FINDING THE MIDDLE: SWEDISH LEADERSHIP ADAPTATION IN THE MIDDLE KINGDOM

HOW AND WHY SWEDISH SENIOR MANAGERS ADAPT

THEIR LEADERSHIP STYLES WHEN LEADING IN CHINA

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Finding the Middle: Swedish Leadership Adaptation in the Middle Kingdom

Abstract

This report aimed to provide an understanding for *how* and *why* an expatriate leader may adapt their leadership styles when leading abroad. It was explored through a qualitative, abductive study on Swedish leaders in China. To find the modes of adaptation, the Culturally Endorsed Implicit Leadership Theories (CLT) framework, established by GLOBE, was used, defining how the twelve Swedish leaders had adapted their leadership styles in connection to the six dimensions of the framework. The report further delved into the underlying reasons behind the adaptation, grounded in the theory of Cultural Intelligence (CQ). The CQ-scales were then used to determine the presence of cultural intelligence among the interviewees, exploring it as an underlying reason for leadership style adaptation. Together, the two theories provided a new CQ-CLT framework attempting to explain not only *how* a leadership style may shift in a foreign cultural setting, but also underlying mechanisms pertaining to *why* it shifts.

Findings show that Cultural Intelligence can result in different directions of cultural leadership style adaptation, suggesting that it may be hard to define a "one path of efficient leadership style adaptation". In addition to adaptation not being linear, finding a middle ground through combining a Swedish and Chinese leadership style is an approach widely adopted. Cultural leadership style adaptation is deemed important, and increasing one's level of cultural intelligence — in regards to Cognitive and Metacognitive CQ — is an efficient competence to assess the leadership style adaptation needed in the specific cultural context.

研究摘要

该报告旨在提供对于外籍领导人如何在国外适应的一个理解。本文的研究对象是在华工作的瑞典领导人。为了理解适应模型，本文使用了由GLOBE建立的文化内隐领导理论（CLT）框架，该框架定义了12位瑞典领导人如何在此六个,维度上进行适应。并且探讨基于文化智力(CQ) 之上所适应的背后根源。进而 使用文化智力尺度确定衡量受访者文化智力的程度，并探讨其领导风格适应的根本原因。文化内隐领导理论(CLT) 和文化智力(CQ)这两种理论共同提供一个适应本文的框架，此框架不仅阐述解释在异国文化环境中领导风格的变化, 而且阐述表明与这些领导风格变化有关的潜在机制。

对于包括"文化智力可以导致文化领导风格适应的不同方向"的相关研究报告表明, 在界定一位移居中国工作的瑞典高级领导人是否是"有效适应领导风格的途径之一"是非常困难。明白适应并不是线性这个事实，所以通过结合瑞典和中国的领导风格并在其中找到一个中间地带是一个被广泛采用的方法。总而言之，文化领导风格的适应是一个极其重要的过程。在认知和元认知方面，一个领导人如何提高自身的文化智力水平，是一个有效佐证来评估领导人在特定的文化背景之下的领导风格。

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We would like to end with a quote very related to this research:

> *It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent that survives. It is the one that is the most adaptable to change.*
> *- Charles Darwin*

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DEFINITIONS

Adaptation	A change of behaviour over time when becoming accustomed to a new environment
Cross-cultural	Dealing with or offering comparison between two or more different cultures or cultural areas (Merriam-Webster, n.d.)
Expatriate	A person who is residing in a foreign country (Merriam-Webster, n.d.)
Host country	A nation where a person or organisation has settled, different from the country of origin

ABBREVIATIONS

CLT	Culturally Endorsed Implicit Leadership Theories
CQ	Cultural Intelligence (Cultural Quotient)
GLOBE	Global Leadership and Organisational Behaviour Effectiveness program

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Expatriation

The world is globalising rapidly, with digital innovation and increased travel possibilities speeding up the process. We are more than ever part of a global community of world citizens, with the expansion and increase of multinational companies and organisations, along with businesses taking an international leap being a natural stage of growth. Expatriates are no longer those who are forced to exile overseas, but those who choose to relocate to a foreign country when the opportunity arises, contract-based or indefinitely. English is by many seen as the global language of business (Neeley, 2012; Kuiper, 2007), but aside from language barriers — how can leaders adapt their leadership styles to fit a culture abroad? This report aims to analyse how Cultural Intelligence may affect leadership style adaptation, and the leaders' stance to it, focusing on Swedish senior leaders working in China. A relevant choice as China is considered a country possessing the biggest challenges for expatriate adjustment (Zhang, 2015).

1.2. Swedish Presence in China

China is becoming a playground for global and multinational corporations, developing several reforms making international business easier (World Bank, 2020). Expatriate leadership is not a new concept, and common when foreign corporations settle in a new country. The foreign leaders are often thought of as means to establish strategic control, coordination and training of employees, although the majority of employees are often sourced locally (Tsai, Carr, Qiao & Supprakit, 2019).

Sweden was the first Western country to develop diplomatic relationships with China in 1950 and has since long positioned their companies in China: from the Swedish East India Company in the 18th century (Regeringskansliet), to ABB in 1992, (ABB, n.d.) and the recent, highly successful Daniel Wellington in 2014 (Han, 2020) to name a few. Sweden has since the Chinese economic reform in 1978 been the source of many expatriates and today over 600 companies in China (Regeringskansliet, n.d.).

China has seen a scarcity in local leaders of senior experience high enough to compete with the experience of their foreign equals (Business Sweden, 2020). The increasing urban population with a higher level education (Cai, 2013), has however in recent years been leading the demand for foreign leadership to sink as the skills required for the position are now being found locally (Business Sweden, 2020). Many expatriate leaders have therefore left China, replaced by local counterparts, such as Ericsson — holding half the market for mobile systems in China — previously home to the majority of the Swedish expat population who left China in 2015 due to a reorganisation (Ericsson, n.d.).

Today, Chinese businesses such as Huawei and Alibaba are developing at a high speed, attracting skilled local labour which a few years ago would have searched for employment at the then more reputable foreign firms (Business Sweden, 2020). This is likely to cause future increase in the demand for professional, experienced employees from abroad — especially in senior positions (Team Sweden, 2020). Another recent occurrence is the rise of foreign entrepreneurship in China, i.e. non-Chinese entrepreneurs starting a business in China. These companies are supported by organisations such as Business Sweden and Nordic Innovation House, providing incubators and acceleration of Nordic start-ups in China (Tillväxtverket, 2017).

1.3. Cross-cultural Leadership Adaptation

Cross-cultural leadership is a growing phenomenon. Now more than ever, it is important to understand how individuals function differently in terms of working effectively when exposed to a culturally diverse environment (Gelfand, Erez, & Aycan, 2007; in Van Dyne, Ang, Ng, Rockstuhl, Tan & Koh, 2012). Leadership adaptation is considered a necessity for achieving effective cross-cultural leadership (Hanges & Dickson, 2004; House et al., 2004; Mustafa & Lines, 2013) and often cause a challenge for leaders working in a host country. Cross-cultural leaders must understand how culturally diverse people perceive them and their actions and then adapt their leadership style to fit with the new culture (Yukl, 2002; Dickson, Den Hartog & Mitchelson, 2003). House et al. (2004) presents a linear solution in GLOBE's Culturally Endorsed Implicit Leadership Theories (CLT) pertaining to *how* such leadership style adaptation ought to occur.

Cultural intelligence (CQ) is a relatively novel addition to leadership research, focusing on the competence of cultural adaptation, investigating the cultural knowledge possessed and how it is applied in a diverse setting (Ang, 2003). In order for leaders to successfully adapt to new cultural settings, cultural intelligence thus emerges as a good framework for leaders to understand both *why* adaptation is needed, and how oneself can apply it.

1.4. Research Purpose and Question

The purpose of this study is to provide insights as to *how* Swedish upper management leaders in China adapt their leadership styles in China, and CQ as an underlying mechanism as to *why* they adapt the way they do. Knowing not only *how* but also *why* to adapt are important aspects to address for a leader aiming to adapt their leadership style efficiently, leading to the research questions:

1. *How do Swedish leaders adapt their leadership styles when leading in China?*
2. *How is cultural intelligence related to such adaptation?*

1.5. Delimitations

The subjects studied are Swedish leaders, and the geographical scope is limited to China. China being home to two of the world's most influential cities Shanghai and Beijing in business (Business Insider, 2018) makes it an interesting host country to study.

The majority of previous studies on cross-cultural leadership has only been looking at middle managers, which is why it is value-adding to study the senior managers. The study is also limited to only interviewing the leaders themselves and not their employees, since the purpose is to analyse the leaders' own perceptions of their leadership style adaptation. Moreover, focus has been put on looking at the leaders' leadership style adaptation specifically and not their overall cultural adaptation, which has been reflected throughout the paper.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Cultural Leadership Styles

The two largest and most referenced studies within cross-cultural research are the works by Hofstede and Global Leadership and Organisational Behaviour Effectiveness program (GLOBE). Hofstede opened up for cross-cultural research in international business (Tung & Verbeke, 2010), defining cultural dimensions explaining behaviour within organisations. GLOBE is more recent (2004); through building upon the dimensions established by Hofstede it is recognised as holding the greatest collection of data within cross-cultural research. GLOBE produced a framework of Culturally Endorsed Implicit Leadership Theories (CLT), based on the cultural dimensions and the framework of implicit Leadership Theories produced by Lord and Maher (1991, in House et al., 2004). The CLT framework identifies six global leadership dimensions together constituting a leader's behaviour.

The CLT-dimensions are measured by the level they have been *culturally endorsed* in the study — "expected, accepted and effective" (House et al., 2004), and they thus vary by culture. Through a questionnaire containing 112 leader attributes data was collected from 17000 managers to find the culturally endorsed leadership styles of different cultures. The CLT-dimensions are, in order; (1) **Charismatic/Value-based leadership**, (2) **Team-oriented leadership**, (3) **Participative leadership**, (4) **Humane-oriented leadership**, (5) **Autonomous leadership**, and (6) **Self-protective leadership**. These dimensions are in this report discussed as *leadership styles*: representing individual components of a whole leadership. See Appendix 9.1.1. for the primary leadership dimensions they are based on.

