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Acculturation Orientations and Chinese Student Sojourners' Career Adaptability:

The Roles of Career Exploration and Cultural Distance

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## Abstract

Drawing on career construction theory and Berry's acculturation model, this study examined how student sojourners' acculturation orientations predicted their career exploration and career adaptability. We conducted a survey study among Chinese student sojourners ( $N = 222$ ) and the results showed that after the effects of big-five personality and approach/avoidance traits were controlled, both host culture orientation and home culture orientation had positive indirect effects on career adaptability through the mediation of career environmental exploration, but not self exploration. In addition, cultural distance was revealed as a significant moderator on the effect of host culture orientation such that the relationship between host culture orientation and environmental exploration was only significant when the cultural distance between host country and home country was higher. The corresponding moderated mediation model was also supported such that the indirect effect of host culture orientation on career adaptability through career exploration was only significant when the cultural distance was higher. These findings carry implications for research on acculturation and career development.

*Keywords:* acculturation orientations; career exploration; career adaptability; cultural distance.

## **Acculturation Orientations and Chinese Student Sojourners' Career Adaptability: The Roles of Career Exploration and Cultural Distance**

### **1. Introduction**

Career construction theory (Savickas, 2013) posits that career adaptability, which refers to the important psychological resources (career concern, career control, career curiosity, career confidence) that facilitate individuals' problem-solving in their career development (Savickas, 1997), plays an important role in helping individuals achieve optimal adaptations across various career transitions. Consistently, career adaptability has been found to predict important career outcomes, including career satisfaction (Zacher, 2014), salary (Guan, Zhou, Ye, Jiang, & Zhou, 2015), job performance (Yu & Zheng, 2013), and so on. Career construction theory (Savickas, 2013) also suggests that career adaptivity, which refers to individuals' willingness or flexibility in making changes to themselves or environments, serve as an important antecedent for career adaptability. Previous research has identified a series of indicators of career adaptivity, such as big-five personality (van Vianen, Klehe, Koen, & Dries, 2012; Zacher, 2014) and approach/avoidance traits (Guan et al., 2017a; Li et al., 2015), which significantly predicted individual differences in career adaptability. In addition, it has also been found that contextual factors such as parental behaviors (Guan et al., 2015b) and organizational support (Guan et al., 2016), also significantly predicted career adaptability.

In spite of the research progress discussed above, there are few studies that examine how individuals' cross-cultural experiences affect their career adaptability. This research gap is particularly problematic given the prevalence of cross-cultural experiences in modern people's life due to globalization. When living abroad, individuals are engaged in various activities that can facilitate their cultural adaptation, and these activities may play significant roles in helping them develop career-related capabilities (Berry, 1996; Savickas, 2013). To fill

this research gap, in this study we focus on the relations between acculturation orientations (Berry, 1996) and career adaptability among Chinese student sojourners. The past three decades have witnessed a sharp increase in the number of Chinese student sojourners. According to the National Bureau of Statistics of China (2015), the number of Chinese students studying abroad in 2015 was over 523,000 and China is the largest source country that sends students for educational programs in developed countries such as USA, UK, Australia, and Canada. By investigating Chinese student sojourners' cross-cultural experiences in their career adaptability, this study will shed some light on the career education and career counseling practices in cross-cultural settings.

According to Berry (1996, 2005), student sojourners can adopt the host culture orientation (individuals' orientation to approach the host culture and adapt to the local culture) or home culture orientation (individuals' orientation to maintain their original cultural traditions) to facilitate their adaptation to a new cultural environment. Savickas (2013) pointed out that career adaptability is changeable and individuals' learning experiences might help them to improve their adaptabilities. Drawing on the experiential learning theory (Kolb, 1984) and the model of proactive motivation (Cangiano & Parker, 2016; Parker, Bindl, & Strauss, 2010), we propose that both types of acculturation orientations can help individuals gain more insights about themselves and the career world, and will facilitate sojourners' career exploration, which is defined as the activities of collecting career-related information about personal attributes and occupational characteristics (Stumpf et al., 1983). These career exploration behaviors will serve as important experiential sources for sojourners to learn how to improve their career adaptability. In order to examine the unique effects of acculturation orientations on career exploration and adaptability, we measured and controlled sojourners' big-five personality and approach/avoidance traits, which had been found to be important predictors of both career exploration and career adaptability (Li et al., 2015; van Vianen et al.,

2012; Guan et al, 2017a). From a person-situation interaction perspective, we also examined the role of cultural distance, which refers to the extent to which the host culture differs from the home culture (Slangen & Tulder, 2009), in moderating the effects of acculturation orientations on career exploration and career adaptability. We propose that home culture orientation will have stronger positive effects on career exploration and career adaptability in low cultural-distance contexts, whereas host culture orientation will exert stronger positive effects on these outcomes in high cultural-distance contexts. The overall model of this study is shown in Figure 1.

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### ***1. 1. Acculturation orientations, career exploration and career adaptability***

According to the Berry's model of acculturation (Berry, 1996, 2005), home culture orientation and host culture orientation are the two basic dimensions that sojourners use to meet the challenges of living in a new culture. Home culture orientation helps individuals maintain and identify with their own cultural heritage whereas host culture orientation motivates individuals to participate in and identify with the host society's culture. Four types of acculturation strategies were differentiated based on the combinations of these two dimensions. A high home culture orientation combined with a high host culture orientation is labeled as integration, a high host culture orientation but low home culture orientation represents assimilation, the reverse (low host, high home) indicates separation, and those rejecting both cultures belong to the marginalization group. Due to the methodological concerns on how to split participants into these four categories, the bi-dimension model of acculturation orientations, with the home culture orientation and host culture orientation measured by independent scales and yielding two continuous variables, was recommended

(e.g., Arends-Tóth & van de Vijver, 2007; Domes & Geeraert, 2014). As the bi-dimension model acknowledges the co-existence of home culture orientation and host culture orientation, and also offers the flexibility of testing the joint effects of these two orientations on outcome variables, in this study we used this model to operationalize student sojourners' acculturation orientations.

