealthy families, financial issues often have the highest priority.

- *Social & Cultural motives for studying abroad*

Table 4. Social & Cultural motives for studying abroad

	Wish to go abroad during childhood	Want to experience a different life style
Smith	x	X
Martin	x	X
George	x	
Daisy	X	
Charlie	X	X

All the respondents were to varying degrees influenced by their childhood dreams. Martin, for example, mentioned that:

*“Yes, when I was so young, I was thinking about to study abroad. However, until I became 18 years old, I was more sure about to studying abroad”.*

As my point of view, when we were child, Television and books were the main tools for us to know the world, we are attracted by when we saw other types of people with golden hair, white skin, high bridged nose, and different food hobbies, we gradually becomes interested in to go abroad to look around, to see more about this world.

After my respondents came of age, they began to think about experiencing different life styles and turn their childhood dream into a reality. Charlie, for example, mentioned that:

*“After I grow up, until university, I want to go abroad and to experience another countries’ cultures.”*

Studying abroad gives students a chance to know a foreign country where every interaction is a chance to learn something new, as well as sharing your culture with others. Experiencing a different culture could translate into tangible benefits in students’ lives. They get the chance to see historic monuments and famous art and will experience the academic system of another country. Furthermore, according to UNT-International, students will experience the niceties of a foreign culture and language, as well as discovering new things about themselves and our world in new ways.

#### - *Environmental motives for studying abroad*

None of the respondents chose environmental motives for studying abroad, because almost all of them thought that the environment in China was good enough when they applied, therefore no one considered environmental motives. For example, Martin and George described that:

*“The environment in China as pretty good when I went abroad a few years ago, and only recently have they started to think about environmental issues”.*

However, the situation was changed. Chinese Sina news (Sina News Center, 2013) presented a story, shows how environmental motives influenced parents’ and students’ choice to go abroad. A mother tried so hard to send her son abroad to study, in order to let her son breathe clean air, drink clean water, and eat nutritious food without dirty oil and melamine. During those years, she took any chance to let her son keep away from Chinese bad environment. They had been to a lot of countries, such as Australia, European countries. Miraculously, every time they go abroad, her son’s Asthma was cured, no cough, no cold, and no sore throat. Therefore, no matter the quality of education and environment, they have to send their son go abroad. Chinese media – SouFun (2014) state that after 2013, there were formed a large area of thick fog and haze weather, especially in Yangtze River Delta region, northeast and Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei Region, bad air environment destroying affects the regular life and health to people, so that to create a new group of people – “environmental migration”, some of them move to foreign country, some of them move to middle or



even smaller size city. Thus, we can see that environment changes and stress also lead people to seek opportunities to move to new places (Goldin, Cameron and Balarajan, 2011: 207).

- *Political motives*

Although there is no respondent mentions political motives influenced them to study abroad, we still cannot ignore the possibility of the existence of political motives. Back to Literature review, politically uncongenial situation, congenial political situation and congenial political environment could let students move to foreign country.

## 5.2 Motivation for working abroad focusing on Sweden

The tables below, marked with a little “x” means agreement and those with a big “X” means strong agreement. For each factor, **Bold** – the thicker words, represents “Push” factors while normal font represents “Pull” factors.

- *Personal motives for working abroad*

Table 5. Personal motives for working abroad

	No appropriate work	Weak social ties (H3)	Get less support (H2)	Be in relation with local people	Stayed for a while, adapted to the new situation (H1)	Lucky to get interview opportunities	Get more support (H2)	Consideration of the future of family and child	Strong social ties (H3)
Smith								x	
Martin					X			x	
George	X				X				
Daisy	x			X					x
Charlie	x				x			x	

For “Push” factors, three of the respondents thought that no appropriate work in China influenced their decision to continue to stay in Sweden. According to Chinese

media – People.cn. (2014), China’s job market is severe and will remain severe, especially for graduates. It will remain severe even for overseas graduates. In 2014, 7.27 million Chinese college students will graduate, and on top of that China has an estimated population of 300 thousand overseas returnees that will come back and compete for the same jobs as those 7.27 million Chinese college graduates. Finding an appropriate job in China will therefore be harder for overseas returnees. As for the other two “Push” factors, it seems like the reason why my respondents are not influenced by these two push factors, is because their old friends, old classmates and their family could support them if they were to go back to China. In other words, the Swedish conditions make them want to stay.

As for “Pull” factors, since they have already adapted to the Swedish environment during their student life, they were already acclimatized to the environment of Sweden; one of the respondents, George, even mentioned:

*“ Because I had stayed in Europe for such a long time, if I went back to China, I would not be able to readapt to the environment in China, so I prefer to stay in Sweden”.*

Another “Pull” factor that attracts the respondents to stay in Sweden is the prospect of marrying and settling down in Sweden. Daisy, for instance, mentioned that:

*“ If I had not gotten married to my boyfriend, I do not think I would have stayed here”.*

Being in a relationship with local people could motivate students to stay abroad. They apply for a visa or get married in order to stay.