2.1.1. Swedish Leadership Styles

Swedish leaders are average in both charismatic/value-based leadership and team-oriented leadership. Endorsed leadership styles are more autonomous and participative, but less humane-oriented and Sweden is among the world's lowest in self-protective leadership (House, Dorfman, Javidan, Hanges & Sully De Luque, 2014).

Holmberg and Åkerblom (2006) problematise the GLOBE results, stating that within-country and between-country analyses emphasise different views. E.g. charismatic/value-based leadership styles are considered highly important, but in relation to other countries Sweden landed on an average. Holmberg and Åkerblom however do find the GLOBE results to be intriguing evidence for universally endorsed aspects of leadership, speaking for CLT's validity, claiming a paradoxical and locally configured version of endorsed leadership styles can be parallelly valid.

2.1.2. Chinese Leadership Styles

According to GLOBE, Chinese leadership scores especially high on humane-oriented, autonomous, and self-protective leadership dimensions, and low on charismatic/value-based, team-oriented and participative leadership (House et al., 2014).

Within-country charismatic/value-based is highly endorsed, while the self-protective leadership dimension is the least endorsed by Chinese leaders, but they are scored below and above average respectively when compared to other countries (Fu, Wu & Yang, 2007) — further motivating Holmberg and Åkerblom's (2006) statement in regards to within-country and between-country differences.

See Appendix 9.2.1. for the two countries' divergences from the GLOBE average, picturing the differences between their endorsed leadership styles.

2.1.3. Concluding Remarks

Although researchers within the last decade use GLOBE 2004 data, and CLT-dimensions are deemed effective in measuring cross-cultural leadership effectiveness (Moor, 2018), Tung and Verbeke (2010) are questioning the stability over time of the dimensional scores presented by GLOBE. They state that old measurements of cultural dimensions should not be assumed appropriate in a research project merely on the basis of "other scholars use this measurement too" (Tung & Verbeke, 2010). Tung and Verbeke (2010) however state that no complementaries to the works of Hofstede or GLOBE exist, and that the dimensions are still valuable and may be effectively utilised in studies if adding external concepts or theories.

The authors of this study therefore concluded to not see the measurements of 2004 as a strict benchmark of successful adaptation and instead use the defined CLT-dimensions

and measurements as a generalisable framework of exploring adaptation in the participants' leadership styles. The authors still see that the data provided by GLOBE is the most substantial data on the topic and therefore relevant as a basis for discussing cultural leadership behaviours.

2.2. Cross-cultural Adaptation

2.2.1. The Importance of Adaptation

Although several researchers have used GLOBE's quantitative study for insights into the connection between leadership and culture, its data are formed of leaders leading in their native countries, thereby not considering Swedish leaders in culturally diverse environments. Hanges and Dickson (2004) suggest cross-cultural top management leaders should lead in manners consistent with societal leadership expectations, based on a positive correlation found between the alignment of the nation's culture with the top management behaviours and the organisational success (House et al., 2004). While GLOBE's CLT framework suggests that leaders need to adjust their leadership behaviour to suit host country conditions (House et al., 2014), it does not take into consideration globally functioning organisations where the cultural diversity may not be homogenous among employees. Thus, the authors find it relevant to question the ordination by GLOBE, and look into how the mode of leadership adaptation can be explained in a more complex manner.

Previous research on leadership style adaptation in relation to CLT discusses the importance for a leader to align personal values with followers' cultural values (Mustafa & Lines, 2013; Lee, Scandura & Sharif, 2014), but do not discuss or identify leadership styles based on those values. Tsai et al. (2019) also mention that many studies have examined how expatriates adjust in terms of work and life, neglecting leadership style adjustments. Their study aims to evaluate how and why such leadership adjustments happen, but the focus lies on whether it is the leaders or the employees who are adjusting their behaviours, rather than going into details on what kind of adaptations occur. Zhang (2015) has covered several parts of language's effect on expatriate adaptation, but not in detail looked at its effect on leadership style adaptation.

Through analysing 40 years of expatriate research, Kraimer et al. (2016) have looked into expatriate adjustment. Black (1990, in Kraimer et al., 2016) developed a highly influential three-factor model of expatriate adjustment: work adjustment, general adjustment to the culture and adjustment to interactions with host country nationals. The model states that work adjustment is positively related to job performance (Kraimer et al., 2016), and key findings from a meta-analysis on the model suggest that there are certain skills and competencies related to successful adjustment. In addition, several general and work/role adjustment factors are mentioned, making the model largely applicable to overall factors of adjustment, but less so in regards to the adaptation of

individuals' leadership styles. Mol, Born, Willemsen and Van der Molen (2005, in Kraimer et al., 2016) analysed 30 primary studies on the Big Five personality traits finding it did not have any major effects on adaptation, something that could be explained by the questions of the Big Five not being culturally approachable. Kraimer et al. (2016) instead brings in Cultural Intelligence (CQ) as a more valid predictor of adaptation, stating "CQ has unique explanatory power in predicting […] cultural adaptation", but are also emphasising the need for further empirical studies on the subject.

2.2.2. The Competence Behind Adaptation

DuBrin (2010) notes the importance of international experience for a leader to increase their understanding of other cultures. But the main research on cross-cultural adaptation among expatriate leaders has been researched in terms of traits, values, skills, or adaptation on a broader spectrum. The authors have not found research describing leadership style adaptation as a result of cross-cultural competence, such as the CQ framework, although the CQ concept is prevalent as an advantageous competence in the contemporary discussion on global leadership.

CQ explains a person's "adaptability to diversity and cross-cultural interactions" (Earley & Ang, 2003; Van Dyne, Ang & Koh, 2008). It explores the notion of cultural intelligence as a competence to develop in order to improve one's ability to function in a culturally diverse setting. A highly valuable competence for a leader in a cross-cultural context.

To assess individuals' CQ, the CQ-scales were developed and assessed in works by Van Dyne et al. (2008) and Van Dyne et al. (2012), based on the previous work by Earl and Ang (2003): (1) **Behavioural CQ**: the ability of *verbal* and *non-verbal behaviour* as well as *speech acts* when interacting with culturally diverse individuals; (2) **Motivational CQ**: the *intrinsic-* and *extrinsic interest*, as well as *self-efficacy to adjust*, providing satisfaction from and confidence oneself in intercultural interactions; (3) **Cognitive CQ**: the individual's *culture-general* and *context specific knowledge*; and (4) **Metacognitive CQ**: the strategy the individual forms when applying the cultural knowledge, based on the abilities of *planning*, *awareness*, and *checking* (Van Dyne et al., 2008).

Subdimensions and descriptions are found in Appendix 9.1.2..

Lots of research presents CQ as a factor of cross-cultural leadership effectiveness (Van Dyne, Ang & Tan, 2019). Quantitative studies have found limited correlation between authoritarian, democratic and laissez-faire leadership styles and CQ (Eken, Ozturgut & Craven, 2014), and adaptive cross-cultural management skills positively correlated to metacognition (Van Dyne et al., 2019). Most qualitative studies on CQ and adaptation

look at general adaptation to a new cultural environment rather than adaptation of leadership styles in specific. They also tend to isolate scales (Van Dyne et al., 2019).

The reason for the additional theories on Cultural Intelligence was discovery of emerging themes — relating to self-awareness, cultural awareness, motivation and communication — brought up by the interviewees discussing the reasons for their adaptation. This sparked an interest in researching underlying reasons of which CQ was deemed appropriate. *Behavioural CQ* was omitted since such behaviours were not expanded on in interviews.

2.3. Theoretical Framework

The words 'adjusting' and 'adapting' are being used interchangeably in the literature. The authors are in the continuing text using the word 'adaptation', in terms of leaders having adapted their leadership style to the cultural situation.

> **Adaptation**: A change of behaviour over time when becoming accustomed to a new environment

DuBrin (2010) states that a leader needs flexibility in one's skill set along with ability, in order to be an effective leader: when facing a new situation or culture, leaders need to be able to assess it, develop the leadership role necessary for the situation and internalise it — finding *how* and *why* to adapt.

2.3.1. Leadership Style Adaptation and Adaptational Reasons

The CLT-dimensions are recommended to be used at an aggregated level of analysis (Hanges & Dickson, 2004), why they in combination with the CQ-scales help provide a basis to evaluate the individual adaptation when leading in a host country, and the reasons behind the adaptation. The authors have thus developed a framework restructuring the CLT-dimensions and CQ-scales into two categories: (1) Adaptation and (2) Underlying Adaptational Reasons.

In terms of **Adaptation***,* the authors assess *how* the participants have adapted their leadership styles in terms of the six CLT-dimensions defined by House et al. (2014; Table 1). *Why* the leaders may have adapted their leadership styles is analysed through looking at **Underlying Adaptational Reasons**, and the participant leaders' cultural intelligence. A higher CQ is found to respond to more efficient adaptation (Van Dyne et al., 2008). The CQ-scales may therefore be able to determine underlying reasons of adaptation: the cultural knowledge and the application of said knowledge. *Metacognitive CQ* is likely the most important CQ-scale in terms of adaptation as it reflects cultural consciousness, awareness and learning. The participants' displaying of metacognitive CQ thus ought to clearly explain their behavioural choices from a basis

of *cognitive CQ*. Lastly, *motivational CQ* may affect metacognitive CQ as it shows the leaders' interest and confidence in adapting to cross-cultural situations, as presented in Figure 2.
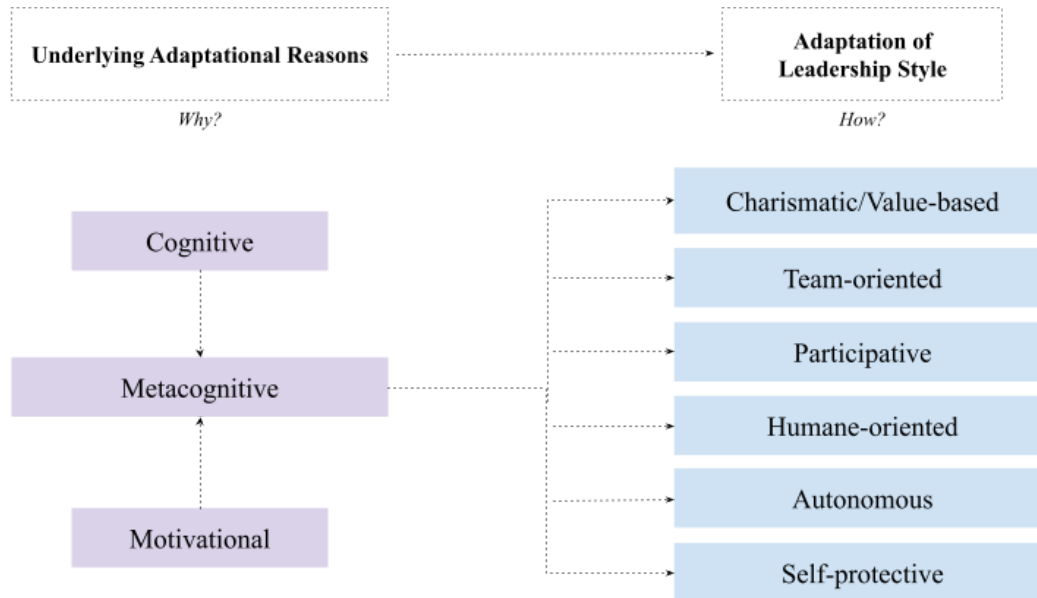
Figure 2: Theoretical Framework

Although the choice of framework could limit data interpretation and analysis, this is in part avoided as the framework emerged after the data presentation. The framework does also not assess the employees or the organisational culture of the companies, proven to affect leadership behaviour (Kraimer et al., 2016), which could create some distortion in the results.