Stumpf et al. (1983) divided career exploration into two categories: self-exploration (individuals explore their internal attributes to understand who they are) and environmental exploration (individuals collect relevant information on jobs, organizations, and occupations). We propose that both types of career exploration could be facilitated by home culture orientation for the following reasons. Firstly, home culture orientation motivates people to keep in contact with members of the home country, and their shared cultural background often makes it easier for sojourners to build their social network in a new environment (Arends-Tóth & van de Vijver, 2007; Smith, Rachel, & Khawaja, 2011). When interacting with compatriots, sojourners can effectively seek suggestions, support and feedback to facilitate their career exploration (Creed et al., 2009; Werbel, 2000). Secondly, when interacting with people from the same country, sojourners can preserve their religious and/or cultural traditions, which can help to maintain their cultural identity and psychological well-being (Berry, 1997; Ward & Kennedy, 1994) and thus enable sojourners to engage in career exploration activities in a more effective way. In sum, a high level of home culture orientation can facilitate sojourners' exploration of their own characteristics and environmental characteristics, as hypothesized below:

*Hypothesis 1:* Home culture orientation will be positively related to career self-exploration (H1a) and career environmental exploration (H1b).

On the other hand, since individuals with a high level of host culture orientation tend to actively participate in the host culture, they are more likely to have an open attitude to the

values and opportunities of the host society, and to interact more frequently with members of the host country (Berry, 1997). These activities will make it easier for student sojourners to build their social network among local people, which will promote their social acceptance in the host society (Sam & Berry, 2010). Consequently, a host culture orientation will enable sojourners to have more opportunities to collect information on jobs, occupations, industries, as well as their own career interests, values and skills. A host culture orientation can also motivate student sojourners to develop relevant skills, such as language skills, in order to overcome the cultural barriers and more effectively explore their future career possibilities in a new society (Demes & Geeraert, 2014). As a result, host culture orientation will also facilitate student sojourners' career exploration activities.

*Hypothesis 2:* Host culture orientation will be positively related to career self-exploration (H2a) and career environmental exploration (H2b).

We further argue that career exploration behaviors will mediate the effects of acculturation orientations on career adaptability. From the perspective of Career Construction Theory (Savickas, 2013), career adaptability plays a central role in linking individuals' career adaptivity to adaptive behaviors. That is, higher levels of willingness or flexibility to change (career adaptivity) will motivate individuals to develop adaptive abilities (career adaptability), which in turn facilitate individual to engage in career-related activities, such as exploration behaviors (e.g., Rudolph, Lavigne, & Zacher, 2017; Hirschi, Herrmann, & Keller, 2015; Li et al., 2015; Urbanaviciute, Kaiys, Pociute, & Liniauskaite, 2014; Zacher, 2014). However, in this paper we argue that the opposite relationship from career exploration to career adaptability could also be true due to the following reasons. From the perspective of experiential learning theory (Kolb, 1984), since career exploration behaviors helps individuals gain insights about their own characteristics and external environments, they serve as important experiential sources that enable individuals to learn how to improve their

abilities and skills. Therefore, student sojourners' acculturation strategies may lead to various career exploration activities, which in turn will serve as valuable learning experiences for them to develop career adaptability. In addition, the model of proactive motivation (Cangiano & Parker, 2016; Parker et al., 2010) also suggests that proactive career behaviors, such as career exploration can help to improve individual's career capabilities.

Specifically, we propose that since career exploration activities can help individuals obtain more valuable career information and opportunities, they can stimulate student sojourners' career curiosity, one element of career adaptability. In addition, career exploration also enables student sojourners to think about their future career possibilities, which can enhance their career concern abilities. Moreover, the exploration of personal characteristics and career world can also facilitate students' decision-making process (Blustein & Phillips, 1988), thereby strengthening their ability of career control. Finally, the exploration process can also promote individuals' career confidence by helping them discover their strengths of problem-solving. Empirically, emerging evidence has offered support for the positive effects of career exploration behaviors on career adaptability (Cai et al., 2015; Guan et al., 2015b; Guan et al., 2017b). It has been found that career exploration behaviors mediated the effects of personality traits (Cai et al., 2015), and parental behaviors (Guan et al., 2015b) on Chinese university students' career adaptability. In addition, recent findings from a time-lagged panel design show that the relationship between career exploration and career adaptability is reciprocal (Guan et al., 2017b). That is, a high level of career adaptability enables individuals to engage in more exploration behaviors; more frequent career exploration behaviors can also help individuals to improve their career adaptability. In light of this, we propose the following mediation model:

*Hypothesis 3:* Career self-exploration (H3a) and career environmental exploration (H3b) will serve as mediators of the relations between home culture orientation and



career adaptability; career self-exploration (H3c) and career environmental exploration (H3d) will serve as mediators of the relations between host culture orientation and career adaptability.