- *Professional motives for working abroad*

Table 6. Professional motives for working abroad

	More pressure at work	Unequal competition at work	Too much limited at work	Too much over time work without pay	Best play to talents	Improve abilities	More freedom at work	Less pressure from work	Swedish working experience will more valuable	Less competition between colleagues	Like the job itself	High level of protean career approach (H5)	More equal with other employee
Smith									X		x		
Martin	x	x	x	x			X	X	X		X		
George	X	X		X	X	X	X	X		x	X		
Daisy	X			X			X						
Charlie			x		x	X	X	X	X		X		X

On the one hand, three of the respondents heard that more pressure is exerted on the employees and that the wages are lower in China. Thus, when comparing the Chinese working conditions with those in Sweden, they prefer to stay. Martin, for example, says

*“ Working for long-hours in China, and under too much pressure without being paid accordingly...”*

Even though not all my respondents had firsthand experience from the harsh working conditions in China, they had still heard from friends and Chinese news about the high pressure, low wages, over time etc. These conditions made my respondents less inclined to work in China, especially when contrasting them with the preferable Swedish working conditions.

According to Chinese news – Qingdao News (2012), people who are working in China are facing too much pressure from the work. Chinese mainland workers are suffering series work pressure in 2011. It is ranked first in the world from a research, which grasped around 80 countries in the world and about 16 thousand works. In this research, the percent of Mainland China was about 75 percent. It ranked at the top of

the world and thus beyond the global average of 48 %. Too much pressure makes people want to look for a less stressful job in another country. George, for example, mentioned that:

*“ I heard that working in China with too much pressure... however, in Sweden, there is not that much pressure in work, we have pressure, but not that much”.*

Another Chinese website – Mier Community (2013), state that Even Japan complained that a lot of Japanese died cause of too much working pressure from China, the article mentions that Chinese people grew up in a fierce competitive environment. When they entered the workforce, in order to achieve outstanding achievements, they have to suffer great working pressure. This also affected the Japanese who works in Chinese company, leading to about 300 Japanese people a year death from overwork in China. According to the news from China Daily (2014), working pressure could led to a lot of problems, for example, health problems, feeling a sense of irritability and fatigue, feel dull and lifeless, lacked any interest in things and experienced loneliness and inferiority; only less than 5 percent of employers provided psychological counseling and annual health checkups. Thus, no profession is spared growing pressure. We can see the real situation in China, how Chinese people facing those problems, so we are not hard to imagine that why more people want to work abroad.

Too much pressure from work also lead to working longer hours, this is another reason “Push” my respondents work abroad. Martin, for example, mentioned that:

*“People work too long time in China, they are facing much pressure and get less payment...”*

According to the website – The Register (2012), the average Chinese worker spends eight hours per day and forty minutes per week, and about 30 percent work for at least ten hours per day. Another website – Bloomberg Businessweek (2013) presented that about 82.8 percent of Chinese workers feel they are either close to or already overloaded with work.

In order to lead a better life with a nice car, more money and a house, Chinese workers pursue a steady job and a good salary, which means they must devote themselves to their jobs. Thus, overwork is a common phenomenon in China. Data shows from SoHu News (2013) present that China, less than half of the workers (45.7%) get overtime wage.

On the other hand, there are four main factors that attract my respondents to stay to work in Sweden. First of all, get more freedom at work. Here, the freedom means the flexible working time, freedom to express own perspectives and so on. In contrast to China, the Working Hours Act (1982: 673) of Sweden section five states, “regular

working time may not exceed 40 hours per week”. Furthermore, according to the local Swedish News (The Local Sweden’s News in English, 2014), the Swedish authorities try to introduce six-hour workdays with the same pay. When there is a special need, however, to increase the number of hours worked, employees may overwork to a maximum of 48 hours over a period of four weeks, or 50 hours over a calendar month, with a maximum of 200 hours over a calendar year (Working Hours Act, Section 8). All employees are entitled to a daily rest period between midnight and 05:00 (Ibid, Section 13) and a minimum of uninterrupted rest periods of thirty-six hours weekly (Ibid, Section 14). Workers’ rights could be protected by powerful Labor unions, and the Swedish Work Environment Authority, whose mission it is to ensure the well-being of workers and uphold an equal, non-discriminatory work environment. According to Swedish official website – Sweden (Sweden b), everyone has the right to be treated equally regardless of gender, age, ethnicity or any other factor. Even when the employee works overtime, he/she will get paid a special remuneration. Worker’s supplements often amount to either 50% or 100% of the regular hourly rate, depending on when the overtime is worked. In lieu of a monetary remuneration, employees can opt for time off, the length of which is determined by regulations in a collective agreement, according to Website- Eurofound (2009). In Sweden, flexible working time could guarantee the rest time for employees, and policies also guaranteed the rights of the employees.