The theories are deemed compatible since one provides a tool for evaluating the *competence of adaptation* in a culturally diverse situation (CQ) and the other offers a method of exploring cross-cultural *adaptational direction* (GLOBE). The theoretical framework may thus contribute to research through investigating whether a leader's CQ may be a mechanism of leadership style adaptation.

2.4. Research Gap

Many existing studies look at *how* leaders adapt in a wider cross-cultural setting, very few explore *why*. To the authors' knowledge no research on cross-cultural leadership style adaptation has been performed looking at adaptation in the light of the CLT-dimensions and CQ-scales as a matter of explaining the reasons behind the adaptation. Tsai et al. (2019) even state that although CLTs emphasise the necessity of adjusting leadership approaches, empirical research of such adaptation is non-existent. Tung and Verbeke (2010) even suggests CQ to be a relevant theory to add to cultural

dimension frameworks (such as CLT), and Kraimer et al. (2016) further emphasises that CQ is a valid method for analysing the competence of cultural adjustment. CQ has also mainly been assessed through quantitative self-assessments, critiqued for their validity (Van Dyne et al., 2019) why a qualitative abductive approach may add value to previous results.

There is also a largely empirical gap as many current studies tend to mainly focus on male expatriate leaders. Although this may be caused by a larger number of leading male expatriates (Speranza, 2017) the scarcity of female participants in studies on cross-cultural leadership leads to a lacking picture on the actual adaptation processes. This study ensures a relatively gender-equal set of interviewees in order to capture the female perspective, and somewhat balance existing research.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Method of Research

3.1.1. Qualitative Study

A qualitative research method was adopted, enabling a deeper understanding of the leaders' experiences (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2008; Conger, 1998). The study used an abductive research approach, exploring existing theories through data collection and analysis. An abductive study enables a deeper exploration of the research question, benefitting from the advantages of both deductive and inductive approaches (Suddaby, 2006; Conaty, 2021). With limited interview subjects, the aim was to provide intensive research and valuable insights rather than generalisable data.

The study lies in the positivist paradigm where the authors, through gaining insights from research, tested theories to establish laws to predict the social reality of Swedish cross-cultural leadership styles in China. The focus was therefore on observations rather than theories, generating more objective findings (Park, Konge & Artino, 2020). A positivist approach allows for predictions about the social world which is suitable for the study's purpose as it seeks to understand how and why leaders adapt and the role of CQ (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

3.1.2. Multiple Case Study

With many methods of doing research, Yin (2008) identifies three key factors to consider when choosing a research method:

1. The type of research question
2. The amount of control one has over occurring events
3. Whether the setting is contemporary or historical

Considering the research dealt with the question of 'how', and examined a contemporary phenomenon of which occurring events could not be controlled, Yin (2008) suggests a case study; a widely used research design method in business research (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). It is particularly suitable in abductive studies (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2008) as the abductive approach aids a deeper interaction between authors and empirical data (Conaty, 2021). Cases were jointly accounted for to explore a general phenomenon, through a multiple case study (Bryman, Bell & Harley, 2018). Multiple case studies are used to understand the similarities and differences between the cases (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Stake, 1995). The results are considered more convincing as they are grounded on several empirical evidence and thus regarded as more robust and reliable (Herriott & Firestone, 1983; Baxter & Jack, 2008). The multiple case approach hence allowed for a wider exploration of the research question (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007), making it a suitable approach for this study.

3.2. Method of Data Collection

3.2.1. Participant Selection and Sampling

The selection of cases is the most crucial decision in the methodology (Dubois & Araujo, 2007); mainly based on the incentive to learn (Stake, 1995), why the authors chose cases where the expected learning was the greatest (Bryman et al., 2018). The subjects were found using different methods of purposive theoretical case sampling (Bryman & Bell, 2011) based on following criteria:

- Swedish
- Senior manager
- Leading in China/Having lead in China within the past decade
- Minimum two years executive leading experience in China
- Minimum 50% of Chinese subordinates

The authors abductively finalised the criterias throughout the span of the interviews. With only a limited number of Swedish senior leaders' in China, the criteria were broadened to enable sufficient empirical data. Although a more diverse set of interviewees could cause a negative implication on finding general insights, it allowed for the discovery of more unique and in-depth findings.

For expatriates, it usually takes six to twelve months to start getting accustomed to a new culture, which is why the criteria of minimum two years of recent leading experience in China was chosen (Marx, 1999). The criteria for leaders to have led in China within the past decade was made to ensure cultural and timely relevance in their responses. The number of Chinese subordinates was established as a criteria to ensure cultural immersion.

In practice, the sampling was initiated through interviewing a representative of the Swedish Chamber of Commerce in China who provided contact details to four participants. Three of the contacted participants recommended four additional subjects of which three responded. These methods are often used for sampling rare populations (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981): a chain-referral method called *snowball sampling*. This targeted snowball technique is an effective sampling method, although it risks creating bias in the sample population as it is not collected non-randomisably (Heckathorn, 2011). Since the snowball sampling was collected through different channels, bias ought to be less eminent. Five subjects were found through LinkedIn searches, based on mentioned criteria. All contact was initiated by the authors, through email, WeChat or LinkedIn (Appendix 9.4.).

Effort was made to create a gender-balanced study since the authors have found previous studies to lack female participants. With a higher response rate of women, through contacting 20 people, five men and seven women chose to participate. Twelve participants aligns with the minimum sample size recommended for qualitative studies (Fugard & Potts, 2015; Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). Themes and responses were repeated in initial interviews, indicating that some theoretical saturation was reached early on (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

3.2.1. Semi-structured Interviews

An interview guide was used for all interviews and prepared in a semi-structured manner, combining specific and open questions (Appendix 9.5.). The semi-structured method is preferred in qualitative research (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009; Edmondson & McManus, 2007) and appropriate for studies addressing somewhat complex and sensitive topics — fitting as the study examined the self-reflections and personal experiences of the interviewees. Although semi-structured interviews reduce comparability (Bryman et al., 2018), it allows for deeper insights and individualised follow-up questions particularly compatible with an abductive study and difficult to achieve through standardised questions (Ahrne & Svensson, 2011). During all but three interviews, two interviewers were present; one asking the questions and one taking notes. Multiple interviewers created a more informal atmosphere and made the interviewees feel more relaxed, thus generating better circumstances to obtain more elaborated answers (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The interviews were conducted as video-calls in the Swedish language, and then translated to English. Although translations may lead to loss or unwanted alteration of data, the same risk is faced when communicating in a foreign language (Van Nes, Abma, Jonsson & Deeg, 2010) why the choice of interview language was deemed appropriate. The authors' own Chinese language-knowledge further provided for an understanding of Chinese phrases.

3.3. Method of Data Analysis

In a qualitative method, data collection and analysis are often done in parallel (Terre Blanche et al., 1999) through an *iterative* process (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The method of data analysis was *thematic* to find emerging themes from data. Although it can lead to a lack of coherence and consistency, its flexibility allows for deeper and unanticipated findings (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It is thus suitable in a multiple case study as it allows for understanding the different perspectives of cases, identifying similarities and differences, resulting in emergent insights (Braun & Clarke, 2006; King, 2004).

The data collected was organised in an Excel file (see sample in Appendix 9.1.5.). Although interview notes were taken during interviews, all interviews were later transcribed through listening to interview recordings 2-4 times and at least once by each author, which allowed for "familiarisation and immersion" of the data; important for the later analysis (Terre Blanche et al., 1999). An initial coding was made by the authors respectively to find interesting features within the data, then compared between the authors and organised into emerging themes that were further refined — resulting in the final four themes of *motivation*, *communication*, *cultural awareness* and *self-awareness*. These were considered underlying reasons for leadership style adaptation. These findings also called for further research, adding additional theories of Cultural Intelligence. See Figure 3 for the abductive research process.
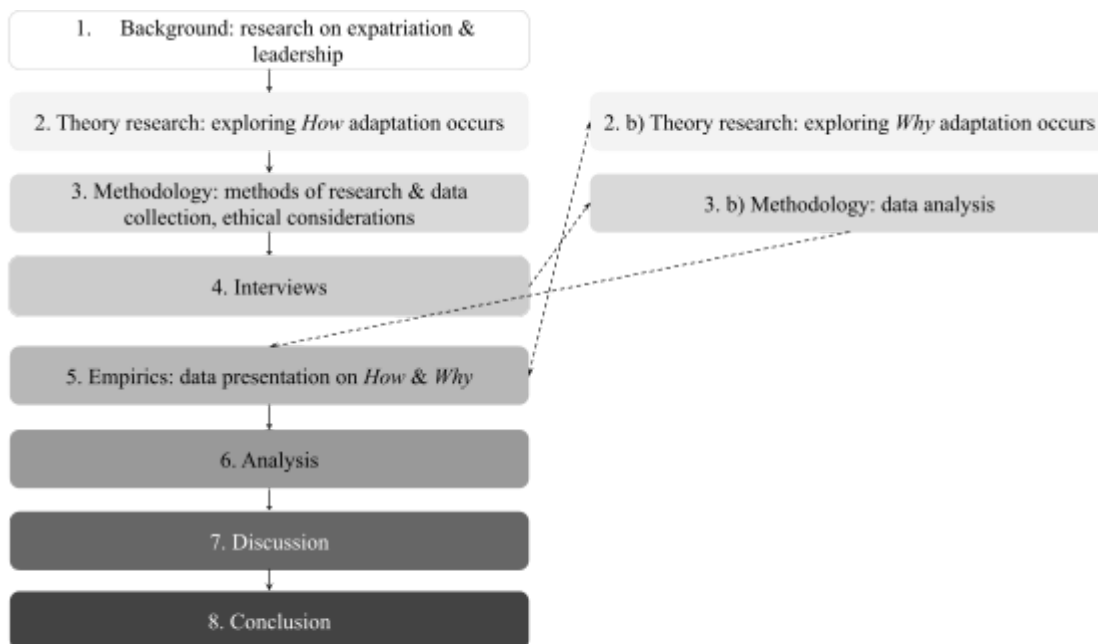
Figure 3: Methodological process

