

SEA TURTLES' HOME COMING: CHINESE RETURNEES' RETURNING EXPERIENCES

by

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ABSTRACT

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Since China's open door policy enacted in 1978, massive numbers of Chinese people have gone overseas for education or professional development. Such "brain drain" triggered China's state level policy reform to harness these talents back home, and consequently both numbers and return rate of these returnees have been increasing over the past decade. These returnees are usually called "sea turtle" (a homonym for "returnee" in Chinese). Sea turtles are generally viewed as an asset, and even the rise of the Chinese economy has been attributed partly to their repatriation (Zweig & Han, 2011). Previous research on this special group of people has shown their important role in facilitating international knowledge transfer in Chinese research institutions and universities, and in facilitating development and change in local entrepreneurship, cultural and economic aspects (Ding, 2014; Wen, 2013; Zweig & Yang, 2014). Accordingly, various and generous policies have been introduced to induce sea turtles to swim back to their home country (Wadhwa, Jain, Saxenian, Gereffi, & Wang, 2011).

However, despite the practical importance of these sea turtles, research on their after-return experience is still limited. Thus, this two-essay dissertation aims to fill in this gap by investigating sea turtles' experiences after coming to home country. To gain a comprehensive understanding of extant literature, I first reviewed sea turtles studies on their reentry experience.

My review showed that most of the studies are largely descriptive and exploratory, and the main focus is on repatriation reasons and their practical importance. Their experiences after coming back to China are usually neglected except for some general descriptions of problems (e.g. Hao & Welch, 2012; Tung, 2007). Like other types of returnees (e.g. repatriates), sea turtles' home coming journey is never an easy task (Black, 1992; Szkudlarek, 2010). Limited extant research showed that sea turtles' returning experiences are characterized with negative feelings, struggles, and maladjustment (Chen, Yuan, Jiang, Yu, & Huang, 2003; Gill, 2010; Hao & Welch, 2012). Zweig and Han (2011) even documented that approximately one third of sea turtles intended to re-expatriate due to maladjustment.

Because examining sea turtles' subjective experiences is a relatively nascent stream of research, in addition to reviewing this literature, in Essay 1, I also adopted a qualitative approach to answer four basic research questions about sea turtles returning experiences: 1) How do sea turtles feel about their reentry experiences? 2) What are the influential factors? 3) How do sea turtles deal with these feelings? 4) What role does Chinese culture play during sea turtles' reentry? Building upon in-depth interview data from twenty sea turtles, I identified the paradoxical nature of their experiences. Integrating the interview data and the paradox literature, I established a grounded theory that shows that sea turtles' home coming journey is inherently replete with paradoxical tensions such as paradox of identity, paradox of affection, and paradox of practice. These tensions are initially latent until rendered salient by triggers such as confusions about who they are, dramatic changes in external environment, and mixed messages on the value of their overseas experiences. Sea turtles then seek different ways to manage such paradoxes. Some choose to avoid paradoxical tensions by temporarily separating them or simply ignoring them. Others choose to confront paradoxes by accepting their persistence and unsolvable nature.

In doing so, sea turtles may have the chance to transcend paradoxes and thrive in their home country.

Essay 2 extends and empirically tests one part of the grounded theory developed in Essay 1. Drawing on both paradox and identity literature, this Essay focused on the paradox of identity, and explains why sea turtles' re-entry journey is so distressful and how certain coping responses allow sea turtles to thrive in their home country. I tested the hypothesized predictions with a sample of 91 sea turtles who returned to China from a broad range of overseas countries. I proposed and found that the effects of paradox are paradoxical: the tensions resulting from sea turtles' paradox of identity are not necessarily detrimental. On the contrary, if coped with effectively, paradox may lead to a virtuous cycle and facilitate sea turtles' thriving at work. Particularly, I found that those who are equipped with the ability to think paradoxically and have a low level of preference for consistency are more likely to react strategically to paradoxical tensions, resulting in less strain and even thriving at work.

By integrating a paradox lens with the sea turtle literature, this dissertation contributes to our understanding of sea turtles' reentry experiences in two major ways: 1) Establishing a theoretical model that explains how different types of paradoxical tensions emerge during sea turtles' reentry and the corresponding coping strategies. 2) Offering empirical support showing how sea turtles can benefit from paradox by acting strategically.

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DEDICATION

To my family and all friends.

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**SEA TURTLES ON LAND: A REVIEW AND QUALITATIVE STUDY OF CHINESE
RETURNEES' RETURNING EXPERIENCES**

To this impossible race (Chinese), we attributed at once great wisdom and the emptiest simplicity; weakness and [the] ability to resist the buffetings of time; complete inertia and prodigious industry; ignorance compensated by cunning; naiveté, but incomparable subtlety; soberness of life coupled with the most amazing luxury; and an infinity of other such ridiculous contradictions. China was regarded as vast and impotent, inventive and backward, cruel and philosophical, kindly and corrupt. (Valery, 1928, p. 10)

Paradoxes are not opposites, but are dimensions of the same rhythm lived all-at-once where one is in the foreground and one is in the background (Parse, 1998, p. 30).