In light of the freedom of expression enjoyed by employees at Swedish work places, I would like to discuss the different working cultures of China and Sweden. As for work related hierarchies, Chinese and Swedish business culture differs. Many Chinese prefer to work in Sweden because they feel there is more equality between employer and employees. Social hierarchies are an overarching cultural norm in China, which extends beyond the confines of the household to the workplace. Thus, inequality at work is considered reasonable in Chinese culture. In the West, people can refer to their father by name directly because they consider themselves equal, while in China such an act is looked upon as unfilial. At work, Chinese employers and employees maintain a hierarchy. Chinese workers have different attitudes depending on the status of the coworker they are interacting with. One example from a Chinese website discussion – Readit (2008), points out that people dare to bring up certain topics with their subordinates, but abstain from them when talking to their superiors. Another website – MBALib (2009) explained the reason behind Chinese workers’ subservience to their superiors and obedience to the hierarchical structure. They expect their superiors to lead them and they abstain from voicing any independent thoughts, let alone questioning their superiors’ orders. However, Swedish workplace culture focuses on everyone’s importance in the group, strict hierarchies, are therefore virtually non-existent in Swedish society, according to Swedish official website - Sweden (Sweden b). Swedish managers often make decisions based on discussions with their colleagues. It is evident that the Swedish system encourages employees to express their thoughts and opinions, unlike the Chinese business culture, which, probably due to the strict hierarchy, discourages the exchange of ideas and individual

initiatives. Employees in Sweden have more freedom to voice their opinions and are treated equally.

Except the freedom at work in Sweden, less pressure is exerted on them at work, this is the second main factor that attracts my respondents to stay and work in Sweden. George, for example,

*“Less pressure at work is also the most important reason made me to stay in Sweden, sometimes when I talk to my friends, compare to their working conditions, Sweden, in deed, has less pressure... we do have pressure, but not as much as in China... and more freedom at work, I feel I can freely express my thoughts and opinions at work in Sweden”.*

Thus too much working pressure could let people feel tired, lose passion for work, therefore, working with less pressure could let people feel relax, and doing work more efficiently.

Thirdly obtaining work experience in Sweden is valuable. Martin explained that

*“Swedish working experience is more valuable, because it could give you a competitive edge when applying for a job in China”*

Foreign working experience could help overseas students stand out more than others. According to Chinese media - Sina Education (2011), increasingly more companies in China are beginning to think highly of overseas work experience, the manager of human resources of one company said that the real competitive edge a overseas returnee has is foreign work experience, including good command of English, good understanding of intercultural communication etc. Thus, increasingly more students want to get a job in foreign countries, on the one hand, they get the chance to live in a foreign country and on the other they get foreign work experience. Regardless of their future endeavors, international work experience should help students find a better job.

Fourth, they like the job itself. During the internship at company, they gained some working experience and know more about the job they do. Thus, they like their job, and when they get chance to stay, they choose to stay and continue to work with the same job.

- *Economic motives for working abroad*

Table 7. Economic motives for working abroad

	<b>Lower income</b>	<b>Weak labor market (H4)</b>	Higher income	Good welfare system	Strong labor market (H4)
Smith			X		
Martin			X	X	X
George				X	
Daisy				x	
Charlie			X	X	

Even though there is no “Push” factors makes the respondents do not want to go back to China, the higher income indeed influenced my respondents in their decision to stay in Sweden. According to Chinese website – 66XUE (2014), 77.5 percent of overseas returnees feel that their salary is lower than expected, 38.5 percent of them feel that the salary is too less than expected. China Daily (2012a) also mentioned that some 43 percent of the overseas returnees who work in China after their studies abroad, have a salary of just about 3, 000 yuan (470\$) and 5, 000 yuan per month.

For “Pull” factors, however, higher income and good welfare system in Sweden are the main reasons for staying in Sweden to work. Smith, for instance, mentioned that

*“... of course stay in Sweden because of the higher income, all is about the higher income, that is the most important reason for me to stay”.*

In contrast to China, there is no minimum legal wage in Sweden. Salaries are instead negotiated by collective bargaining between Trade unions and employers. Furthermore, according to web news – Just Landed, the gender wage gap in Sweden has decreased. According to Average Salaries in Sweden mentioned by Swedish website – Lost in Stockholm (2012), most major professions, such as dentists, doctors, lawyers, nurses, stockmen etc. Salaries are 50, 600; 50, 600; 40, 700; 27, 800 and 20, 200 kronor. The salary is obviously higher in Sweden than China; therefore, a lot of students want to stay and work in Sweden.