### ***1.2. The moderation role of cultural distance***

Besides the mediating mechanisms discussed above, we further propose that cultural distance may moderate the indirect effects of acculturation orientations on career adaptability through career exploration. Cultural distance reflects the level of difference between host culture and home culture (Hofstede, 1980), and was also termed as “cultural novelty” (Black, Mendenhall & Oddou, 1991), “cultural toughness” (Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985), or “cultural barrier” (Cooney, Ratcliffe, Silver, 2009). Cultural distance can be reflected by the differences of important values, such as Power Distance, Uncertainty Avoidance, Individualism/Collectivism, Masculinity/Femininity, Indulgence and Pragmatism (Hofstede, 2010). Empirical studies have generally supported the view that cross-cultural adjustment, especially sociocultural adjustment, is more challenging when the host country is more culturally distant from home culture (e.g., Dunbar, 1992; Searle & Ward, 1990; Ward & Searle, 1991).

When sojourners are living in a culture that is similar to their home culture (low cultural distance), their cultural values are similar with host residents. When the two cultures are similar, sojourners can easily adapt to the host culture by following their home cultural traditions or mainly interact with people from their home countries (Tsui & O'Reilly, 1989; Kalliath, Bluedorn, & Strube, 1999). However, when sojourners are living in an environment with high cultural distance, a home culture orientation is less likely to offer as much insight on the characteristics of host society as it is in a low cultural distance society. Therefore, the positive effects of home culture orientation on career exploration and adaptability may be weaker in a higher cultural distance society.

We also propose that cultural distance may moderate the indirect effects of host culture orientation on adaptability via career exploration in a reverse way. When sojourners live in a society with higher cultural distance, a host culture orientation is more likely to facilitate individuals' exploration activities and adaptation by motivating them to engage in the new environment. In contrast, a host culture orientation will not bring as much new insight in a society with lower cultural distance due to the high level of similarity between home culture and host culture. Based on the above conceptualizations, we propose that:

*Hypothesis 4:* The relationship between home culture orientation and career adaptability via career exploration is moderated by cultural distance, in such a way that, when the cultural distance is higher, the indirect effect is weaker (4a); The relationship between host culture orientation and career adaptability via career exploration is moderated by cultural distance, in such a way that, when the cultural distance is higher, the indirect effect is stronger (4b).

In summary, the purpose of this study was to examine how student sojourners' acculturation orientations predicted their career exploration and career adaptability, and whether cultural distance served a significant moderator on these effects. We tested these ideas among a sample of Chinese student sojourners.

## **2. Methods**

### *2.1 Procedures and participants*

Students from mainland China who were studying in overseas universities (including universities in Hong Kong and Taiwan) were invited to participate in this study by online advertisements or emails. We used snowballing method to find sojourners which means participants were asked to circulate the advertisements to other sojourners to encourage more participation. After participants accepted the invitations, they were directed to complete an online questionnaire on personality (big-five personality and approach-avoidance traits),

acculturation orientations, career exploration, career adaptability, and demographic background. As a result, two hundred and twenty-two participants (62 males and 160 females) provided complete responses, which were used for data analysis.

## *2.2 Procedures and participants*

Among these participants, 37.8% were undergraduates, 43.7% were Master students, and 18.5% were Doctoral students. 40.1% majored in natural sciences and 59.9% majored in social sciences or humanities. On average, participants had spent 8.30 months ( $SD = 6.72$ ) on their current overseas study. The host countries (regions) for these participants included: USA (23.4%), UK (12.5%), Germany (12.5%), Japan (9.8%), Australia (7.8%), Canada (6.0%), South Korea (5.0%), Netherlands (4.1%), Belgium (4.1%), Hong Kong (4.1%), France (3.1%), Spain (1.7%), Singapore (1.3%), Ireland (1.3%), Italy (0.9%), Taiwan (0.9%), Denmark (0.5%), Sweden (0.5%) and Russia (0.5%).

## *2.3 Measures*

*2.3.1 Acculturation orientations.* Acculturation orientations were measured by the scale developed by Demes and Geeraert (2014). Demes and Geeraert (2014) translated this scale into Chinese and the results from their study showed that the Chinese version had good reliability and criterion validity in relation to established measures of acculturation orientations. Four items on the value of cultural friendships, traditions, characteristics, and actions were used to measure both the host and home culture orientations (e.g., “it is important for me to have [home/host country] friends”), on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*). The Cronbach’s alphas for home (0.70) and host (0.68) culture orientations were acceptable.

*2.3.2 Career Exploration.* The Chinese version of career exploration scale was adopted from previous research (e.g., Cai et al., 2015; Guan et al., 2015b; Li et al., 2015). This scale was originally developed by Stumpf et al. (1983) and previous research showed

that the Chinese version has good reliability and predictive validity on career adaptability (e.g., Cai et al., 2015; Guan et al., 2015b; Li et al., 2015). Participants were informed to rate on the 11 items from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*), which consists of 5 items on self-exploration (e.g., “I reflected on my past integrates with my future career”,  $\alpha = 0.85$ ) and 6 items on environment exploration (e.g., “I went to various career orientation programs”,  $\alpha = 0.81$ ).

*2.3.3 Career Adaptability.* Career adaptability was measured by the scale developed by Maggiori, Rossier, and Savickas (2015). The scale contains four subscales with 3 items each to measure the adaptive resources of concern, control, curiosity and confidence respectively. We used the Chinese translation of these 12 items from the 24-item scale in the study by Hou, Leung, Li, Li, and Xu (2012). Respondents rated each item on a scale from 1 (*not strong*) to 5 (*strongest*). The Cronbach's alpha was .86 for the scale. We conducted a confirmative factor analysis and the result shown that the second-order factor model has good fit ( $\chi^2 = 954.34$ ; CFI = 0.97; RMSEA = 0.05; SRMR = 0.05). Thus, we averaged scores across dimensions to form an overall measure of career adaptability.