Along with globalization and increased international mobility, there has been growing interest in self-initiated expatriates/repatriates (SIEs/SIRs) - individuals who choose to expatriate or repatriate independently (e.g., Al Ariss & Ozbilgin, 2010; Cerdin & Pargneux, 2010; Richardson & Mallon, 2005; Tharenou & Caulfield, 2010). Although a growing body of research has evolved over the last two decades with respect to SIEs [see (Doherty et al., 2013) for a review], much less attention has been given to SIRs. Furthermore, research on SIRs has focused on those individuals who return to developed countries. As such, we know relatively little about SIRs' experiences when they return home to developing countries (Doherty et al., 2013). In regard to the more general repatriate literature, scholars have also noticed that the individual experience of re-acculturation (i.e., re-adjusting to one's home culture after an extended sojourn abroad) has received much less research attention (J. S. Black, 1992; Kelly & Morley, 2011; Sussman, 2001, 2007, 2010).

In this essay, I focused on the returning experiences of a special group of SIRs – sea turtles (i.e., *haigui*, a homonym for “returnee” in Chinese). This term describes those individuals who were born in China; left to study or work overseas for more than one year; and, eventually, returned to China to work for the long-term (Li, 2005; Tharenou & Seet, 2014).

Due to their increasing practical importance to China, sea turtles have been the focus of recent scholars (Doherty et al., 2013; Hao & Welch, 2012; Kan, 2004; Sun, 2013; Tharenou & Seet, 2014; Zweig & Han, 2011) and are generally viewed as an asset to the country. In fact, the rise of the Chinese economy has been attributed partly to their repatriation (Zweig & Han, 2011). Studies have shown the essential role of sea turtles in facilitating international knowledge transfers in Chinese research institutions and universities (Yi, 2011; Zhang, 2013), local entrepreneurship and economic developments (Liu, Lu, Filatotchev, Buck, & Wright, 2010; Wang, 2011; Wang, Duan, & Hou, 2014; Wright, Liu, Buck, & Filatotchev, 2008), and social and cultural development changes (Ding, 2014; Wen, 2013; Zweig & Yang, 2014). Consequently, various and generous policies have been introduced to entice sea turtles to swim home (Wadhwa, Jain, Saxenian, Gereffi, & Wang, 2011).

However, as is typical of other nascent streams of research, the research on sea turtles has been largely descriptive and exploratory with relatively little theory behind it [see (Doherty et al., 2013) for an exception]. Most studies on sea turtles focus on why they repatriate and their essential roles in economic or organizational development, but their reentry experiences are usually neglected except for some general descriptions of the problems that they experience after returning home (e.g., Hao & Welch, 2012; Tung, 2007). This is an important omission in that these experiences, such as sorrow and joy, struggle and success, are more proximate to sea turtles' effective functioning after coming back to China.

The purpose of this article is an attempt to fill this gap by examining the following four sets of research questions: 1) How do sea turtles feel about their reentry experiences? 2) What are the influential factors of these feelings? 3) How do sea turtles deal with these feelings? 4) What role does the Chinese culture play during the sea turtles' reentry experiences? This study

adopts a qualitative approach and begins with a brief literature review of the extant literature on sea turtles' returning experiences. Then, I will describe the design of the study and my data analysis process in the methods section. Next, I will detail the findings in order to address my research questions. I will also explain how the paradox lens emerged and was integral to my research focus. In the discussion section, I will explain how this study makes contributions to both sea turtle and paradox literatures.

Literature Review

The experience of returning to one's own culture is a special type of cross-cultural transition, which is a multifaceted phenomenon encompassing various aspects, such as emotion (i.e., affect), behavior, and cognition (Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001). Therefore, in order to systematize the existing studies on sea turtle return experiences, I followed the cultural adjustment framework proposed by previous studies (Martin & Harrell, 2004; Ward et al., 2001) and grouped the theoretical streams into three functional categories: affective, behavioral, and cognitive.

Affective aspects

Past research has shown that the affective consequences of returning home after stints overseas are complex. Distress, anxiety, grief, and depression are common feelings upon returning (Cox, 2006; Gaw, 2000; Hao & Welch, 2012; Tannenbaum, 2007; Yoshida et al., 2009). Thus, some studies even argue that returning to one's home country can be more challenging than expatriation (Adler, 1981; Chamove & Soeterik, 2006). However, other studies have shown that reentry is not a psychologically challenging experience (Gama & Pedersen, 1978; Rohrlich & Martin, 1991; Sussman, 2007; Tung, 2007).

Similarly, the majority of studies on sea turtles report reverse culture shock (Chen, Yuan, Jiang, Yu, & Huang, 2003; Choi & Lu, 2013; Ding, 2014; Gill, 2010; Gu & Schweisfurth, 2015b; Hao & Welch, 2012). For example, studies documented that sea turtles feel that they are forced to readjust to some negative aspects of the Chinese lifestyle, such as gift exchanges; corruption; different work ethics, and different modes of communication (Gill, 2010); competitive, fast-paced work styles; and overcrowded and polluted living environments (Hao & Welch, 2012; Wadhwa, Saxenian, Freeman, Gereffi, & Salkever, 2009). Other affective responses, such as anxiety, marginalization, and maladjustment, were also commonly mentioned (Choi & Lu, 2013; Gill, 2010; Ip, 2006; Qu, 2003). However, several studies have suggested that sea turtles with shorter times of absence or higher levels of education may have strong positive sentiments and smooth re-integration back to China (Keren, Guo, Ping, & Huang, 2003; Tung, 2007; Zweig, Changgui, & Rosen, 2004; Zweig & Han, 2011)

Behavioral aspects

After their overseas adventures, sea turtles are changed. These changes differentiate them from local colleagues in terms of knowledge and skills, learning and adapting abilities, and modes of communication (Gill, 2010; Gu & Schweisfurth, 2015a; Hao & Welch, 2012; Wang, Tang, & Li, 2014). As documented in sea turtle research, these changes are welcomed and also unwelcomed at home.