The data was first organised into *factual data*: such as gender, decade of birth, time in China, company origin and location (Appendix 9.1.3.). It was then coded and organised into: (1) two *first-order* perspectives on leadership style: leadership style adaptation, and its underlying reasons; (2) ten *second-order themes*: the six CLT-dimensions and the four emerging themes; and (3) multiple *first-order constructs* holding the primary leadership dimensions provided by GLOBE (House et al., 2004) (Appendix 9.1.1.), as well as the first-order constructs creating the four themes. All presented in Figure 4.
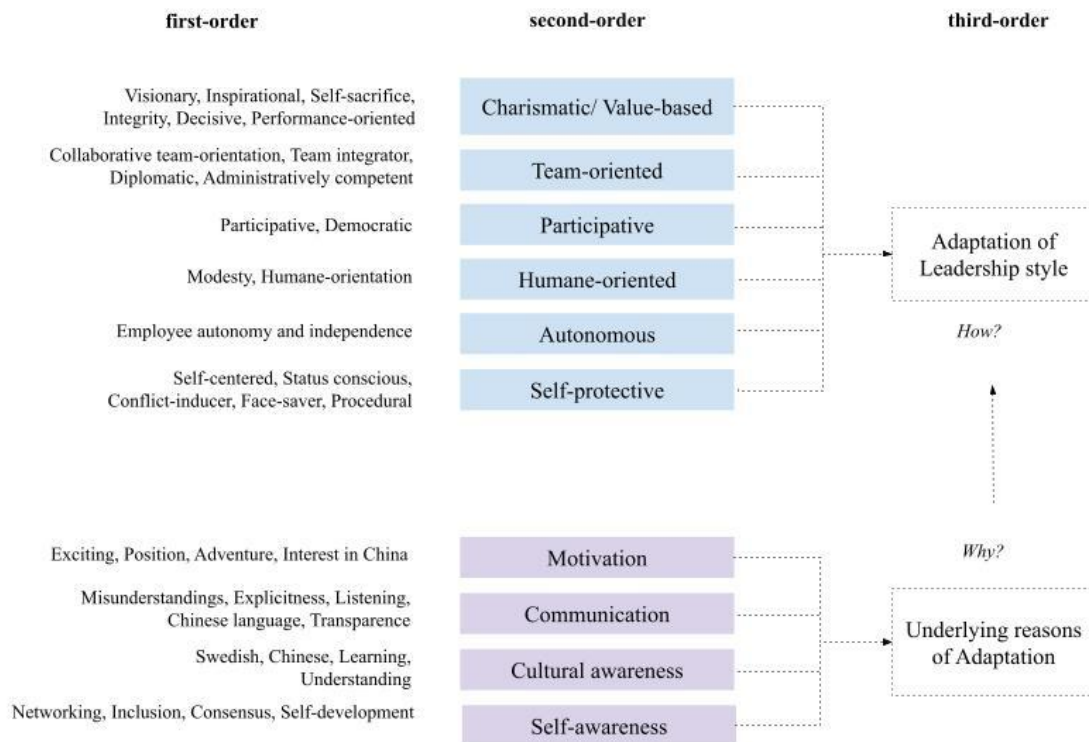
Figure 4: Thematic Framework

The six constructs of adaptation are used to see whether the use of leadership style/behavioural CQ has adapted in terms of increased or decreased, or if the leader's behaviour has remained neutral.

3.4. Quality Considerations

3.4.1. Reliability

In a qualitative study it is hard to achieve *external reliability* as it is "impossible to 'freeze' a social setting" and create replicable studies in the same circumstances as the initial study (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982). However, the level of replicability is increased due to the transparency of the research process in the form of clear descriptions and illustrations.

The *internal reliability* is perceived high. Both authors were present in most interviews, to observe and interpret the subjects' responses, and a joint discussion was made directly after each interview to better achieve inter-observer consistency. Subsequently, an individual coding was made, and in case of the authors having opposing views, the authors discussed them thoroughly to reach conformity. However, the study being non-interpretivist, there is always a possibility of bias based on the authors' own experiences (Elliot & Timulak, 2005).

3.4.2. Validity

With the research method being a multiple case study, the *external validity* of the study is high, however, the purposive sampling approach means the results can only be generalisable to Swedish senior leaders leading in China. Due to the qualitative nature of the study, a smaller data sample was used which diminishes the level of external validity (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982). However, albeit the small set of interviewees, the ones chosen constituted for a large part of all Swedish senior leaders in China, making them a representative sample. Moreover, through explicit descriptions of the methodology the level of transferability was improved, increasing the external validity. The authors deemed the *internal validity* of the study to be of lower level since there could be several additional explanatory factors as to why leaders adapt. This was also emphasised by the authors in the phenomenon of cultural intelligence as a possible mechanism of leadership style adaptation, rather than just providing a collectively exhaustive explanation.

3.5. Reflexive Considerations

The authors have considered the three forms of reflexivity within management research, as defined by Johnson and Duberley (Bryman & Bell, 2011) and due to the positivist nature aimed for *methodological reflexivity*. The intention has been to remain as neutral as possible, with possible implications addressed below:

The authors' interest in China, based both on social and work experience, has benefitted the build of rapport with interviewees and allowed for understanding the meaning behind certain Chinese expressions mentioned in interviews. The authors have been able to relate to the culture, understand differences and communication, values and work culture. Albeit possibly influencing the authors' interpretation and analysis, it is a valuable asset in this study. Citations were translated from Swedish to English, which in some cases left the authors to interpret the meaning of words and expressions with no obvious translation. Effort has been made to research the most common translations of such wordings to ensure minimal mitigation with the results.

Due to COVID-19, video-calls were chosen over regular phone calls or writing, to add a communicational dimension. To avoid unaware distortion of data, the authors have reviewed each other's participation in this report and discussed their implications.

Furthermore, as with all abductive studies, the authors could have benefitted from further utilising the iterative process of an abductive approach for even deeper emergent findings.

The subjects having lived in China for a longer period of time might also remember less of their leadership back in Sweden, which constitutes a potential distortion in the data.

3.6. Ethical Considerations

The authors considered the ethical principles presented by Diener and Crandall (Bryman & Bell, 2011), and ensured there was no harm to participants, lack of informed consent, invasion of privacy or deception. Data-collection, storage and removal of data was performed in accordance with GDPR, the Stockholm School of Economics regulations, and followed the authors' own ethical standpoints — thus involving both legal and ethical considerations.

Written and oral consent was given by all participants, purpose and nature were explained, participation was voluntary, and signed consent forms were collected (Appendix 9.3.-5.) explaining utilisation, collection and deletion of data (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Effort was made to protect the anonymity of the participants; enclosing no personal attributes other than gender and decade of birth, and using pseudonyms. Sensitive data was not transcribed, collected information was kept to a minimum, and no private information was sought (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Only the organisations' origins are enclosed why the companies' identities can be considered concealed (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

4. EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

4.1. Adaptation of Leadership Styles

The primary aim of the study was not to define the leaders' personal leadership style based on the 6 leadership dimensions. The focus lay on their *adaptation*, in what manner they have adapted their leadership. A table showing the adaptational patterns of each individual can be seen in Appendix 9.1.5..

I. Charismatic/Value-based

Charismatic/value-based leadership was generally noted as "more important" when being a foreign leader.

> *"In China, the show is important for a leader. I have never before given as many speeches as I do here." [Bella]*

The two who expressed being less charismatic and visionary explained this as the result of leaders above/below them being charismatic and the need thus less.

This is however a more surprising finding as the adaptation is not in line with the GLOBE-defined Swedish leadership style and even opposite to the Chinese leadership style.

II. Team-oriented

The majority of the leaders have expressed the need to work harder to achieve effective teamwork, due to it not being a common practice in China.

> *"I have had to put more effort into team-orientation [in China]. The Chinese school system is built on individualism." [Daniel]*

Several leaders expressed establishing team-oriented training sessions and/or practices to increase their employees' teamwork capabilities. One entrepreneur even said she did not accept non-team-oriented behaviour among her employees, agreeing with several other leaders that teamwork is the path to a successful business.

Although many leaders emphasised teamwork as a necessity for their work, this also goes against the GLOBE-defined preferred leadership practices of China.

III. Participative

Most leaders expressed being less participative in China, an adaptation in line with the GLOBE findings. Stating the more hierarchical nature of the country being the reason, the majority of the interviewees felt that they were not able to execute this style as much as they would have wanted.

> *"In China I am more authoritarian and I make more decisions, but I try to engage employees." [Joakim]*

One leader expressed that while there is always need for consensus, there may also be a need for non-participative leadership decisions, bearing on trust for one's leaders to make the correct decision. Another stated the language barrier affects the possibility to involve subordinates in decisions.

IV. Humane-oriented

GLOBE has found humane-orientation among leaders to be of comparatively high importance in China, and below average importance in Sweden. Most leaders described their leadership style to be very humane-oriented in general and not having increased it in China.

> *"I am very people-oriented and caring, I believe that is how my employees would describe me."* [Greta]

Two leaders had decreased their humane-oriented leadership style; one stated they focused more on shareholder value and the other stated they are willing to listen but that it is hard to make employees open up emotionally in China.