*2.3.4 Cultural distance.* Following the approach used in previous studies (e.g., Kogut & Singh, 1988), we created a composite index to represent each host society's deviation from China (home society of participants) along all the six cultural dimensions (power distance, individualism, masculinity, uncertainty avoidance, pragmatism and indulgence) in Hofstede's model of cultural values (Hofstede, 2004). The deviations were corrected for differences in the variances of each dimension and then arithmetically averaged. Algebraically, the index was built with the following equation:

$$CD_j = \sum_{i=1}^6 \left\{ (I_{ij} - I_{iu})^2 / V_i \right\} / 6$$

$I_{ij}$  stands for the index for the  $i$ th cultural dimension and  $j$ th country,  $V_i$  is the variance of

the index of the  $i$ th dimension,  $u$  indicates China.

*2.3.5 Control Variables.* In order to examine the unique effects of acculturation orientations on career exploration and adaptability, we incorporated big-five personality and approach/avoidance traits as controlling variables in our model (Guan et al., 2017a; Li et al., 2015).

*Big-five personality.* Participants' big-five personality was measured by a short-form inventory (BFI-S; Hahn, Gottschling, & Spinath, 2012). The Chinese version of this scale was used in previous research, which supported its good reliability and predictive validity on career exploration and adaptability (e.g., Li et al., 2015). Each dimension was measured by 3 items and participants were asked to rate these items on a 5-point scale (1 = *does not apply to me at all*; 5 = *applies to me perfectly*). The alphas for the five dimensions were: openness to experience ( $\alpha = 0.71$ ), extraversion ( $\alpha = 0.86$ ), agreeableness ( $\alpha = 0.73$ ), conscientiousness ( $\alpha = 0.70$ ) and neuroticism ( $\alpha = 0.76$ ). The sample items of this scale were: "I see myself as someone who does a thorough job (conscientiousness)", "is communicative, talkative" (extraversion), "has a forgiving nature" (agreeableness), "is original, comes up with new ideas" (openness to experience) and "worries a lot" (neuroticism).

*Approach/Avoidance traits.* Approach/Avoidance traits were measured by the 12-item Approach-Avoidance Temperament Questionnaire developed by Elliot and Thrash (2010). We adopted the Chinese version of this scale from previous study (e.g., Guan et al., 2017a), which showed that the scale had good reliability and predictive validity on career adaptability. Participants were asked to rate on the items from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Six items represented approach trait ( $\alpha = 0.84$ ) and 6 items represented avoidance trait ( $\alpha = 0.91$ ).

*2.3.6 Demographic variables.* Previous research also showed that some demographic variables, such as gender, age, education level, and so on, were significant related to career

exploration or career adaptability (e.g., Hou et al., 2012; Li et al., 2015; Rudolph et al., 2017). In this study we also measured participants' demographic background, such as age (as some participants might be reluctant to fill in the actual age in the survey, we created a range scale to make it easier for them to answer this question: 1 = "< 16 years old", 2 = "17~18 years old", 3 = "19~20 years old", 4 = "21~22 years old", 5 = "23~24 years old", 6 = "> 25 years old"), gender (0 = male, 1 = female), education level (1 = Undergraduates, 2 = Master students, 3 = Doctoral students), major (0 = natural sciences, 1 = social sciences or humanities), and time spent on the current overseas program (number of months). However, the correlation results of this study showed that career adaptability was not related to sojourners' age ( $r = -.02, ns$ ), gender ( $r = -.01, ns$ ), education level ( $r = -.04, ns$ ), major ( $r = .09, ns$ ), and time spent in current program ( $r = -.05, ns$ ). Additional analyses also showed that the key results of this study remained stable when these demographic variables were included or excluded from the models. Thus, we did not control these demographic variables in the analysis.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1 Confirmative Factor Analysis

Given that our data were collected from a common resource, we conducted a set of confirmative factor analysis (CFA) to demonstrate these measures captured distinctive factors. The results showed that the five-factor model (home orientation, host orientation, career self-exploration, career environmental exploration, and career adaptability) fit the data well,  $\chi^2(117) = 680.24$ , CFI = 0.90; TLI = 0.89, RMSEA = 0.05; SRMR = 0.07. Additional analyses showed that the five-factor model has significantly better fit than all the four-factor, three-factor, two-factor and one-factor models.

#### 3.2 Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics and correlation coefficients for the variables are presented in

Table 1. As is shown, home culture orientation was related positively to self-exploration ( $r = 0.19, p < 0.01$ ) and environmental exploration ( $r = 0.25, p < 0.01$ ). Host culture orientation was also related positively to self-exploration ( $r = 0.11, p < 0.01$ ) and environmental exploration ( $r = 0.29, p < 0.01$ ). Both career self-exploration ( $r = .45, p < 0.01$ ) and environmental exploration ( $r = 0.37, p < 0.01$ ) were related positively to career adaptability. These results provided support for H1a, H1b, H2a and H2b.