On one hand, they are seen as an ‘asset’ because of their changed behaviors and newly developed human capital. Unlike other returnees (e.g., corporate repatriates) whose newly acquired skills and knowledge are usually neglected (Black., Gregersen, Mendenhall, & Stroh, 1999; Ren, Bolino, Shaffer, & Kraimer, 2012), sea turtles’ overseas education and experiences

are highly valued and desired by Chinese firms and the government (Tharenou, 2015). For example, sea turtles usually enjoy strong support from their employers and from country-level policies designed to guarantee or maximize the usage of their overseas experiences (Zweig, 2006; Zweig & Han, 2011). It is probably also the underlying reason why most (87%) sea turtles report no problems finding jobs in China during the first three months after their returns (Zweig & Han, 2011).

In contrast, some studies have found that, for some sea turtles, the process of learning to fit back into China is relatively difficult. For example, Ip (2006) reported that sea turtles returning to China from New Zealand took a long time to readjust to the work environment and complex Chinese culture. Chen et al. (2003) described the difficulties that sea turtles confront, such as dealing with administrative bureaucracies and the need to “cotton up” to people due to the essential role of networking in Chinese culture.

Cognitive aspects

Studies in this category investigate how returning individuals ‘think.’ As such, the focus is on their thoughts, perceptions, and beliefs. In the more general reentry literature, research has revealed that whether they are aware of it or not, returnees undergo substantial changes in terms of cognitive styles, values, and identities because of their overseas experiences (please see Szkudlarek, 2010 for more information).

Studies examining sea turtles’ cognitive experiences have been limited to two general focuses. One set of research is based on the expectation models developed by Black and colleagues (1992). These models are used to explain the confrontation between sea turtles’ expectations and the realities of the host country. The results of these studies are inconsistent.

Some studies have shown that sea turtles' expectations are not met. For example, Biao (2011) documented that the government failed to deliver the promises of higher salaries and research conditions to the sea turtles who returned from Singapore. Other studies, however, have shown that sea turtles' unmet expectations are related to their unrealistic, often too high, expectations about life and work after returning to China (Zweig & Han, 2011). Several studies on Chinese sea turtle students showed that they tended to have high expectations about coming to home country; they wanted to play a critical role in the workplace and gain better job and business opportunities, and were dissatisfied because their expectations were not met (Biao, 2011; Luo Keren & Ping, 2003). However, there are also studies showing that sea turtles' expectations were well met as they received what they were promised, such as greater professional advancements and opportunities for career and economic development (Wadhwa, 2009; Wadhwa et al., 2009).

The other set of research focuses on the competing identities of sea turtles. For example, Ip (2006) found that sea turtles have been profoundly influenced by their overseas experiences. As a result, they've developed a dual identity (i.e., additive identity) by adding the overseas country's values and ideals to their Chinese identity. The findings showed that these returnees experienced difficulties in interpersonal relationships with colleagues who had not been abroad. Chang (2010) reported that Chinese students underwent subtractive shifts in identity and become "less Chinese," which caused difficulties in interacting with family members. Another study based on Sussman's (2000) framework investigated sea turtles' cosmopolitanism identities based on cosmopolitanism and global flows (Zhang, Wei, & William, 2012). The authors found that, although these sea turtles (back from the U.K.) developed cosmopolitanism identities due to their exposure to both cultures, such identities were difficult to maintain after settling down. The

deeply embedded Chinese culture makes it hard for returnees to keep a distance from all of the different aspects of their own culture.

Overall, extant research has revealed that we still lack a thorough understanding of sea turtles' returning journeys. Most studies have not had a theoretical basis, relying largely on economic explanations or general descriptions of returning problems. A few exceptions still followed the paradigm of traditional cross-cultural research focusing on mostly negative reactions and the correspondent outcomes.

Methods

Sample and Context

This study aims to build theory in the area of returning experiences; thus, grounded theory approach is chosen to better understand the unexploited dynamics regarding sea turtles' re-entry experiences. A qualitative approach, in this regard, is suitable to this study in that, on one hand, it aims to “study things in their natural setting, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994, p. 2) and, on the other hand, uses “a holistic perspective, which preserves the complexities of human behavior” (Greenhalgh & Taylor, 2008, p.1) which enables us to understand the world from the eyes of those studied (Pratt, 2009).

Among the different sampling strategies for such inductive qualitative studies, scholars have suggested that purposeful and theoretical sampling are often appropriate (Patton, 1990; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Therefore, a selected group of research participants in this study were recruited in a strategic way relevant to the research purpose (Pratt, 2009). The goal of this sampling was not to randomly select a representative sample with the intention of making

generalizations. Rather, purposive sampling is a method that relies on the judgment of the researcher when it comes to selecting the participants (Seidman, 2012). To be eligible for this study, the returnees had to meet three conditions. First, they had to be born in China and worked (for more than one year) or obtained their degrees overseas. Second, they must be currently employed in companies for the long-term. Third, following the work by (Kraimer, Shaffer, Harrison, & Ren, 2012), as my focus is their experiences, only those individuals who returned to China within the past 18 months were recruited in order to mitigate recall bias.