As for good welfare system in Sweden, George mentioned the good welfare as the

main reason for staying in Sweden:

*“Since the welfare system in Sweden is pretty good... you get a high income and you pay more tax, but you know where your tax is taken from and for what it is used... seventy or sixty percent of tax money is used on public services. In China, however, you get a higher income, and also have to pay tax, but you do not know on what the tax money is spent”.*

A more developed welfare system is also encouraging students to stay. According to Swedish official website (Sweden c), you do not need to worry about the cost of healthcare, childcare or your children’s education because Sweden has comprehensive social benefits. You even have eighteen months of paid parental leave.

- *Environmental motives for working abroad*

Table 8. Environmental motives for working abroad.

	Bad environment (Insecurity food)	Bad living environment	Bad working environment	Bad weather/poor air quality	Insecurity living environment	Racial discrimination	Good environment	Good working environment	Less crime, feel more safety	Good living conditions	Good air quality	Good life style
Smith									x	x	x	
Martin	X			X			x	x	x	x	x	
George		x	X	X				x	x	X	x	
Daisy	x	x	X	X	X		x	x	x	x	X	
Charlie	x			x	X		x		x	X		

As for environmental motives, the respondents started to consider them after they graduated. This is interesting because, before they went abroad, no one thought about the environmental factors. After they graduated, however, they changed their mind.

The respondents felt that food insecurity and bad weather/poor air quality were important reasons for them not going back to China. Martin, for example, mentioned that:



*“Air, food, traffic environment, cultural environment are all so important, however, those factors in China are a little bit worse”.*

The environmental issues in China are a problem, which in turn affects the quality of food. For example, gutter oil, oil dumped by restaurants, is collected and reused by restaurants and vendors seeking to cut costs. According to Chinese online news – China.com (2011), the gutter oil currently flowing back to restaurants amounts to about two or three millions tons per year, and the total sales of animal and vegetable oils were about 22.5 million tons, which means on average every ten meals may be cooked with used gutter oil. Except gutter oil, China is facing other food problems, such as poisoned and contaminated pork, rice and milk powder (Ibid). Except food insecurity, the environmental conditions are not good enough. According to online news – Bloomberg businessweek Global Economic (2013) and CNN news (2013), in 2013, thousands of rotting pig carcasses were afloat near Shanghai; and in Beijing, people have to seek refuge behind surgical masks because of the gray smog, and about 66.8 percent of young and middle-aged Chinese say that they feel their health is poor because of the bad environment and pressure from work. In addition, working conditions in some industries are not very good, especially in the Chinese IT manufacturing sector, employers are “exposed to harsh fumes without proper protection and experience a psychologically harsh work environment and verbal abuse”, according to online news - Electronics watch (2013).

The respondents felt that food insecurity and bad weather/poor air quality were important reasons for them not going back to China. Compared to the bad Chinese environment, the good environment in Sweden attracts them to stay and work. According to website – Lifestyle9.com (2013), Sweden is among the top five countries to live in, it states that Sweden is packed with nature, it serves as the best country for women, it is a safe country to live in, people can enjoy fresh and clean air, water is perfect for both drinking and swimming, public transport covers every place from big cities to small villages etc. (Ibid).

Good working environment also attracted my respondents to stay, George, for example, said

*“...Considering of the future work, if you have a good working environment, you will work happily”.*

Other factors, such as food safety, low levels of crime, better air quality and good living conditions, contributed to my respondents’ decision to stay. They do not need to worry about the food quality, here has no gutter oil, less crime, and fresh air, compared to China, and those advantages more attracted them to stay.

- *Political motives for working abroad*

As with studying abroad, no respondents mentioned any political motives influencing their decision to work abroad. The possibility, however, cannot be ignored.

## 5.3 Studying and working experiences in Sweden

### 5.3.1 Study experiences

- *English anxiety*

For Chinese students, the language barrier is a difficulty when studying abroad. Five of the respondents mentioned that when they first came to Sweden, they had problems communicating with others, and some of those five had difficulties during class. Martin told me that he at first was a bit uncomfortable with speaking English in the class and in normal life. Chinese students rely on a very traditional language learning method of cramming vocabulary and grammar exercises, without actually making any practical use of the foreign language.

George said that communicating in a foreign language could be a big problem during class. When asking a question, for example, you sometimes use your own expressions that the other students do not understand, which can be embarrassing.

In the beginning, it can be hard to express yourself in English, especially when you have tried to explain something a couple of times and they still do not understand what you mean, which reinforces the anxiety and the fear of talking to others. Zach mentioned that he is afraid of expressing his opinions and thoughts during classes and seminars. Charlie, however, mentioned that he is not afraid of expressing his thoughts and opinions. The problem for him is:

*“... when you are trying to say something and the topic has already passed, or maybe sometimes the topic is almost done when you are still organizing your language...”*

Even though Chinese students learn English for many years at school, many of them are struggling with expressing themselves in English, due to their lack of exposure to the language outside the classroom.