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### 3.3. Examining the mediation models

Hypotheses H3a, H3b, H3c and H3d predicted the mediation roles of self-exploration and environmental exploration. The results of regression analyses (Table 2) showed that after the effects of big-five personality and approach-avoidance traits were controlled, home culture orientation was significantly related to career environmental exploration ( $B = 0.27, SE = 0.07, t = 4.20, p < 0.01$ ), but not self-exploration ( $B = 0.10, SE = 0.06, t = 1.63, ns$ ). Similarly, host culture orientation was significantly related to environmental exploration ( $B = 0.28, SE = 0.07, t = 3.91, p < 0.01$ ), but not with career self-exploration ( $B = 0.001, SE = 0.07, t = 0.02, ns$ ).

Since traditional methods (e.g., Baron & Kenny, 1986) has low power in testing indirect effect (Fritz & MacKinnon, 2007), we utilized the methods of Hayes (2013) to examine indirect effect with the PROCESS macro in SPSS. This method tested indirect effect through a bias-corrected bootstrapping procedure (5,000 resamples). In the model, control variables were added as covariates. Table 3 shown that the estimated indirect effect from home culture orientation to career adaptability through environmental exploration was significant, 0.02 (95% CI = [0.01, 0.05]); but the indirect effect ( $B = 0.02, 95\% CI = [-0.003,$

0.05]) through career self-exploration was insignificant. In sum, career environmental exploration mediated the effect of home culture orientation on career adaptability, which supported H3b. The indirect effect of host culture orientation on career adaptability through environmental exploration was 0.02, 95% CI = [0.01, 0.05]), which was significant; while the indirect effect through self-exploration was non-significant ( $B = -0.004$ , 95% CI = [-0.03, 0.02]). Hence, H3d was supported.

### 3.3. Testing the Moderated Mediation Model with Cultural Distance as moderator

To examine the moderation and moderated mediation models, we used Hayes' PROCESS macro (Model 7) in SPSS to test these hypotheses. As shown in Table 3, cultural distance moderated the indirect effect of host culture orientation on career adaptability through career environmental exploration ( $B = 0.01$ ,  $SE = 0.01$ , 95% CI = [0.003, 0.04]). The indirect effect of host culture orientation on career adaptability via career environmental exploration was significant and positive ( $B = 0.04$ , 95% CI = [0.01, 0.09]) when cultural distance was high (1 *SD* above the mean), not significant ( $B = 0.01$ , 95% CI = [-0.02, 0.05]) when cultural distance was low (one *SD* below the mean). However, career self-exploration could not mediate the indirect effect of culture orientation on career adaptability via career environmental exploration ( $B = -0.004$ , 95% CI = [-0.03, 0.01]). Thus, H4b was supported. Figure 2 depicts the interaction between host culture orientation and cultural distance on career environmental exploration.

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### 3.5. Testing the Alternative Models

Since career construction theory (Savickas, 2013) and previous research (e.g., Hirschi



et al., 2015; Rudolph et al., 2017) suggested that career adaptability could also mediate the effects of acculturation orientations on career exploration, we conducted additional analyses to examine the mediation role of career adaptability for the relations between acculturation orientations and career exploration. The results from regression analysis showed that after the effects of personality variables were controlled, neither home culture orientation ( $B = .04$ ,  $SE = .04$ ,  $ns$ ) nor host culture orientation ( $B = .02$ ,  $SE = .05$ ,  $ns$ ) was significantly related to career adaptability. In addition, the indirect effects of home culture orientation and host culture orientation on career exploration behaviors through career adaptability were not significant. Moreover, we also used path analyses to compare three different models: one where career exploration predicted career adaptability (hypothesized model), one where career adaptability predicted career exploration (alternative model 1), and one where career exploration and adaptability covaried (alternative model 2). Again, the results did not support the significant relations between acculturation orientations on career adaptability, or the mediation role of career adaptability in linking acculturation orientations to career exploration. The interaction between host orientation and cultural distance was also not significant in predicting career adaptability. In sum, the alternative models were not supported in our data.

#### **4. Discussion**

The current research examined how acculturation orientations predicted career exploration and career adaptability among a sample of Chinese student sojourners. We found that both host culture orientation and home culture orientation were positively related to environmental career exploration, which in turn predicted career adaptability. In addition, it was also found that the indirect effect of host culture orientation on career adaptability via environmental career exploration was only significant among participants who were in a cultural environment with high cultural distance from their home country. These results carry

both theoretical and practical implications.

#### *4.1. Theoretical and practical implications*

First, our study enriches the research on career construction theory (Savickas, 2013) by considering the role of acculturation orientations in predicting individuals' career adaptability. Although previous studies have identified a series of individual (Li et al., 2015; van Vianen et al., 2012; Zacher, 2014) and contextual predictors (Guan et al., 2015b, 2016) for career adaptability, not much has been done to examine how individuals' cross-cultural experiences affect their career adaptability. The present study addresses this gap and the results showed that even after the effects of big-five personality and approach/avoidance traits were controlled, both home culture orientation and host culture orientations contribute to student sojourners' career adaptability. Acculturation orientations thereby capture important components of sojourners' career adaptivity (Savickas, 2013), and future research should continue to examine whether acculturation orientations can influence sojourners' long-term career development outcomes (e.g., job search success, career success). Moreover, since career construction theory (Savickas, 2013) suggests that there is a sequential model from adaptivity to adaptability, adaptive responses and adaptive outcomes, future research should also examine whether career adaptability can mediate the effects of acculturation orientations on these long-term outcomes.