In addition, the participants in this study were chosen in order to ensure a variety of background profiles (e.g., overseas country, current living city, industry, gender, major, etc.), which are likely to illuminate the various issues related to the sea turtles' returning experiences. However, in this sample, despite various efforts to diversify the overseas countries, the percentage of those individuals who came back from Western developed countries (90%) is higher than the percentage of those individuals from other Eastern countries (10%). This is also consistent with national statistics (Chinese National Bureau of Statistics, 2013) and likely occurs because gaining an education from a Western country increases one's reputation as such an education is highly valued in China.¹

Another consideration of the background profiles is the sea turtles' home cities. In China, location is tremendously important, as China's increasing regional economic disparities between the Tier-1 cities in the highly developed eastern coastal area and other cities (Tier-2 or lower) in the underdeveloped west interior have resulted in significant differences in many aspects of life, including the cost of living, transportation, average income, food safety, education, and

¹ China News. (2013). *haigui huiguo dajun yuji jiang chao qunian, gaoduan rencai bili xiajiang* [The number of returnees is expected to surpass last year and the percentage of top level returnees is declining]. Retrieved from <http://www.chinanews.com/edu/2013/11-05/5463836.shtml>.

development opportunities (Cai, Wang, & Du, 2002; Wei, 2013). A general trend documented by the latest *Annual Report on the Development of Chinese Returnees (2013)* shows that more than one third of returnees have settled in the cities of Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou, or east coast provinces such as Jiangsu province, regardless of where their home cities were located. In order to capture the diversity of the new returnees, individuals who settled in Tier 2 cities were also included in this study.

The participants were recruited through personal contact and the snowballing method. Once a potential participant's contact information was obtained, an invitation email was sent. All of the sea turtles I contacted agreed to participate in the study. Table 1 provides a detailed distribution of the participants.

- Insert Table 1 about here -

Data Collection

The primary method of data collection for this study was the in-depth interview. Following Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) interview data collection guidelines, as well as considering the geographic differences, I conducted the interviews via online video chatting software because gesture and facial expressions are valuable resources when accessing the feelings and thoughts of the interviewees. The interviews were conducted at the times most suitable for the participants and lasted approximately one hour on average. Every interview was recorded as audio data with the participants' consents and then transcribed into text verbatim. Mandarin Chinese was the main language used in all of the interviews because the participants preferred to use their mother language. In addition, the use of Chinese was able to capture the

richness of their life stories and holistic understanding of the issues (Marshall & Rossman, 2010). Although I modified and rearranged the questions in the protocol during each interview to better capture the emerging themes (Spradley, 1979), common to each interview were questions about the 1) sea turtles' major positive and negative experiences and reactions after returning, 2) causes of these experiences and reactions, 3) sea turtles' coping strategies, and 4) role of Chinese culture in the sea turtles' returns.

These data were supplemented with short surveys, unobtrusive observational notes, and archival analysis. The surveys collected demographic data, such as age, gender, time spent overseas, and current city. Since transcription decontextualizes the interview from its natural setting (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009), I also took notes during and after the interviews to document information that the recordings could not capture, such as body language, gestures, facial expressions, and settings. The gestures and facial expressions were valuable in regard to accessing the feelings and thoughts of the interviewees (Mason, 2002). Finally, I gathered archival documents from various sources, including news articles, annual reports on Chinese returnees, government documents from the National Bureau of Statistics, and documentaries about sea turtles' returns. Taken together, these secondary sources provided a richer context for understanding the responses in the larger social context.

Data Analysis

Following the guidelines specified for methods of naturalistic inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and constant comparison techniques (Locke, 2001; Strauss & Corbin, 1998), this study adopted a modified grounded theory approach, whereby I analyzed the qualitative data by going back and forth between the data and an emerging structure of a theoretical argument in the following three steps.

Step 1: Creating provisional categories and first-order codes. I began the analysis on the sea turtles' returning experiences by identifying the initial concepts in the data and then drawing on common statements to form provisional categories and first-order codes (Locke, 2001). For example, data from the first several interviews referenced the general question raised by sea turtles of "Who am I?" Thus, the participants' statements on the sea turtles' views about themselves were grouped together and named accordingly. After a category was named, I searched the interview data and notes for additional information related to that category. Any category that was considered unfit to the revisited data was either abandoned or modified. In the remaining interviews, these categories, which were continuously modified during the data collection process, were used to guide and direct the interview questions.

Step 2: Integrating first-order codes and creating theoretical categories. In this step, I engaged in axial coding (Locke, 2001), wherein I summarized all of the provisional categories created in Step 1 into more theoretical and abstract themes (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This step allowed me to search for relationships between and among these categories and compare intraspecialty and interspecialty differences within and across the sea turtles (data sources) in order to investigate the dynamics of their returning experiences.

Step 3: Delimiting theory by aggregating theoretical dimensions. At this stage, I sought to formulate, reorganize, and revise my understanding of all the codes within a coherent picture (Locke, 2001). Similar themes were grouped together based on several overarching dimensions to make up the basis of the emergent framework. Once I identified a workable framework, I examined whether the data and framework were able to fit together (Locke, 2001). During this process, frequent indicators of contradictions and tensions drew my attention and led me to the paradox literature for insight. As Hatch and Erhlich (1993) stated "When environments are

complex and changing, conditions are ripe for the experiences of contradiction, incongruity, and incoherence and the recognition paradox and ambiguity within organizations” (p. 505).