Several leaders expressed that "we're all human", emphasising that employees, whether Chinese or Swedish, have the same needs to be seen and heard, and as a leader this is one important responsibility, even a prerequisite of leadership.

> *"People are people, we all want to be seen and appreciated — regardless of nationality."* [Anna]

> *"In order to be a good leader, one needs to love people."* [Karl]

V. Autonomous

Like in the case with team-oriented leadership, a high majority of the leaders found themselves having to put more effort into establishing autonomous behaviour among their employees. Many expressed a need to be explicit about what has to be done and always having to follow up for things to get done.

> *"My biggest challenge has been to create responsible, independent managers."* [Bella]

In contrast to team-orientation however, autonomous leadership is something that is higher rated in China than in Sweden (in GLOBE), and both countries are scored above average.

VI. Self-protective

This category provided a wide range of responses. Whilst some stated that this is something they do not endorse, others said they had to develop self-protective strategies in order to maintain respect from their subordinates.

> *"By showing that it is okay to lose face, my employees have realised they do not need to save face in front of me."* [Anna]

This is the CLT-dimension where Chinese and Swedish leadership preferences as defined by GLOBE differ the most (Appendix 9.2.1.), why the varied responses may be less of a surprise. Two leaders stated they were less self-protective in China in order to prove a point and reduce their employees' fear of losing face. Four leaders expressed

having changed to become more self-protective saying it is a necessity in the Chinese culture, but also trying to reduce the stigma of losing face.

"It is important not to underestimate the importance of 'guanxi' [social networks and relationships] and losing face in the Chinese culture. In my company, we try to remove those cultural barriers." [Greta]

4.2. Underlying Reasons of Adaptation

Several interviewees were in-depth reflecting over underlying reasons behind their adaptation. Those reasons were sorted into the four categories of Motivation, Communication, Cultural Awareness and Self-Awareness, and are presented below.

I. Motivation

In terms of motivation, almost all subjects stated that moving to China felt exciting and as an adventure.

"It felt exciting to get to know a new culture and lead in a new market." [Isak]

A few interviewees further expressed satisfaction with their improved position and status. Others had taken a lower position (hierarchically) and emphasised their cultural interest in China. Several expressed the wish to understand Chinese culture:

"I wanted to understand China, understand that it is possible to be and act differently than what we [Swedes] are used to." [Anna]

II. Communication

Many leaders had experienced misunderstandings in communication. The most common misunderstandings were related to the meaning of 'yes' and 'no'.

"There are different ways of saying 'yes'. A Swedish Yes is a definite yes, but in China a Yes is equivocal." [Filippa]

"Once I said 'this is difficult, we need to look this up further before getting back to you' and my employees took it as a 'no' — it took me six months to understand why." [Bella]

A solution to misunderstandings several leaders mentioned was to *increase explicitness, follow-ups* and to *solicit confirmation*.

Only one of the interviewed leaders, an entrepreneur, was able to speak Chinese with work-proficiency. The reasons given for not knowing the language were temporary employment, negligible need when living in an international city, lack of time and the

language simply being too difficult to learn. Several respondents however expressed a wish to acquire the language stating it would make their leadership a lot easier, and one respondent said that it feels "mafan" (troublesome) for Chinese to have to speak English because of one person only. To overcome this issue, some leaders explained having local assistants helping them to convey their messages to, as well as to solicit feedback from, their employees in the local tongue.

III. Cultural awareness

The leaders expressed different amounts of cultural knowledge. The hierarchical culture was emphasised by many, and that employees were used to very direct instructions.

> *"In China, a senior manager is expected to be almighty, and in Sweden we trust that the employees know more about their work than the boss. There is a wide discrepancy between the two cultures." [Anna]*

> *"In China, people prefer to get directions from their boss, and they are not as independent [as Swedish employees]." [Filippa]*

Other respondents working for Swedish corporations referred to the companies' values, visions and procedures rather than referring to their personal stances in regards to their leaderships. This made it hard to localise actual cultural awareness as well as self-awareness.

IV. Self-awareness

Several leaders emphasised trying to develop a combination of a Swedish and Chinese leadership style, such as being transparent with decisions and wanting consensus in decision making. Some leaders also explained being less inclined to act in a manner that would risk them losing face.

> *"A fully Swedish leadership style does not work in China, it has to be adapted. I take positive things from the Swedish leadership style and emphasise it in a Chinese environment." [Karl]*

> *"I am not as transparent in China when it comes to admitting to mistakes - which is due to it being less accepted to fail here." [Hanna]*

They also discussed implementing physical changes to the workplace, such as open-plan solutions and removed doors, to show openness and improve inclusion. Other leaders emphasised that they respected the need their employees felt to keep the distance from their superiors and therefore did not barge in on employee conversations.

The interviewees were also asked what they would like to develop in regards to their leadership in China, stating they wished to learn more about the Chinese culture and language; that they would like to develop more patience, and listening skills; to become better at networking and organisational politics:

> *"I should have been better at networking. It is a highly important skill to have and to build when in a higher-level position in China." [Camilla]*

Finally, three leaders reported not knowing what to develop and referred to their employees as better suited to answer that question.

4.3. Underlying Mechanism of Adaptation

Based on the findings within leaders' *reasons to adapt*, further theoretical research led the authors to add the theory of Cultural Intelligence as explained in the theoretical framework. The four identified themes were sorted according to the four CQ-scales. This was made by connecting the first-order constructs to the subdimensions of CQ. With no data being connected to the *behavioural CQ*, this scale was omitted. Communication, cultural and self-awareness all provided data in line with *cognitive* and *metacognitive CQ*, at different degrees as shown in Figure 5.

Those expressing more self-awareness in terms of knowing what skills to develop in the cultural setting they are in, and those who know how to alter their way of communicating to better be understood by their employees all express levels of *metacognitive CQ*. The ability to present the cultural environment and differences between Chinese and Swedish culture and communication shows *cognitive CQ*.
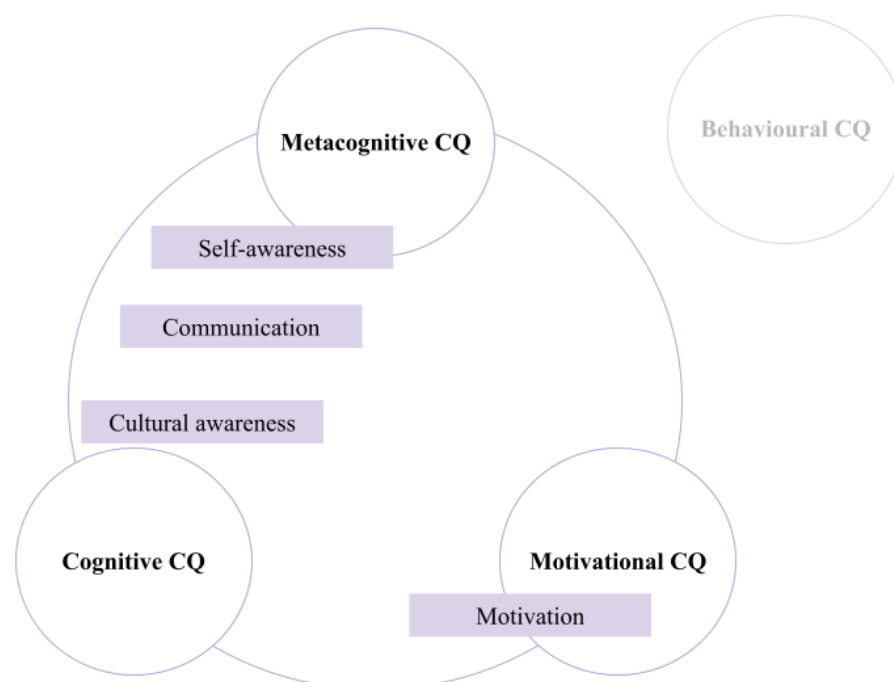

Figure 5: Cultural Intelligence as an underlying mechanism behind adaptation

4.4. Further Observations

Two interviewees reported that the expectations of them, being foreigners, were so different that it made their employees more understanding of their leadership being different.

> *"As a foreigner, I have had no expectations of who I should be as a leader, so I have been able to freely create my own leadership."* [Bella]

Several leaders also stated that they themselves do not change or adapt their leadership styles, suggesting that a good leader is a good leader regardless of cultural setting.

> *"If your leadership style involves wanting consensus, but where your employees can accept a direct leadership style when needed — then you have succeeded as a leader. This balance is necessary anywhere in the world."* [Karl]

5. ANALYSIS

5.1. Finding the Middle: *How* to Adapt

All twelve leaders expressed that when leading in China they use a combined Swedish and Chinese leadership approach. This can be confirmed by how they all in some CLT-dimensions adapted their leadership styles to fit their Chinese employees better, e.g. exercising a *less participative leadership*, and in some dimensions emphasised their Swedish leadership style, such as *increasing team-orientation*. The leaders were **finding a middle ground**.

With most leaders expressing doing *more of team-oriented leadership*, this is no surprise as they may have the need to emphasise such practices further and train their employees in this manner as it is not something as implemented in China.

The *less participative leadership* was in interviews reasoned by a will to create consensus and hear opinions, but employees being reluctant to express themselves out of a fear of losing their job or position. In order to reduce their employees' feelings of discomfort when soliciting opinions, several leaders reduced their participative behaviours but felt they were likely still more participative, involving and consensus-seeking than their Chinese peers.

That *humane-oriented leadership* by many leaders is regarded as important in all leadership situations imply that the leaders themselves prior to leading China held a high level of humane-orientation. This is supported by the motivational CQ-scale stating that intrinsic interest is a prerequisite for cultural adaptation.

The emphasis on *increased autonomous leadership* is not surprising as most leaders mention trying to decrease the hierarchical expectation of themselves as leaders to make all decisions, it is also in line with GLOBE data placing China high on autonomous leadership.

The result of most leaders having *increased their charismatic/value-based leadership style* was the most surprising initially, as this was neither in line with a Swedish endorsed leadership style, and definitely not in line with a Chinese. However, interviewees stated that this was part of being more explicit, something by several leaders deemed highly important when communicating with their employees. Through increased charismatic and visionary behaviour, they explained being able to convey their values and beliefs and thereby overcome cultural barriers. Furthermore, as charismatic/value-based leadership is deemed consistently linked to the firm's competitive performance, an increase in this leadership style could also be linked to the headquarters' high expectations of their expatriate leaders.