Second, our results highlight the mediating role of career environmental exploration in the relationships among acculturation orientations and career adaptability. Career construction theory (Savickas, 2013) posits that there is a mediation model from career adaptivity (e.g., personality) to adaptability and adaptive behaviors. It follows that career adaptability should serve as the mediator that accounts for the effects of acculturation orientations on career exploration (Hirschi et al., 2015; Urbanaviciute et al., 2014; Zacher, 2014). That is, student sojourners' acculturation strategies should influence their career

adaptability, which enables individuals to explore their own characteristics and future career opportunities. However, in this study we found that career exploration mediated the effects of acculturation orientations on career adaptability. Our argument is also consistent with experiential learning theory (Kolb, 1984) and the model of proactive motivation (Cangiano & Parker, 2016; Parker et al., 2010). In addition, recent research also offered support for the possibility that career exploration could also influence career adaptability (Cai et al., 2015; Guan et al., 2015b). The result of a recent study (Guan et al., 2017b) suggested that there might be a reciprocal relationship between career exploration and career adaptability. That is, a high level of career adaptability enables individuals to engage in more exploration behaviors; more career exploration behaviors can also help individuals to improve their career adaptability. We tested the alternative model in which career adaptability served as the mediator but the result did not support the alternative model. Future research should use longitudinal or experimental designs to further examine the reciprocal relationship between career exploration and career adaptability.

These findings suggest that in a new cultural environment, environmental exploration, rather than self exploration, is the key link between cultural orientations and career adaptability. A possible explanation could be that when encountering novel elements in a foreign culture and experiencing possible culture shock, sojourners tend to seek support from home and host cultures to understand the environmental characteristics that may affect their cultural adaptation and career development (Neimeyer, 1988; Werbel, 2000). As a result, these two cultural orientations had stronger effects on environmental exploration, rather than self-exploration. Future research may continue to examine other mechanisms that may account for the effects of acculturation on career adaptability. For example, there might be negative mediation paths from acculturation orientations to career adaptability. For example, home culture orientation may lead individuals miss their home and feel difficult to adapt to

new culture. Hence they may feel disappointed and do not have enough motivation to engage in career exploration activities, which in turn impedes the improvement of their career adaptability. In addition, acculturation orientations may affect sojourners' career adaptability through network building (Arends-Tóth & van de Vijver, 2007; Smith et al., 2011), social support (Creed et al., 2009; Werbel, 2000), or well-being (Ward & Kennedy, 1994). These possibilities need to be examined in future work.

Third, the results showed that cultural distance served as an important contextual boundary for the effects of host culture orientation on environmental exploration and career adaptability. As a high cultural distance represents the level of difference between home culture and host culture (Slangen & van Tulder, 2009), sojourners actively participate in activities to explore host culture and acquire knowledge about it will have a better chance to understand these differences, and to identify good opportunities to develop their adaptive resources. As this study only considers the role of cultural differences, future research should continue to examine how family background (Guan et al., 2015b), organizational support (Guan et al., 2016) and other contextual factors affect the career adaptability and long-term career development of sojourners. In addition to the migration-based acculturation, Chen, Benet-Martínez and Bond (2008) argue that the acculturation process also occurs to individuals who stay in their home societies but are exposed to the influences of other cultures, as globalization has permeated various aspects of life. Chen et al. (2015) used global orientation to denote individual differences in their acculturating process to the globalizing world, and found that individuals have both proactive responses (multicultural acquisition) and defensive responses (ethnic protection) to globalization. It will be interesting to examine how these global orientations affect the career development of individuals who reside in their home societies.

The current research also carries several practical implications. The positive effects of

home culture orientation and host culture orientation on career adaptability suggest that student sojourners should get involved in the social activities with both in-group and out-group members, in order to identify opportunities of career exploration and skill development. The moderation role of cultural distance suggests that host culture orientation is particularly important for sojourners who are studying in a culture that has a low level of similarity with their home culture. Educators should also create such opportunities for sojourners to interact with local people and to engage in the local culture, in order to facilitate their career development.

#### *4.2. Limitations and Future Directions*

Despite the theoretical and practical implications discussed above, the current research has several limitations. First, the self-report method used in this study may lead to common method bias in our results (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). Although confirmative factor analysis showed a good fit of our model and moderation effects revealed in this study may be less affected by common method variance (Evans, 1985), a time-lagged design should be used in future work. In addition, as participants were asked to complete all the questions at the same time point, the results of this study cannot support the causal relations among acculturation orientations, career exploration and career adaptability. Although it is possible that acculturation strategies can help individuals to engage in more exploration activities and develop them to increase career adaptability, it is also possible that when coming into a new cultural environment, individuals with a high level of career adaptability may be more capable to do exploration activities, which in turn influence their acculturation strategies. The above analyses suggest that the causal relations of these variables can be reversed and future research should continue to address this important issue of causality.

Second, in this study we adopted short version of big-five personality scale and the

four-item acculturation measure, it is possible that these measures might not adequately capture the complex facets of these constructs. Future research may address this limitation by using alternative measures. Third, since our data were collected by snowballing sampling method and this might affect the generalizability of these results. In addition, there were more female than male sojourners in our sample. Although gender did not influence the analysis results in our data, future study should address these issues with a more representative sample. In addition, since this study was conducted among a sample of university students from China, more research should be done to examine whether the current findings can be generalized to student samples or employee samples from other countries.