Furthermore, three approaches were adopted to ensure the trustworthiness of my interview data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). First, the data, including the contact records, transcripts, notes, CVs, news, and statistic reports, were carefully managed, stored, and analyzed using NVivo 10.0. Second, I used member checking, which entails double-checking with the participants about the clarity and accuracy of both the Chinese and English versions of the interview transcripts, in order to mitigate any potential problems, such as information loss during translation and transcription. Finally, a peer examination was used to provide an external check. I asked several Chinese colleagues to check my translations and offer comments on my findings.

Emergence of Paradox

Paradoxical tensions refer to those elements that seem logical individually, but inconsistent and even absurd when juxtaposed (Lewis, 2000). These tensions, according to Ford and Backoff (1988), are then socially and cognitively constructed as paradoxical if the actors polarize the elements, ignoring or masking their interdependence. In other words, paradoxical tensions are the underlying sources of a paradox (Smith & Lewis, 2011). This definition differentiates paradox from other types of tensions, such as dilemmas or dialectic conflicts in nature and as means of coping. A dilemma denotes an either/or choice, and coping with dilemma requires weighing the upsides and downsides of each competing alternative. A dialectic conflict denotes a synthesizing process, whereby contradictory elements can be solved through integration. In sharp contrast, paradoxical tensions signify two sides of the same coin and the

core premise is not problem-solving through contingent fit, but addressing the dualities simultaneously (Lewis & Smith, 2014).

Recent development in paradox literature has called for researchers to move beyond the paradox as a simple label, accentuating its value as a guiding perspective (e.g., Lewis, 2000; Smith & Lewis, 2011). Lewis & Smith (2014) proposed that paradox can also be used as a metatheory, which is unconstrained by contexts, variables, or methods. This study uses paradox as an overarching framework through which to explore the tensions that occurred in the sea turtles' returning processes.

To the best of my knowledge, studies adopting a paradox lens in reentry are still rare. However, in the closely-related expatriate literature, an increasing number of studies have adopted a paradox lens (Gannon, 2007; Osland & Osland, 2005; J. S. Osland, 2000; Russell & Dickie, 2011). For example, Osland and Osland (2005) identified nine paradoxes inherent in the expatriate experience based on interviews with repatriated businesspeople. Spector and Cooper (2000) proposed that the internal conflict experienced by expatriate executives stems from polarizing two cultural identities as mutually exclusive. In comparison, effective coping entails learning to live with dual identification.

The returning process as it is related to sea turtles poses an appropriate and feasible setting for paradox. On one hand, sea turtles' reentry journeys are inherently replete with paradoxical tensions because sea turtles are mediating between two cultures. For example, prior research has already documented tensions, such as contradictory feelings (e.g., feelings of belonging and loneliness), conflicting messages (e.g., overseas experiences being valued and ignored), and competing demands (e.g., pull and push forces) (Bolino, 2000; Tharenou, 2015; Tharenou & Seet, 2014).

On the other hand, Chinese culture also poses a unique context for a paradox lens to emerge. The quote from Paul Valery (French poet) at the beginning of this study summarizes the paradoxical nature of the Chinese culture. Scholars have examined this unique feature from different angles. For example, Faure and Fang (2008) identified eight pairs of paradoxical values in China. Then, based on the philosophical principle of yin and yang, Fang and Faure (2011) provided a framework describing the paradoxical characteristics of Chinese communication styles. Chen (2002) proposed that Chinese middle way philosophy may offer a meaningful way to transcend paradoxes by reconciling the polarities and dualities.

Based on the interview data, the themes that initially emerged as identity, cross-cultural readjustment, affective reaction, and tension-coping strategies, were re-grouped into the paradox of identity, affection, practice, and different methods of managing paradoxes. Using the paradox perspective, the final data structure is illustrated in Figure 1, which summarizes the second-order themes on which I built the model of identity change.

- Insert Figure 1 about here -

Findings

Triggers of paradox

Despite the journey of return is full of tensions, these tensions only become paradoxical sea turtles polarized them or emphasized their differences over commonalities. In other words, sea turtles may not have noticed these tensions unless they were rendered salient by certain

triggers. As illustrated by Figure 1, four triggers were found by this study to relate to the origins of different types of paradoxical experiences of sea turtles.

First, **construed external image discrepancies** refer to the incongruities between who sea turtles think they are and their perceptions about how they are seen by others. Respondents reported such comparative incongruities in both their social identity and cultural identity, triggering two types of identity paradoxes: a privileged AND mediocre strata and Chinese AND foreign Chinese

Second, **systematic contradictions** refer to the external and internal contradictions experienced by sea turtles after returning home. External contradictions are denoted by the environmental differences between China and overseas countries and highlight the differences between the sea turtles' past experiences in overseas countries and their new lives in China. Internal contradictions refer to individual differences between "the old self" (i.e., who they were) and "the new self" (i.e., who they are now), which make them feel as if they can never go home again. As Cannon (1996) suggested: "many paradoxes are caused by the hangover of one set of assumptions or beliefs into a new age or environment and proliferate when change is dramatic or rapid" (p. 110). Therefore, paradoxes of "Adapted AND Unfit" and "Sense of belonging AND Strangeness" emerge when sea turtles are immersed in the comfort of the past, fail to keep up with external and internal changes, and start questioning their compatibility with their home culture and interpersonal relationships.