The responses above, along with the further findings showing that the expectations of a foreign leader are very different from that of a local, or even non-existent, indicate that GLOBE's recommendation to linearly adapt one's leadership style to that of the host country's culture is insufficient as employees may have different expectations.

GLOBE also does not take the organisational structure into account. Some leaders expressed a leadership capability already being manifested enough by other leaders (i.e. charismatic/value-based), thus suggesting that leaders together rather than individually may fill the role endorsed by their subordinates.

5.2. Underlying Mechanism of Adaptation: *Why* Adapt?

After examining *how* the leaders have adapted their leadership styles through finding a middle ground, it becomes relevant to explore how they are able to maintain their own leadership style whilst still catering to the needs and expectations of their Chinese employees: what is an underlying mechanism of this adaptation?

Some of the leaders have examined their leadership styles thoroughly, choosing which Swedish styles they want to maintain and which Chinese styles they feel the need or wish to incorporate. They have done so through actively reflecting on the environment they are in and who they themselves are in this environment, exercising metacognitive *awareness*. They have assessed the ways they could become the leader needed in the situation, and continuously over time have elicited feedback as to whether they are on the right track or not, metacognitively *checking*, learning from their mistakes to create the leadership needed. Several leaders have also studied Chinese, which shows a willingness and effort to increase cognitive CQ.

Three leaders found the middle ground through leaning on the support of the Swedish organisations they work for, staying well aware of the official values of the companies. They built cognitive *culture-general* and *context-specific knowledge* and assessed how this knowledge aligns with the values of the organisation, one leader stating he focused on shareholder value. Another leader expressed that he had probably adapted his leadership style unconsciously, as he realised when returning to the Swedish company base conversation was different with higher focus on consensus. Both said cultural differences had been challenging initially. Their methods of adaptation can be explained by the leaders having a greater physical distance to their employees and close contact with Swedish headquarters. Even if they expressed cognitive CQ, this in itself did not seem to be a mechanism of adaptation.

Two other leaders of a Swedish company, on time-limited contracts, expressed cognitive *context-specific knowledge*, stating that their employees were used to Swedish leaders and that it made it less challenging to adapt their leadership styles. Thus suggesting less effort being needed in adapting if a leader similar to oneself has already established a middle ground.

Some leaders also leaned on the support of local assistants and/or colleagues to convey their messages and assist them in metacognitively *planning* their behaviour, practising *awareness* to realise who they are as leaders, as well as helping them in *checking* their own and their employees' cultural assumptions. These colleagues were not only helping the leaders assess their leadership style but also develop cognitive *cultural-general* and *context-specific knowledge* through open conversations and dialogues, becoming someone for leaders to turn to for advice. Several leaders also solicited anonymous feedback from employee satisfaction surveys, helping them metacognitively *check* and verify their self-perceptions.

One entrepreneur defined the organisational vision and guidelines in a company handbook, provided in English and Chinese. Through metacognitive *planning*, she was able to use her past experience and cognitive *context-specific knowledge*, to meet the needs of clear messages that arise in a cross-cultural setting. Two other entrepreneurs metacognitively *planned* by laying high focus on who they employed. Both stated the importance of having the right employees that were a "fit" with themselves as leaders. These three entrepreneurs all explained adaptations they had made in terms of their leadership style since moving to China, but also stated that their leadership styles are who they are as leaders, regardless of cultural setting.

A few more leaders expressed similar reasoning, that "they are who they are" and that only aspects of their leadership style may change whilst their core remains the same. Considering their adaptations in the CLT-dimensions, these lines of reasoning can be signs of incorporating metacognitive CQ into their leadership, as they individually

expressed aspects related to *planning*, *awareness* and *checking* to be an important part of a leadership.

Although motivational CQ was not found to be a mechanism of leadership style adaptation, it lies as a prerequisite for taking on employment in a foreign country. *Intrinsically* this was shown by leaders expressing China being an adventure and the expressed excitement to learn a new culture. *Extrinsically* some leaders felt the position and offer to be rewarding. The courage and confidence leaders expressed to establish themselves in an unfamiliar culture, displays a *self-efficacy to adjust*. Rather than directly influencing the adaptive process, motivational CQ is essential for accepting a position or starting a company in a host country, thus a necessary competence for adaptation to occur.

5.3. Theoretical Model

A higher cognitive CQ is on its own not affecting leadership style adaptation, but helps explain *why* there is a need to adapt. Cognitive CQ (*context-specific* and *culture-general knowledge*) is thus a necessity for developing metacognitive CQ (*planning, awareness* and *checking*) to apply the leader's knowledge, and thus assess and adapt their leadership styles to the cultural and contextual setting. The effect of metacognitive CQ on the adaptation of leadership styles are exhibited by an increase, a decrease, or a decision to remain unchanged, thus not adapt. The findings have resulted in an update of the previous theoretical model:
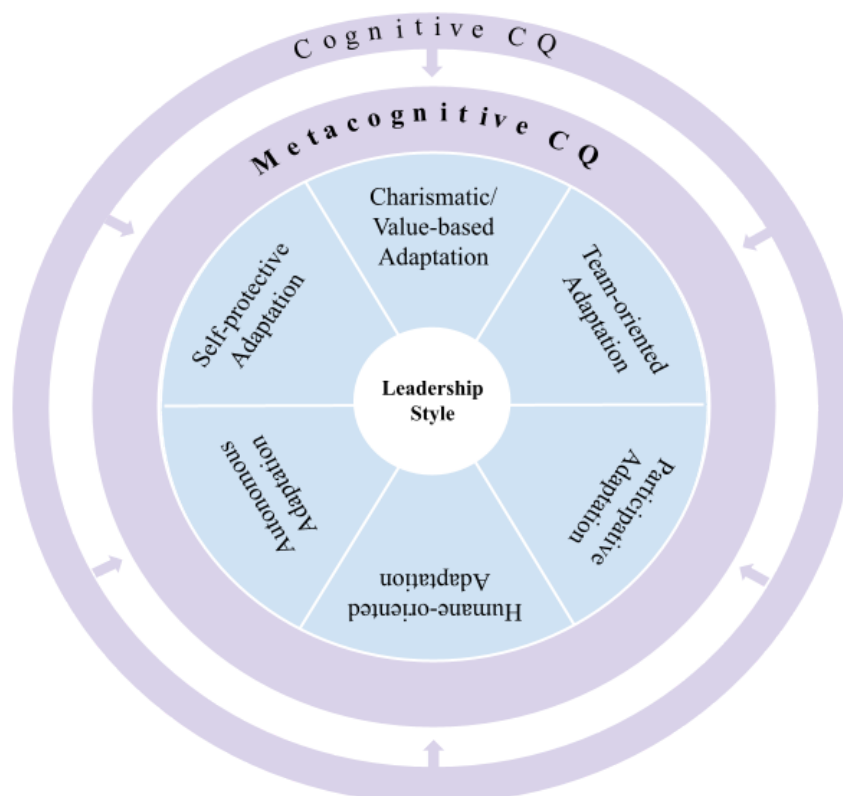

Figure 6: CQ-CLT framework

6. DISCUSSION

6.1. Elaboration on Findings

Globalisation has caused expatriation to be a research topic more relevant than ever. The perspective of cultural adaptation in terms of leadership style was adopted in this study: developing an understanding for *how* Swedish senior leaders adapt their leadership styles in China, based on the CLT-dimensions; exploring CQ as an underlying mechanism of *why* they adapt in such a manner. With the development of the CQ-CLT framework, the study answers the two research questions:

1. How do Swedish leaders adapt their leadership styles when leading in China?
Different leaders adapt their styles in different manners. The leaders studied have adapted only partly in line with the culturally endorsed leadership styles as defined by GLOBE, through finding a middle ground.

2. How is cultural intelligence related to such adaptation?
Metacognitive CQ is a competence that induces active adaptation of leadership styles. It is based on Cognitive CQ: a cultural knowledge which helps clarify *why* to adapt, thereby supporting an understanding for one's subordinates' cultures. Adaptation can also occur unconsciously, suggesting there exists other underlying mechanisms of adaptation.

The study has further highlighted motivational CQ as a prerequisite of expatriation.

6.2. Contribution

The findings further problematise the recommendation by GLOBE (House et al. 2004) of a linear leadership style adaptation along with the endorsed leadership styles of the host country. This form of adaptation was not exhibited by any of the leaders in this study, and has not been proven efficient in other studies to the authors' knowledge. The extensive data, although aged, is however seen to contribute well to the building of cognitive CQ and the overall learning of cultures. The CLT-dimensions also create an effective framework for assessing cross-cultural leadership.

With the three-factor model of expatriate adjustment (in Kraimer et al., 2016) explaining overall adaptation to the host country, the CQ-CLT framework may act as its complement. Through providing a theoretical framework for understanding adaptation in regards to senior leaders' leadership styles, it allows for digging deeper into one aspect of cross-cultural expatriate adaptation. Several research can also suitably act as a complement to the CQ-CLT framework, explaining further underlying reasons of adapted leadership styles and behaviours. Tsai et al.'s (2019) study is an example of such research. Through a framework combining work-role-transition theories with

cross-cultural leadership adjustment theories they manage to build an understanding as to whether it is the leader or the subordinate that adapts and why so. This would be a highly relevant complement to the study of this paper, adding an explanation as to *who* adapts. Combining the two frameworks could help explain which adaptation is made by leaders and which adaptation is made by subordinates.

Eken et al. (2014) provides a quantitative research on the CQ-scale's relation to autocratic, democratic and laissez-faire leadership styles. Their finding shows the motivational scale being linked to a democratic leadership style. Considering all twelve interviewees exhibiting clear motivational CQ, this could be an explanation of the leaders' efforts to find a middle ground. An element that would need further investigation to verify.

The research findings are in line with Van Dyne et al. (2008), stating that cultural intelligence is of essence for cultural adaptation. The report thereby manages to elaborate on the connection between cultural intelligence and cultural dimensions as suggested by Tung and Verbeke (2010), and inquired for in the cross-cultural research evaluation by Kraimer et al. (2016). The combination of the two theories, creating the CQ-CLT framework, thus manages to explain how competence in the form of cognitive and metacognitive CQ can explain leadership adaptation.