- *Different educational system*

According to the respondents, the Chinese and Swedish educational systems differ mainly on curriculum settings and pedagogical approach. The length of a course, for example, is measured in weeks in Sweden, while in China courses are measured in semesters. In other words, a course can take up to half a year to finish. Smith, for instance, said:

*“ In Sweden, one course will be finished within 8 weeks, and then you have to take the exam, but if you were in China, you would have to study 5 or 6 courses at the same time, all six courses are of the same length of time, which means you need to understand the knowledge of the five or six courses in one semester, and have all the exams crammed together at the end.”*

As previously mentioned, one difference in the educational system is the pedagogical approach, which, according to my respondents, differs in four ways. First of all, Swedish universities have no fixed textbook per course, but rely on several textbooks and/or printed handouts; while in China there is only one textbook per course. Smith said:

*“... The most important thing is that they do not have fixed textbooks, but in China, we call it book, which means the book was written by someone...specifically for college students, and you can read the materials or information from the book...”*

Secondly, students in Sweden have to study by themselves, while in China they are “Pushed” to study by the teachers. Martin mentioned this point and he said that students have to be more active and read the materials or book by themselves.

Thirdly, teachers in Sweden not only teach, but are also involved in many research projects. George mentioned that teachers at Chalmers University of Technology have more experience in scientific research; thus, they know the frontiers of scientific research and technology in the world,

*“You can grasp the forefront of scientific research, you can learn a lot of things about scientific research. And also the scientific equipment is more advanced than in China, so you can acquire more knowledge”.*

Fourthly, Zach mentioned that in Sweden a kind of open education is advocated, with open education meaning that there is no fixed answer to a question. A Swedish pedagogical approach could aid students in their learning by making them understand the purpose of the research/project, and why every step in the process is important. Zach thinks that the pedagogical approach in China is different:

*“They want students to show their working process or want them to repeat the previous work... they do not let you really experience the purpose of the research...” .*

The different educational systems between China and Sweden caused some of the Chinese students to lose their motivation to study, and, as mentioned in the Introduction chapter, some students who go abroad neglect their studies and waste their time and money because of a lack of authority figures, such as parents and teachers that could otherwise push them to study. In other words, many students lose their motivation to study because they cannot adapt to the new educational system.

### - *Adapting to a new life*

Almost all the respondents mentioned that it took a while to adapt to the new life in Sweden, including the language, food and culture. Martin spent half a year adapting to the language, he spend a lot of time practicing his English with Swedes. Both Martin and Charlie were not used to Swedish food:

*“It is so hard to adapt to a new culture for me, the food is different...I am not used to eat Swedish food, I have to cook by myself...” (Charlie).*

Since China is very different from Sweden, it might take a while for Chinese students to adapt to the new environment, culture and lifestyle. Some Chinese students, however, cannot adapt to the Swedish food culture.

### - *Feel lonely*

People often feel lonely when they live alone in a foreign country. My respondents also had the same feelings in the beginning. They were living alone and did everything from cooking, grocery shopping, eating and laundering by themselves.

For Martin, after he came to Sweden, he did everything on his own, and he felt very lonely because he missed his girlfriend. Another aspect of being on your own is the challenge of solving problems by yourself without support from friends or parents, Zach, for example said:

*“...Most of the time you have to be independent to face all the problems alone. Most of the time you are alone. Does not matter if you are studying or doing something else”  
(Zach).*

Studying abroad is not an easy thing, especially if you do not have any relatives or friends in the foreign country, you do everything by yourself, Smith, for example, said

that going abroad is a very hard thing. After he came to Sweden he had to cook and buy stuff by himself.

According to a previous study by Zhang and Brunton (2007), it is common for Chinese students to experience loneliness because of the great distance from family and friends, but after a while most of them find new friends. They may still feel lonely from time to time, even though they have made new friends.

### 5.3.2 Work experience

#### - *Breaks for rest was guaranteed*

All the respondents mentioned that breaks for rest and flexible working hours were guaranteed. Smith introduced me to his flexible work schedule, which included two half hour breaks for “fika” every day.

*“You have a more flexible schedule. The required time for work is eight hours, and you can go to work at anytime, but you have to work for eight hours. You can, for example, go to work later and go back home later...”* (Smith).

George, Zach and Charlie also mentioned the same sentiments and told me that employees only need to work for 40 hours per week and rarely have to work overtime.

Since working hours in Sweden are quite flexible and breaks are guaranteed, the working conditions are quite beneficial for the employees thanks to the lack of pressure at work, which in turn might increase the efficiency among them.

#### - *Good relationships with colleagues*

All the respondents said that the relationship between them and their colleagues are good, for example Daisy and Charlie told me that:

*“I have a good relationship with my colleagues”.*

Martin and George even said that their relationships with their coworkers are like a family.