Third, sea turtles also receive **mixed messages** related to the value of their overseas experiences. On one hand, sea turtles are empowered by various support from multiple sources (e.g., government, supervisor, coworker, family, organization), as the common belief shared by all the participants is that the objective of attracting sea turtles back to China is to fully utilize

their superior knowledge and skills. In the eyes of one participant, HY, related to his parents' generation: "[sea turtles] are of a totally different species...we are better in many aspects." On the other hand, messages such as "do as what others do" create pressure to conform, which limits the use of the sea turtles' newly gained human capital. Moreover, they are actually treated (e.g., compensation, tasks, promotion opportunities) not much differently than land turtles (those who have never been abroad). Such multiplicity of views expands uncertainty and surfaces the paradoxes of Empowered AND Constrained, and Valued AND Deprived.

Forth, **conflicting behavioral expectations** denote conflicting codes of behaviors perceived by sea turtles. These conflicting behavioral expectations may be caused by the paradoxical nature of Chinese culture (Fang & Faure, 2011). The participants in this study highlighted two behavioral tensions: Squeaky wheel AND loud duck, Guanxi AND Nengli (Professionalism).

Types of Paradoxes

Four triggers mentioned above render salient three types of paradoxes. The **Paradox of Identity** refers to the sea turtles' opposing, yet distinct identities and denotes the multifaceted, tenuous, and seemly absurd nature of the sea turtles' identities. According to Figure 2, subtle identity tensions became salient and form paradoxes as multiple views emerge on who sea turtles really are. One paradox in this category occurs when sea turtles feel that they are both a privileged AND mediocre strata. Specifically, many sea turtles believe that, with their overseas education and experiences, they should be treated as superior at home (e.g., with better jobs, with favorable policies, with more growth opportunities). Unfortunately, such expectation did not always correspond with reality and is, sometimes, contrary to what they actually experience, or

the feedback they received from their coworkers and friends. As HY stated: “the label of sea turtle is only a stepping stone to find a job. Once you get in, it seems useless.” For example, as DFSDN explained,

It was easy for me to find a job; indeed, big companies prefer someone with overseas degrees or experiences. Thus, we do have more opportunities [in the] domestic job market. After all, that’s why more and more sea turtles are coming home. However, other than that, one can hardly tell the differences between sea turtles and others. If I have to say, we are better in English, and that’s it!

Another paradox in this category concerns sea turtles’ individual cultural identity incongruities. Sea turtles make sense of who they are through interactions. Sea turtle respondents often stress their cultural identities as Chinese, but at the same time, they also complain that others misunderstand them by seeing them as “less Chinese” or “foreign Chinese.” These feelings of misunderstanding were often evident in the sea turtles’ unique behaviors and mindsets revealed during personal interactions. The identity paradox of Chinese AND foreign Chinese can, thus, be triggered. For example, GS stressed her Chinese roots and firmly believed that she had not changed “much” by “living abroad [for] several years.” However, she also acknowledged that some of her behavioral and cognitive changes made her “less Chinese” or a “foreign Chinese” to others. To illustrate, she stated that

One day, we [with land turtles] were discussing the differences between smart and wise. One of my friends asked me what type best described [me]. I said “I am both smart and wise” without thinking. My friends looked at me, surprised, and said “you are really not modest at all!

She also described her habit of speaking a mixed language with both Chinese and English together.

Mr. Qianzhongshu [the author of *Weicheng* (1947)] satirized sea turtles with such behavior as ‘the meat stuck in between teeth.’ Ironically, when I become a sea turtle, I

spoke the same way and did not even realize it until my friend [a land turtle] told me multiple times. I am not trying to show off, really. It is more like a habit.

The **paradoxes of affection** refer to the sea turtles' related, but opposing affective reactions toward their experiences at home. They are similar to the "emotional ambivalence" concept proposed by Pratt and colleagues (Pratt & Doucet, 2000; Pratt & Rosa, 2003), which was defined as "the sensation of being pulled in opposite directions as one feels both positive and negative affect toward a target" (Pratt & Doucet, 2000, p. 205). In this context, I found that sea turtles' "ambivalent" affections were directed toward home country, their interpersonal relationships, their competence, and their overseas experiences. Respectively, the sea turtles experienced paradoxes of adapted AND unfit, belonging AND strangeness, empowered AND constrained, and valued AND deprived

The first of these affective paradoxes is that the sea turtles feel both adapted to AND unfit in relation to home in general. The participants did not report any problems adapting back to China home, yet found it very hard to fully "fit in" again. For example, the majority of the respondents suggested strong positive sentiments related to their smooth reintegrations into China. However, they also acknowledged that they felt that they could not "go back home again." For example, one sea turtle who had lived in the U.K., FG, described his feelings after coming back to China as follows:

'Happy' is the key word...I cannot see why there [would] problems adjust[ing] back. After all, I've already managed to adjust to a different country. Back home, that is the environment that I am familiar with and, so, adjusting back is not a problem; however, every time I came home, I feel like there are some aspects of culture that I just cannot stand.

ZH, a sea turtle who came back from Australia, shared similar paradoxical feelings:

I was born here and have lived in China for more than 20 years. There is no reason to say “I can not adjust” just because of spending several years abroad. My overall feeling is [that] there are, of course, many things I don't like, but I can adjust back home [that's] no problem and I can understand home. Isn't it true for any places you go in the world?