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Table 1

*Descriptive Statistics, Reliabilities, and Inter-Correlations among Variables*

	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. Openness to	3.86	0.68	<b>0.71</b>												
2. Extraversion	3.20	0.93	0.37**	<b>0.86</b>											
3. Agreeableness	3.96	0.64	0.22**	0.12	<b>0.73</b>										
4. Conscientiousness	3.39	0.72	0.17*	0.12	0.35*	<b>0.70</b>									
5. Neuroticism	3.07	0.82	-0.20**	-0.22*	-0.08	-0.37*	<b>0.76</b>								
6. Approach trait	3.94	0.60	0.22**	0.25*	0.29*	0.26*	-0.29*	<b>0.84</b>							
7. Avoidance trait	3.15	0.90	-0.19**	-0.21*	-0.11	-0.39*	0.74*	-0.26*	<b>0.91</b>						
8. Host culture	3.34	0.59	0.25**	0.30*	0.03	0.01	0.03	0.12	0.07	<b>0.70</b>					
9. Home culture	3.50	0.62	0.06	0.07	0.16*	0.21*	-0.07	0.12	-0.02	-0.19*	<b>0.68</b>				
10. Career	3.42	0.64	0.32**	0.26*	0.08	0.18*	-0.13	0.24*	-0.07	0.29*	0.25*	<b>0.81</b>			
11. Career	3.84	0.59	0.37**	0.21*	0.20*	0.25*	-0.12	0.30*	-0.04	0.11*	0.19*	0.38*	<b>0.85</b>		
12. Cultural distance	2.89	1.20	-0.07	-0.02	0.06	-0.00	-0.03	0.07	-0.01	-0.06	-0.03	0.06	0.10	NA	
13. Career adaptability	4.00	0.46	0.31**	0.18*	0.31*	0.38*	-0.29*	0.52*	-0.24*	0.11	0.15*	0.37*	0.45*	-0.03	<b>0.8</b>

*Note.* \* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . Reliability coefficients are shown in bold along the diagonal of the table.





Table 2

Variables	Self-exploration		Environmental exploration		Career adaptability		<i>Results of Hierarchical Regression</i>
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	
Constant	0.87(0.47)	0.82 (0.47)	0.21(0.50)	0.14(0.50)	1.70**(0.33)	1.53**(0.32)	
Openness to experience	0.25**(0.06)	0.26**(0.06)	0.19**(0.05)	0.19**(0.06)	0.11**(0.04)	0.04(0.04)	
Extraversion	0.03(0.04)	0.03(0.04)	0.04(0.05)	0.04(0.05)	-0.02(0.03)	-0.03(0.03)	
Agreeableness	0.01(0.06)	0.00(0.06)	-0.09(0.07)	-0.09(0.07)	0.06(0.04)	0.07(0.04)	
Conscientiousness	0.14*(0.06)	0.15*(0.06)	0.08(0.06)	0.07(0.06)	0.13**(0.04)	0.10(0.04)	
Neuroticism	-0.04(0.07)	-0.03(0.07)	-0.04(0.07)	-0.04(0.07)	-0.06(0.05)	-0.05(0.04)	
Approach trait	0.19**(0.07)	0.17**(0.07)	0.14*(0.07)	0.14*(0.07)	0.30**(0.05)	0.24**(0.05)	
Avoidance trait	0.13* (0.07)	0.12*(0.06)	0.05(0.07)	0.05(0.06)	0.02(0.04)	-0.00(0.04)	
Home culture orientation	0.10(0.06)	0.32(0.16)	0.27**(0.07)	0.37*(0.17)	0.03(0.04)	-0.02(0.04)	

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Host culture orientation	0.00(0.07)	0.14(0.14)	0.28**(0.07)	-0.01(0.15)	0.03(0.05)	0.00(0.05)
Cultural distance		0.44(0.25)		-0.19(0.27)		
Home culture orientation *		-0.07(0.05)		-0.03(0.05)		
Cultural distance						
Host cultural orientation *		-0.04(0.05)		0.11*(0.05)		
Cultural distance						
Self-exploration						0.17**(0.05)
Environmental exploration						0.12*(0.04)
R <sup>2</sup>	0.24	0.26	0.26	0.29	0.37	0.44
$\Delta R^2$		0.02		0.03*		0.07**

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Notes: N=222. Unstandardized coefficients are presented in this table. Standard errors are also presented in the parenthesis.

\*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$

Table 3

*Results of Mediation and Moderated Mediation Effects*

Indirect Effect of Career Exploration Between Acculturation Orientation and Career Adaptability					
Independent variable: home culture orientation					
Mediator		<i>B</i>	<i>Bootstrapped SE</i>	<i>95% LLCI</i>	<i>95% ULCI</i>
Environmental exploration		0.02	0.01	0.01	0.05
Self-exploration		0.02	0.01	-0.003	0.05
Independent variable: host culture orientation					
Mediator		<i>B</i>	<i>Bootstrapped SE</i>	<i>95% LLCI</i>	<i>95% ULCI</i>
Environmental exploration		0.02	0.01	0.004	0.06
Self-exploration		-0.004	0.01	-0.03	0.02
Conditional Indirect Effect as a Function of Cultural Distance					
Independent variable: home culture orientation					
Mediator	Cultural distance	<i>B</i>	<i>Bootstrapped SE</i>	<i>95% LLCI</i>	<i>95% ULCI</i>
Environmental exploration	Low	0.03	0.02	0.01	0.07
	High	0.02	0.02	-0.001	0.06