This report thus fills a part of the gap within previous research of expatriate cross-cultural adaptation, as well as empirically further balancing the presence of the female gender in cross-cultural research. From the view of Swedish senior managers in China, it provides insights into how leaders may adapt their leadership styles using the CQ-scales of metacognitive and cognitive CQ as a tool for understanding and developing their adaptation.

6.3. Suggestions for Future Research

The study has raised several questions that new studies may be able to explore further: (1) Language's influence on adaptation. Zhang (2015) has provided much research on the topic of language competence being beneficial in host country adaptation. Although language knowledge is an aspect of cognitive CQ, this could favourably be researched further in terms of how host country language competence may affect overall CQ and thereby also leadership style adaptation. Especially since the majority of the participants in this study did not possess a Chinese language proficiency for working. (2) The difference between expatriate entrepreneurs and expatriate corporate leaders. Organisational culture matters and the interviews have shown the entrepreneurs to consider their leadership styles more stable, and differences between Swedish and Chinese employees to be smaller: "people are people" they state and put attention as to who they employ. (3) Leadership effectiveness in adaptation. Since level of CQ is considered enabling effective adaptation (Van Dyne et al., 2008), this would need

further exploration in regards to leadership styles through getting more respondents of various cultural backgrounds in more host countries than in this study. (4) The employees' impact on adaptation. Interviewees mentioned that many employees actively seek jobs in international organisations, indicating that they may have searched for other leadership attributes/organisational cultures than what is the norm in China, thereby affecting the results.

The authors lastly recommend researching various elements of cross-cultural adaptation for a more comprehensive understanding on what components influence adaptation.

6.4. Implications for Management

This paper suggests that:

1. *Swedish leaders in China are trying to find a middle ground*, through combining a Swedish and Chinese approach. Their adaptation may either be conformational, in line with the classical Chinese leadership; or it will be contradictory, to further emphasise one's own leadership style or values. (Although the latter may be seen as "anti-adaptional", it is an adaptation of the leader's style in relation to the situation).

2. *Metacognitive CQ is an underlying mechanism affecting leadership style adaptation*, but that leaders can also adapt unconsciously, showing there exists other underlying mechanisms of adaptation.

3. *Motivational CQ is a prerequisite for expatriation.*

The paper thereby offers a perspective on the *recruitment, selection, and training of expatriate leaders*. This is highly relevant for multinational and international corporations with offices abroad, but also for organisations such as Business Sweden and Nordic Innovation House helping Swedish entrepreneurs establish themselves in China. The advice emerging in this study is that regardless of culturally endorsed leadership styles, the charismatic/value-based leadership style seems to be of high importance when working cross-culturally and thereby an important aspect to consider when sending leaders to work abroad. Cognitive and metacognitive CQ are also good tools to assess which cognitive skills can be improved when leaving to work internationally. Especially since motivational CQ is apparent for those looking to work internationally, but not on its own relating to adaptation.

Even if the research is on Swedish leaders in China, the finding of the CQ-CLT framework as a tool for leaders and organisations to assess and develop appropriate leadership styles in diverse cultural settings may also pertain to other *organisations acting cross-culturally* as well as *organisations with culturally diverse employees*. This

through emphasising that the competence of CQ ought to be built and developed to adapt and assess one's leadership style to the cultural situation.

The tendencies for leaders to make their leadership styles align with the organisation's values, highlights the importance of *multicultural organisations establishing values adhering to the different cultures represented*.

Lastly, the framework may open up for the *culturally diverse employees* to increase their understanding of the organisation they are working in, and its leaders. Through this framework they may help build their leaders' cognitive and metacognitive CQ so that their leadership may better suit the diverse culture. Since cross-cultural workplaces and employees are an increasingly common phenomenon, the framework stresses the importance of culturally intelligent leaders.

7. CONCLUSION

Through answering both questions of *how* and *why* Swedish senior leaders adapt, the study goes beyond the previous findings of leadership style adaptation and contributes to the research field by examining the impact that cultural intelligence has on leadership style adaptation, thus providing a more dynamic discussion to the phenomenon and thereby partly filling the gap found.

Given the importance of efficient expatriate adaptation to organisational success (Hanges & Dickson, 2004; House et al., 2004), the CQ-CLT framework and the suggestions provided offer valuable bases for future research and cross-cultural management practices globally.

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9. APPENDICES

9.1. Tables

9.1.1. Table 1: CLT Dimensions and Primary Leadership Dimensions

CLT-Dimensions	Primary leadership dimensions
Charismatic/ Value-based	Visionary, Inspirational, Self-sacrifice, Integrity, Decisive, Performance-oriented
Team-oriented	Collaborative team-orientation, Team integrator, Diplomatic, Administratively competent
Participative	Participative, Democratic
Humane-oriented	Modesty, Humane-orientation
Autonomous	Employee autonomy and independence
Self-protective	Self-centered, Status conscious, Conflict-inducer, Face-saver, Procedural

9.1.2. Table 2: CQ-Scales and Subdimensions

Based on Van Dyne et al. (2012)

CQ-Scales	Subdimensions	Descriptions
Metacognitive CQ	Planning	Anticipating needs and behaviours through the "perspective of culturally diverse others"
	Awareness	The consciousness of the application of one's cultural knowledge
	Checking	Reviewing one's own and others' cultural assumptions
Cognitive CQ	Culture-general knowledge	Knowledge on universal elements characterising culture
	Context-specific knowledge	A declarative knowledge on how culture manifests itself and a procedural knowledge on how to be effective in such cultural context
Motivational CQ	Intrinsic interest	Intrinsic satisfaction and enjoyment when working with culturally diverse people

	Extrinsic interest	Valuing tangible personal benefits, which can be beneficial for an organisation when developing mechanisms and rewards incenting cross-cultural work
	Self-efficacy to adjust	The confidence of one's own capability to work in culturally diverse settings
Behavioural CQ	Verbal behaviour	Flexibility in vocalisation, warmth, enthusiasm and formality
	Non-verbal behaviour	Gestures and facial expressions, physical and eye contact shaking or bowing as well as appearance and body language
	Speech acts	Flexibility in communicating specific messages, such as degree of directness and force of speech acts

9.1.3. Table 3: Interviewees

No.	*Name	Decade of birth	Gender	Company origin	Years in China	Chinese level	Date of interview	Found through
1	Anna	1950	F	SWE + Own**	13	Elementary	2021.02.17	Recommendation
2	Bella	1960	F	SWE	8	Intermediate	2021.02.18	Recommendation
3	Camilla	1970	F	MNC + Own**	13	Elementary	2021.02.19	LinkedIn
4	Daniel	1960	M	SWE	8	Elementary	2021.03.04	Recommendation
5	Erik	1970	M	SWE	13	Elementary	2021.02.25	Recommendation
6	Filippa	1970	F	SWE	5	Elementary	2021.02.22	Recommendation
7	Greta	1970	F	SWE + Own**	25	Advanced	2021.03.08	LinkedIn/WeChat
8	Hanna	1960	F	SWE	3	Elementary	2021.03.09	Recommendation
9	Isak	1970	M	SWE	2	Elementary	2021.03.11	Recommendation
10	Joakim	1970	M	SWE	18	Elementary	2021.03.17	LinkedIn
11	Karl	1960	M	Own**	15	Intermediate	2021.03.30	LinkedIn
12	Lena	1980	F	SWE	9	Advanced	2021.03.09	LinkedIn

Names are pseudonyms
*** The company is based in China*

9.1.4. Table 4: Adaptational Scheme

Their regular approach to the leadership dimensions show how much the leaders have previously incorporated each dimension: low, medium or high.

Adaptation: How the leader has adapted their leadership style in regards to the leadership dimensions; done less of (-), done more of (+) or remained neutral (0).

	Charismatic/ Value-Based	Adaptation	Team-Oriented	Adaptation	Participative	Adaptation	Humane-Oriented	Adaptation	Autonomous	Adaptation	Self-Protective	Adaptation
1. Anna	Medium	+	Medium	+	High	-	High	0	Medium	+	Low	-
2. Bella	High	+	High	+	High	0	High	0	Medium	+	Medium	0
3. Camilla	Medium	+	Medium	+	Medium	-	High	0	Medium	+	Low	+
4. Daniel	Low	+	Medium	+	Medium	0	Medium	0	Medium	0	Medium	0
5. Erik	Low	0	Low	0	Low	-	Medium	-	Medium	+	Medium	+
6. Filippa	Medium	+	High	+	Medium	-	Medium	0	High	+	Medium	-
7. Greta	Medium	+	High	+	High	0	High	0	Medium	+	Medium	+
8. Hanna	Medium	-	High	+	Medium	+	High	0	Medium	+	Low	0
9. Isak	High	0	Medium	+	High	-	High	0	Medium	0	Low	+
10. Joakim	Medium	0	Medium	0	Medium	-	Medium	-	Medium	0	Medium	0
11. Karl	Medium	-	Medium	+	Medium	-	High	0	Medium	+	Low	0
12. Lena	Medium	0	Medium	0	Medium	+	Medium	0	Medium	0	Low	+

9.1.5. Table 5: Sample of Coding

	MOTIVATION		
	Exciting Adventure	**Position**	**Interest in China**
Interviewee 2			
Agreeing	I wanted to live and work in a new country, I wanted the adventure!		I am adventurous!
			I was interested in China, its country and culture, and as someting completely different
	I am adventurous!		
	I wanted something different, something I would not already understand.		Life in China never gets boring!
Disagreeing		My position in China was on a lower level than my previous one, but I was not interested in the level of my new title, I was more interested in China	

9.2. Figures

9.2.1. Figure 1: Divergence of CLT from GLOBE Average

Compiled by the authors using data provided by GLOBE (House et al., 2014).