Less competition could foster a sense of friendship among the employees and they may even, eventually, treat each other like family members.

- *Equal treatment for all employees*

All the employees are treated equally in the company, as a foreign employee you do not feel any difference between you and the local employees.

*“I do not feel any difference between me and my colleagues, the employer treats us the same” (Daisy).*

Since the working culture is less hierarchical, employees are treated more equally.

- *Difficulties encountered in the work – language barrier*

All the respondents are working in Swedish Companies, learning and using Swedish thus becomes increasingly important. Speaking Swedish, however, is one of the common difficulties for Chinese immigrants at work. Zach is even disappointed of himself for not being better at Swedish:

*“At first you do not understand the language, and you always want to speak English with others, your colleagues, however, speak Swedish. I can feel there is a barrier between us... You cannot receive a lot of information, which makes you sorely disappointed... And they speak Swedish during meetings, of course, I can only understand parts of it, but I have trouble expressing my opinion in Swedish. Thus, the language barrier is the greatest difficulty for me”.*

Charlie also mentioned that Swedish is the main language barrier for them.

Even though my respondents are working for Swedish companies in Sweden, they rarely need to speak Swedish because most people speak English in Sweden. Learning Swedish, however, would greatly benefit them, if they want to integrate into the Swedish society as a whole.

# Chapter 6 Discussion

## 6.1 Summary of the findings

The paragraphs below are summaries of the findings. The findings have been structured by the research questions.

Question 1: How do Chinese students explain their decisions to study in Sweden?

According to the “Push-Pull” model, there are six motives influencing students to go abroad. According to my findings, however, only four motives influenced the respondents’ decision to study in Sweden.

The first motive was personal motives, such as recommendations from their friends and relatives who live or lived in Sweden. Half of the respondents were influenced by such personal motives to study in Sweden. Only one of the respondents felt influenced by “Push” factors while the rest did not feel that “Push” factors played an important role. The decisions were made by respondents and were respected by their parents.

The second motive was academic. As for “Pull” factors, almost all respondents were influenced by the good quality of education in Sweden; it is easier to apply compared to other countries; they get the chance of studying their ideal major or to further their studies in a major of their interests. Respondents also thought that a Swedish degree could improve their chances of getting a better job in the future. Lastly they felt that they could acquire more knowledge in Sweden. As For “Push” factors, not many respondents felt that academic motives “Pushed” them to go abroad, however, two of them thought that the low quality of the educational facilities and the poor education quality influenced their decision to leave China.

The third motive was economic. All respondents agreed that no tuition fee was the most attractive reason that “Pulled” them abroad, and low living costs was another important reason. As for “Push” factors, no respondents got any support from the Chinese government, but had to rely on themselves and parental support.

The fourth motive was social and cultural. All respondents were thinking about going abroad when they were young, and when they started their university studies they wanted to experience a different life style in a foreign country.

For the fifth and sixth motives, none of the respondents took environmental and political motives into account.

According to all the findings, we can see that the good reputation of the host country can attract students to study, such as the quality of education. For Chinese students, the most important consideration is if they can afford the tuition fee and living costs. According to previous study from Bodycott (2009), parents' decision plays an important role when the students want to study abroad, so before I start to interview my respondents, I personally thought that parents' decisions were the main reason to let them study abroad. On the contrary, the findings show that parents' view did not have much influence on their decision. In general, the shortage of home country also could let students looking for more chance to study abroad, such as the inadequate education opportunities; however, the respondents in this study were all came from Chinese top universities. Therefore, the educational opportunities do not influence them.

## Question 2: Why do they stay in Sweden after they graduate?

The factors I presented here were following my own "Push-Pull" model's factors.

According to the "Push-Pull" model, five motives influence students to stay in Sweden after they graduate. Through my findings, however, only four motives influenced the respondents' decision to stay and work in Sweden.

The first motive was personal reasons for working abroad. No appropriate work in China was the main "Push" factor that made the respondents stay in Sweden to work. As for "Pull" factors, they have already adapted to the Swedish environment and the benefit of raising a family in Sweden made them think it is better to stay in Sweden.

The second motive was Professional, Two "Push" factors made them not want to go back to China: more pressure at work and no extra pay for overwork. Four "Pull" factors attract the respondents to work in Sweden: More freedom at work, less pressure at work, getting valuable international working experience and lastly the fact that they simply like the job itself.

The third motive is economic. No "Push" factors influenced the respondents' decisions to stay in Sweden, but two "Pull" factors attracted the respondents to stay to work: a higher income and a good welfare system.