The second paradox of affection occurs when sea turtles feel both like they belong at and are estranged from home. Although several years does not sound like a long time, both the sea turtles and their homes have changed in many aspects during their time away. As such, many of the sea turtles interviewed did not feel as if they could “fully” go back to their family and home. Prior research has found that, after spending a long time in a different country, sea turtles are distinct from their local colleagues without overseas experiences in several behavioral aspects, such as code of ethical conduct at work, tentativeness in forming social relationships, and modes of communication (Gill, 2010; Gu & Schweisfurth, 2015a; Hao & Welch, 2012; Wang, Tang, et al., 2014). As GLW explained,

I was excited to come back. I really missed my family and friends. However, when I finally got back and met my old friends, I realized that it seemed [that] we were not “on the same page.” We [didn't] have much to talk [about], were not interested in each others' topics, and got bored easily. Although I am sure we still have the warm feelings, but we are not that close anymore.

Similarly, as KAM, a sea turtle working as an auditor at a construction company, mentioned in regard to her relationships with her coworkers:

My coworkers are very nice. We are all of the same age. There is hardly anything that I feel not used to. Actually, my supervisors are the same. They are only a little bit older than me, so, at work, I usually call them brothers or sisters... however... I kind of feel isolated from everyone [at work]. Sometimes, I don't even know what they are talking about. I have been away for a long time and I think I need time to catch up with what happened in China, such as news, politics, and even pop songs.

The third paradox in this category, empowered and constrained, describes sea turtles' paradoxical feelings of both empowered to pursue personal goals and, at the same time, are

under great pressure to conform as well as are closely monitored and controlled. The sea turtles' feelings of empowerment come from their beliefs in their competencies to successfully perform tasks as well as their various support from work, family, and even the government. Similar to the findings of Tharenou (2015), I also found that overseas education and training forged sea turtles' knowing how (e.g., professional skills, knowledge, language skills, cross-cultural competence), knowing who (e.g., ability to initiate and maintain international connections), and knowing why (e.g., learning abilities, critical thinking, global mindset, holistic thinking) competences. Another source of empowerment is the support received by the sea turtles. Such support may be the reasons why HY stated that "we [sea turtles] are better in many aspects, especially in the eyes of our parent's generation. My supervisor thinks highly of me. I am always his first choice whenever he has a task to assign."

At the same time, sea turtles also struggle with pressures to conform from their home culture, which emphasizes harmony and collectivism. In other words, according to HY, a common mentality in China is "to do as the others do". He described this paradox as following:

For everything, literally everything I do and the way I do it, I have to get approval first from my supervisor. Let me put it this way, if they ask you to write "yi (一, '1' in Chinese)" from right to left, you just cannot do it from left to right. Initially, I took it as a joke, but, later on, I realized that I made a mistake. For me, I believe I am capable of doing this job, so just tell me what you want and I will deliver it to you. Don't tell me how to do it.

Such pressure not only comes from work, but also from the sea turtles' culture and family. As JBM, a sociology major sea turtle who came back from the U.K. after working at a charity organization, explained why she quit her first job after coming back to China:

I feel that all the people around me, my coworkers, my relatives, and even the whole society, have the same expectation of what you should do in different periods of your life. I know [that] life is like a road and they care about me, but everyone

around me tries to make me believe that there is only one road, one “correct” road in my life. I had the same feeling at my first job, too. I don't like it; I believe everyone should have his/her unique road. My family and friends are supposed to support me, but they did not. That's why I left.

The last paradox of affection is feeling both valued and deprived at the same time.

Generally speaking, equipped with new competencies, sea turtles are viewed as an asset to firms and the whole country (Ip, 2006; Tharenou & Seet, 2014). The participants in my study also hold the same belief and their feelings of being valued emerge when they are treated favorably (e.g., sea turtles are offered more job opportunities, provided with generous financial support, assigned more challenging tasks compared with those individuals without overseas experiences. For example, TDN, a sea turtle earned a degree in computer science from the U.S., feels that his overseas experiences are appreciated and make him “better off” than the land turtles because of his choice to pursue a graduate degree overseas. “Generally, I am satisfied with my choice of return. I like where I live and I can find a job because many international companies prefer sea turtles.” DCN, a sea turtle who came back from Holland with a degree in finance and now works in the real estate industry, has had several jobs since returning to China.

I kinda like my current job because I think my firm takes us sea turtles seriously. For example, here, my firm offered us a lot of training and a camp-like orientation. Moreover, I feel lucky that my firm can also support me to get a Beijing Hukou (government registration) through the “Beijing 1000 Talent Program” (a supportive program specific for sea turtles).

On the other hand, feelings of deprivation occur when sea turtles perceive a discrepancy between what they want and feel they deserve and what they have received. This issue echoes Crosby and Gonzalez-Intal (1984) study, which argued that people react to their employment situations based on their subjective experiences rather than the objective conditions they face. Despite most of sea turtles’ claims that they like their jobs, they also believe that they are

receiving less pay than they feel they should and expected to do a lot more work, causing them to feel similar to or even “worse off” than their coworkers without overseas experiences. For example, DCN stated that “I don’t think my company values our overseas experiences and skills enough. We work about 10 hours a day, but my salary barely covers all the costs of living.”

The *paradoxes of practice* refer to the competing and opposing codes of behaviors fostered by the paradoxical nature of Chinese culture. As Valery’s poem described, Chinese culture is commonly considered to be based on three different and often contradictory value systems: Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism. Such cultural complexities and plurality have already been seen nourishing competing behavioral demands in China (Fang, 1999; Faure & Fang, 2008). Having experienced a different culture helps sea turtles understand the uniqueness and complexity of Chinese culture, but also may cause confusion and conflict. In this category, I have identified two major paradoxes of practice.