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Self-exploration	Low	0.03	0.02	0.0003	0.08
	High	.01	0.02	-0.03	0.05
Index of moderated mediation					
Mediator		<i>Index</i>	<i>Bootstrapped SE</i>	<i>95% LLCI</i>	<i>95% ULCI</i>
Environmental exploration		-0.004	0.01	-0.02	0.01
Self-exploration		-0.01	0.01	-0.04	0.006
Independent variable: host culture orientation					
Mediator	Cultural distance	<i>B</i>	<i>Bootstrapped SE</i>	<i>95% LLCI</i>	<i>95% ULCI</i>
Environmental exploration	Low	0.01	0.02	-0.02	0.05
	High	0.04	0.02	0.01	0.09
Self-exploration	Low	0.002	0.02	-0.03	0.04
	High	-0.01	0.02	-0.05	0.02
Index of moderated mediation					
Mediator		<i>Index</i>	<i>Bootstrapped SE</i>	<i>95% LLCI</i>	<i>95% ULCI</i>
Environmental exploration		0.01	0.01	0.003	0.04
Self-exploration		-0.004	0.01	-0.03	0.01

*Note.*  $N = 222$ . Bootstrap sample size = 5000. Results were reported after controlling for age, gender, education level, time length of overseas

study, big five personality and approach/avoidance traits. Low cultural distance refers to one SD below the mean, while high cultural distance refers to one SD above the mean.



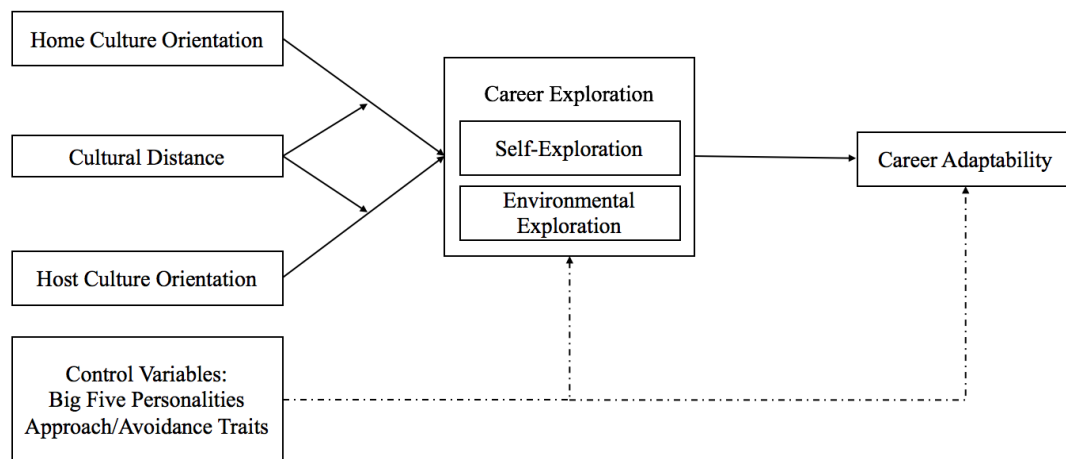


Figure 1. The Proposed Model.

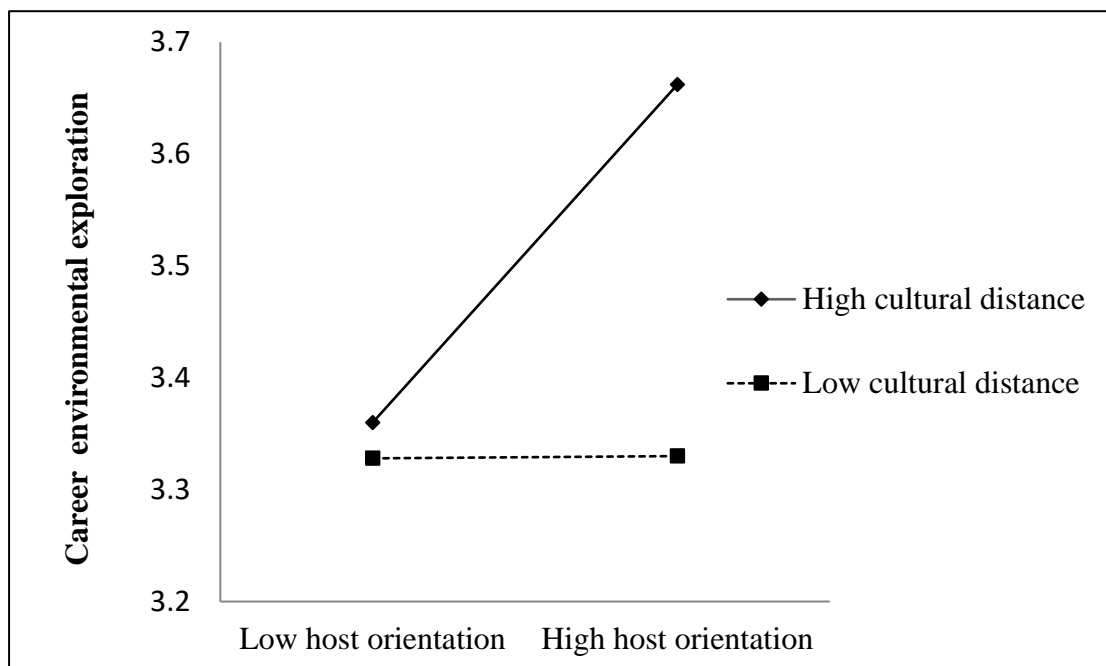


Figure 2: The Moderating Effect of Cultural Distance on the Relationship between Host Culture Orientation and Career Environmental Exploration