The fourth motive is environmental. The respondents began to consider the environmental issues after they graduated, there were two main motives that "Pushed" them to not go back to China: food insecurity and bad weather/poor air quality. Sweden, on the other hand, has good environment that attracted the respondents to



stay and work. Food safety, less crime, good living environment, good working conditions and good weather were the five “Pull” factors that attracted them to stay in Sweden.

Question 3: What has the studying and working experience in Sweden been?

As for studying experiences, the respondents experienced four different problems. The first problem was the language barrier. In the beginning it was difficult to communicate in English, both during class and in daily conversation. Secondly, the education system in Sweden is totally different. Third, it took a while to adjust to a new life in a foreign country because of the differences in food, culture and life style. It took a few months or more for them to adapt the life style in Sweden. Fourth, they felt lonely during the study period because they were living in a totally different country without parents and friends by their side.

As for working experience, the respondents mentioned four common experiences. First, breaks were guaranteed and the working hours were flexible, and the working hours were set up to 40 hours per week and they rarely had to work overtime. The second experience was the good relationships with their colleagues. Two of the respondents even felt that the company is like a family. The third experience was the boss treating all employees equally. The last common experience was that the Swedish language is still a barrier when communicating in a Swedish company.

## 6.2 Reflection over the findings in relation to Social Work and Human Rights

After comparing my findings with those of previous studies, I noticed some differences between them. According to Bodycott (2009) the view of the parents play an important role when students are planning their overseas studies. However, my findings show that it was the respondents’ own desires that accounted for the final decision. Only one of the respondents was influenced by parent.

Predominantly, good reputation of the university under interest, better general knowledge of the hosting country and favorable environmental considerations are reasons that attract students to attend their studies in the given host country. Sweden is one of the destinations to many famous universities and worth mentioning are Uppsala University, Lund University, Karolinska University Hospital and Kungliga Tekniska Högskolan (KTH). These famous universities have been attracting students

of different fields from all over the world and Chinese students are among these students. In addition to the aspiration to study in such famous universities, the authenticity of the degree certificate a student would be awarded is another reason they favor studying abroad. This could be verified by Altbach's study in Chapter 2.

It was found out in the study that studying in Sweden and getting a degree on any level is an accomplishment. Students holding a degree and expertise in the field they studied stand out to be competitive if they go back to China. Nonetheless, half of the respondents thought that they could not find an appropriate job because of graduate students looking for jobs are high in number.

It is a common experience for overseas students to go through language anxiety, different educational system, adapting to a new life style and also loneliness. These experiences are reflected upon by previous studies by different researchers Cheng and Erben (2012), Yue and Fan (2012) and Zhang and Brunton (2007) in Chapter 2. As it has been said above, Sweden is different than China in respect to different aspects such as culture, language and education system. It is due to this differences that students go through the above challenges.

Concerning the periods they have been working in Sweden, the respondents have good working experiences. This good working environment being constant, the only challenge they face is the command of the Swedish language for work purposes. This may led to misunderstandings at work places, organizational problems, and miscommunications and low self-esteem for Chinese workers. These are problems that could challenge social workers at different levels.

This study could help social workers as a base for understanding common challenges faced by Chinese students in specific and Chinese immigrants in general. The above explained language barrier may extend and affect different aspects of their lives. Language could be one of the bases for social segregation and alienation leading to poverty. According to Midgely (1996: 14 & 20), most of the social work practice is concerned with remedial interventions; the role of social work can solve problems of poverty and social workers can work on professional activities that would improve standard of living and alleviate poverty. Social workers as professionals play the major role in helping immigrants and their family to fight poverty on different levels. The social segregation that these Chinese students may face due to the Swedish language inefficiency could be tackled by social workers with different methods. One is by guiding them on how to be enrolled in classes that are given by the Swedish state named SFI- Svenska for invandrare. This is one of the ways a person could start to speak the Swedish language at an efficient level. Basic needs that should be available to anyone no matter what distinguishing backgrounds they come from like race, religion, sex, political and so on should also be protected. This is because every human is entitled to human rights like housing, food, stable working conditions and so on just because they are humans.

Social work profession has a primary mission to enhance human well-being and help people to meet all their basic human needs, attending particularly to the needs and empowerment of those who are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty (Reichert, 2007: 2). Human rights and social work are connected to each other, human rights provide the social work profession with a global and contemporary set of guidelines; Social work and social workers are the profession who realize the concrete work to protect human rights in daily life (Ibid: 2-4).

Social work can make up the things what the government has not seen and the traditional direct practice techniques of social work can be used to promote personal growth and adjustment among individuals, and people can set up more positive relationships with others (Ibid: 17). Except solving problems for immigrants, it is also important to help their families, in order to engage children in the society. Because according to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in the Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status (Article 2), immigrants have the rights to education (Article 26), to work (Article 23) and to has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services (Article 25).