Figure 1: Country CLT Divergence
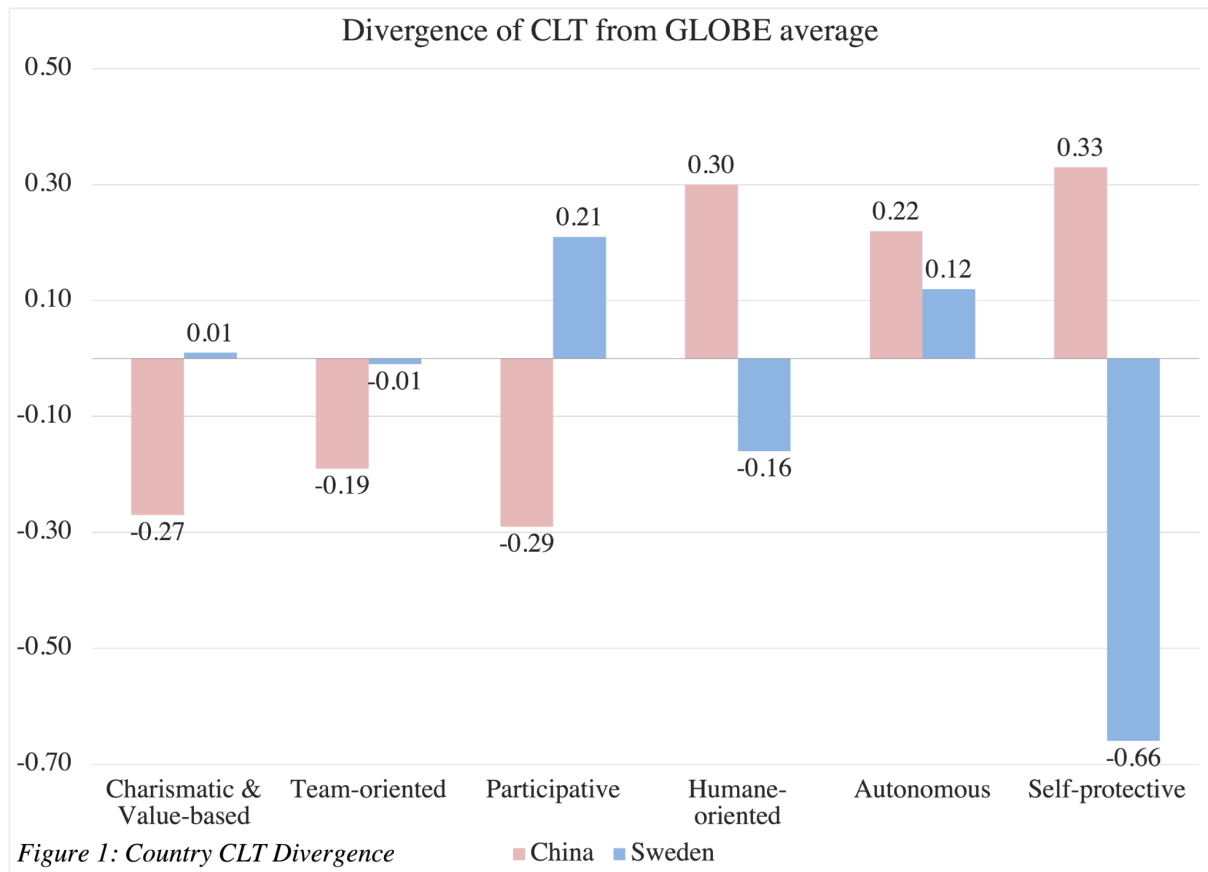
9.3. Email Sent to Interviewees

9.3.1. Swedish Version

(the original email sent out)
Titel: Att leda i Kina, kandidatuppsats

Hej *[förnamn]*,

Vi är två studenter, Olivia och Angelica, från Handelshögskolan i Stockholm som skriver vår kandidatuppsats på temat "Svenska ledare i Kina". Båda har länge haft ett stort intresse för Kina; Olivia bodde drygt 4 år i Hangzhou och Angelica är av kinesisk bakgrund.

[*[för- och efternamn]* rekommenderade oss att kontakta dig och delade dina kontaktuppgifter.] Studien bygger på en kvalitativ undersökning och vi kommer därför genomföra individuella intervjuer med 10-15 ledare på högre ledarpositioner i Kina, nu eller under de senaste åren.

Det skulle betyda otroligt mycket för oss om du vill delta! Hör gärna av dig om det låter intressant så kan vi komma överens om passande tid och datum och besvara eventuella frågor.

Vänligen,

Olivia Ekman Sundin och Angelica Huynh

PS. Studien följer GDPR strikt och du deltar under pseudonym

9.3.2. English Version
(a translation of the original email)

Hi *[first name]*,

We are two students, Olivia and Angelica from the Stockholm School of Economics, writing our bachelor thesis on the theme "Swedish women's leadership in China". Both have long had a keen interest in China; Olivia lived and worked in Hangzhou during 4 years and Angelica is of Chinese background.

[First name and surname] recommended that we contact you and share your contact information.] The study is qualitative and we will therefore be conducting individual interviews with 10-15 leaders in senior positions in China, now or in recent years .

It would mean an incredible deal to us if you would want to participate. Feel free to contact us if it sounds interesting and we can agree on a suitable time and date, as well as answer potential questions.

Kind regards,

Olivia Ekman Sundin and Angelica Huynh

PS. The study follows the GDPR strictly and you will participate under a pseudonym

9.4. Consent Form

Consent to participation in student's survey / interview

The student's project. As an integral part of the educational program at the Stockholm School of Economics, enrolled students complete an individual thesis. This work is sometimes based upon surveys and interviews connected to the subject. Participation is naturally entirely voluntary, and this text is intended to provide you with necessary information about that may concern your participation in the study or interview. You can at any time withdraw your consent and your data will thereafter be permanently erased.

Confidentiality. Anything you say or state in the survey or to the interviewers will be held strictly confidential and will only be made available to supervisors, tutors and the course management team.

No personal data will be published. The thesis written by the students will not contain any information that may identify you as participant to the survey or interview subject.

Secured storage of data. All data will be stored and processed safely by the SSE and will be permanently deleted when the projected is completed.

Your rights under GDPR. You are welcome to visit https://www.hhs.se/en/about-us/data-protection/ in order read more and obtain information on your rights related to personal data.

Project title	Year and semester
Swedish Leaders in China	2021 Spring

Aim of the study
To provide insight into the work experiences of Swedish expatriates in leading positions in China

Students responsible for the study or interview
Olivia Ekman Sundin & Angelica Huynh

Supervisors and department at SSE	Supervisor e-mail address
Marijane Jonsson, SSE Institute for Research	marijane.jonsson@ hhs.se

Type of personal data about you to be processed
- Your position/-s relevant to the study and name of the company/-ies (the name of the company and/or department will not be mentioned) - Name (in the presented study we will not use your real name but use a pseudonym) - Age - Location - Gender - A recording of the interview which will be stored safely and permanently deleted after completed project

I have taken part of the information provided above and consent to take part in this study:

Signature	Place and date
Name	

9.5. Interview Guide

This study is part of a Bachelor's thesis in Management at the Stockholm School of Economics conducted by Olivia Ekman Sundin and Angelica Huynh. Thank you for agreeing to participate in our study!

1. The purpose of this research is to look into how Swedish senior leaders' adapt their leadership styles when leading in China. The study is based on the GLOBE study on endorsed leadership styles. The study is conducted through qualitative interviews, where subjects are Swedish senior leaders in China currently or previously leading in China, with minimum 2 years of recent executive leading experience in China, as well as minimum 50% of subordinates being of Chinese origin.

2. Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You may withdraw your participation at any time during or after this interview, with no requirement to explain the cause of your withdrawal. Please let us know if you would like to skip any of the questions.

3. Your identity will remain anonymous throughout the study in accordance with the GDPR-form that has been sent to you. Everything you say will further be treated with strict confidentiality and only used within the research purpose stated. The material is only made available to the authors, supervisors, tutors and the course management team at the Stockholm School of Economics. All data is securely stored and will be permanently deleted upon the completion of the study.

4. In order to transcribe and properly elicit data, we wonder if you accept that we record this interview? The recording will be stored safely and deleted after finished transcription, by the latest at the end of this course.

5. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions about the research, or how your data will be handled and processed.

Once again, thank you very much for agreeing to take part in this study!

General questions
1. What was your reason for moving to China?
2. Where in China are/were you located?
3. For how long have you been leading in China?
4. Have you held a leadership role before moving to China?
5. How many people are you leading?
   a. How many of those are Swedish/Chinese/other?

Leadership
6. How would you describe your leadership style in China?
7. How do you think your Chinese employees would describe your leadership style?

GLOBE

GLOBE is a study made throughout 160 countries, assessing cultural dimensions of leadership. Below follows the main 6 leadership dimensions identified in the study. A leader can have a combination of all styles, but tend to incorporate more of some and less of others into their leadership.

8. For each leadership style, we would like to know *how* you believe you have, or have not, adapted to the style since moving to China.
    i. **GL1. Charismatic/Value-based leadership**
        - *Inspirational, charismatic, visionary, with high integrity and strong values*
    ii. **GL2. Team-oriented leadership**
        - *Diplomatic, with high focus on the team and its development*
    iii. **GL3. Participative leadership**
        - *Democratic, participative, involving employees of different levels when making decisions and developing strategies*
    iv. **GL4. Humane-oriented leadership**
        - *Generous, empathetic, humble*
    v. **GL5. Autonomous leadership**
        - *Focus on the individual: their development and independence*
    vi. **GL6. Self-protective leadership**
        - *Focus on maintaining or raising one's status as a leader and to "save face", avoiding situations where one may be disputed)*

GLOBE study; Hygiene Questions (only applied if unclear responses to Q11: i-vi.)
- *Would you say you share your visions with your employees?*
- *Do you encourage your employees to do the work using teamwork?*
- *How would you say decisions are made, by you as a leader or as a team or by delegated leaders?*
- *How do you respond/react to situations of disagreement in the company?*
- *What does the promotion process for your employees look like?*
- *How did you receive acceptance/respect from your team members/colleagues in China?*
- *Would you say you have changed any of your core values since moving to China?*
    - *If so, which ones?*

Culture & Leadership
9. What language/s do you use in your daily work?
10. How are you addressed by your employees and colleagues? *First name, surname, title, nickname, or other*
11. Have you experienced any advantages and/or disadvantages being a *Swedish* leader?
12. What is the biggest success you have had leading in China?

13. What have been your biggest challenges leading in China?

14. Have you faced any big misunderstandings from your employees during your role as a leader in China?

Ending Questions

15. What is the most important leadership experience (lesson learnt) you bring with you from your time in China?

16. Is there anything you would like to develop further in regards to your leadership style in China?

Do you have any other comments or opinions you would like to share with us?