When Chinese students come to Sweden, they might experience human rights issues, such as racial discrimination, gender discrimination, and degrading treatment, etc. It is important to ask my respondents how their study and work experience have been because it could help me to investigate if they ever have had to deal with human rights issues. Now I know that none of the respondents had any bad experiences at school or work. Not all respondents, however, know what kind of human rights they have, thus, as social workers; we should work preemptively by informing them on their human rights. We can, for example, offer courses and workshops to teach them about human rights, and offer support if needed.

In addition, it needs to be pointed out that my respondents belong to a special group of well-paid and highly educated immigrants working for Swedish companies. Their issues are, therefore, perhaps less connected to social work or Human Rights Issues. Many Chinese students in Sweden are not able to find a job, even though they have the right qualifications, because they do not speak Swedish. Therefore, many take stressful and low-paid temporary jobs with a lot of unpaid overwork at restaurants while studying Swedish, until they speak well enough to get a job related to their major. According to The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 23, everyone has the right to work...everyone has the right to equal pay for equal work... and everyone who works has the right to just and favorable remuneration. However, these people who suffered unequal payment, underpaid overwork and lack of breaks

need the help from social workers in coping with human rights issues.

From my point of view, the reason why my respondents are so far from human rights issues or social problems is because they also are majored in fields such as Computer science, industrial design, chemistry, etc. Since the demand for people educated within these fields is so high in the labor market, students majoring in said fields do not need to worry about their future careers.

### 6.3 Some advises for helping Chinese students who want to study and work abroad.

There are some things Chinese students should keep in mind before going abroad according to my respondents. Financial security should be guaranteed. Go abroad when mature enough, preferably after high school. Before going abroad, they need to have a target country.

As for finding a job in Sweden after graduation, they have three advices. First, get the opportunity to do your graduation design for a local company. Secondly, try to find a summer job or internship since it could increase the chances of getting a job in Sweden. Lastly, they should prepare their CV before going to an interview since a CV can highlight their advantages and can make a good first impression.

### 6.4 Suggestions for future research

I used a qualitative research method in my study and with semi-structured interviews to collect data. Although a qualitative method could collect more detailed information than a quantitative method, a qualitative method could not represent all Chinese students' opinions on their motivation to stay abroad and their study and work experience.

A recommendation for further research is to combine qualitative and quantitative research methods. A quantitative research method could get more samplings and it could help future researchers to get more comprehensive data on why students choose to study and work in foreign countries. As for the language of the questionnaire, I suggest the questionnaire be translated into their native language, to facilitate comprehension.

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# Appendix 1

## Informed consent

This study is a part of my education in the International Master program in Social Work at the University of Gothenburg, Sweden. My topic is about “Push-Pull” model for study and work motivation of Chinese immigrants who are studying and working in Sweden.

The purpose of this study is to explore why Chinese students choose to study and work in Sweden and find out what “Pushes” them from China and what “Pulls” them to study and work in Sweden. We would like first to request you whether you would like to participate in the study and we promise you that the collected data will be handled in confidentiality, will be used to write down my report and will be kept in such a way that no unauthorized person can view or access it.

The interview will be recorded as this makes it easier for us document what is said during the interview and also helps us in the continuing work with the study. During the analysis, some data may be changed so that no interviewee will be recognized and will be destroyed after we finish the study.

You have the right to decline answering any questions, or terminate the interview without giving an explanation.

You are welcome to contact our teachers or us in case you have any questions (e-mail addresses below).

My name & e-mail

Fangfei Liu (Jliufangfei@hotmail.com)

Supervisor name & e-mail

Lars Rönmark (lars.ronmark@socwork.gu.se)

Interviewee (Signature and date)

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# Appendix 2:

## Interview questions (With Maslow's needs theory)

### - Basic questions:

1. For how long have you been in Gothenburg?
2. When you start your education in Sweden?
3. What is your education level?

### - Study motivation

4. What kind of reason made you chose to come to study in Sweden? (Good air? Good weather? Safety living condition? Your families live in Sweden? Want to be more independence and get more freedom? Want to find the meaning of your life? )
5. Is it your parents' view?
6. Is it your decision?

### - Studying experience

7. Did you have any problems with communicating with your classmates and teachers when you came to the university?
8. What do you think about the culture? Because Sweden and China have totally different culture.
9. What do you think about the educational system? Because Sweden and China have totally different educational systems.

### - Work motivation

10. What kind of reasons made you decide to stay to work in Sweden? (Satisfied with air, water? Your needs, family needs you to stay? You got more attention to work in Sweden? You got more freedom in Sweden? The life in Sweden is more meaningful for you?)

### - Working experience

11. Can you tell me something about your working experience?
12. Did you meet any problems during the workdays?

### - Advice for Chinese students

13. Do you have any advice that you want to give to future Chinese students who want to go abroad?
14. Do you have any advice that you want to give to Chinese immigrants who want to find a job abroad?