First, the “squeaky wheel AND silent duck” denotes opposing rules of conduct about how to express oneself, such as feelings, thoughts, and talents. Many of the participants stated that one of the key characteristics that differentiates sea turtles from land turtles is a strong desire for direct self-expression. According to RMRB, “a lot of [my] colleagues are too shy to speak up. They probably try to save face. When they actually say something, they express it in such a complicated way that, sometimes, I find it very difficult to follow.” This distinct feature of sea turtles probably comes from their overseas training in Western countries, where “the squeaky wheel gets the grease.” However, being “squeaky” is completely opposite from and incompatible with Chinese traditional culture, where “the loudest duck gets shot (*qiang da chu tou niao* in Chinese).” One thing worth noting is that being a “silent duck” does not mean “saying nothing,”

but rather having a conservative Chinese communication style, featuring a combination of controlled feelings, appearing humble, avoiding conflict, and saving *mianzi* (i.e., face) (Fang, 1999; Faure & Fang, 2008). Violating this code of behavior is seen as disturbing group harmony and challenging the hierarchy. Thus, “being squeaky” is usually considered unwise as it can cause one to lose face or be shamed. The paradox of being the “squeaky wheel AND silent duck” represents the tension related to how sea turtles should express themselves. According to RMRB:

Staying in the U.S. for such a long time, I [am] already used to speak[ing] from my heart and, sometimes, [I] forget about modesty and connotation. I don't think this is a bad thing. On the contrary, I believe that it is a way of marketing myself. If I think I am 100% fit for or capable of certain tasks, I will say so. [However], back to China, I oftentimes need to think before I speak and [will] say something that may not be what I really thought. If I think I am 100% fit or capable of certain tasks, I would say [that] I only score 80% and let you figure out what to do with the rest 20%.

Second, the paradox of *guanxi* AND *nengli* (i.e., professionalism) concerns the competing desires to “get things done” in China’s value system. It reflects the opposing standards or sets of behavioral anchors related to the most effective ways by which to accomplish tasks: “who you know” or “what you can do.” Among the studies on Chinese culture, *guanxi* has probably been studied the most in management literature (Farh, Tsui, Xin, & Cheng, 1998; Law, Wong, Wang, & Wang, 2000; J. Liu, Song, & Wu, 2008; Varma, Budhwar, & Pichler, 2011; Yang, 1994). Chinese culture is deeply rooted in Confucianism, which approaches individuals and their relationship with the environment from a relational angle (Hwang, 2011). Individuals are construed as relational or the centers of relationships (Hwang, 2011). Within this context, *guanxi* refers to personal connections or social networks, but is more than the sum of personal ties (Luo, 2000). It also refers to the benefits gained from these connections and the moral obligations to maintain such connections (Gold, Guthrie, & Wank, 2002). *Guanxi* exists and influences almost

every aspect of an individual's life. As such, some scholars have posed that China is more or less a *guanxi* society (Cao, 2008). Many sea turtle participants mentioned even though they have been “out of page” or “out of sight” for years, they still cannot stay away from it,

Traditionally, *nengli* (i.e., professionalism) has been considered secondary and, sometimes, opposite to *guanxi* in building one's professional career. In this study, I found that sea turtles perceived *guanxi* and *nengli* to be intertwined and meaningful in regard to revealing the dynamics of business and daily life in China. When asked about the process of job hunting, LTJ stated with a little sense of bragging:

My parents found it [my current job] for me. I could not find by myself, of course. This is *guanxi*, but the premise is that you need to be competitive in *nengli*. Everyone can do my job, but not everyone can do it well. That [to do it well], I call it *nengli*. *Guanxi* gave me a chance to prove that I have my *nengli*.

A few sea turtles even refused support from their family's *guanxi* and, instead, insisted to hunt for jobs by themselves. For example, RMVB, a sea turtle who came back from France with a master's degree in accounting, described her job hunting experiences as follows.

I turned down several job offers from my family and friends. It is not only because of my confidence in my professional training, which I earned with hard work, but also I know clearly what I want [and] those jobs may not be suitable for me.

Even so, she may be able to shed her family's *guanxi*, but she could not stay away from her own.

It may sound weird, but dinner is the main event of your job. Drinking and eating is the start of building *guanxi*. Sometimes, I need to catch up on several dinners in the same night. It takes up almost all of my personal time.

This study also found that most sea turtle participants understood the importance of *guanxi* and were willing to build and use *guanxi*. ZH described how he sees the relationship

between *guanxi* and his job: “everything is about *guanxi*. In fact, your job ‘is’ *guanxi*. Sometimes, having the right *guanxi* is more important than having the right *nengli* to do your job.” DFSDN is one of the oldest employees at his company and he enjoys the current *guanxi* he has at work:

Actually, only 30% of our time is spent on work. The rest (70%) is spent on *guanxi*. I am an old employee now and have built up a fine *guanxi* with everyone. For example, according to the normal processing speed, to complete an order roughly takes a week. However, if I personally place the order, and it is urgent, it only takes two to three days. Problems like this may be very difficult for a new employee but will become easier if you have the right *guanxi*.

Managing Paradoxes - Defensive and Transcendent Strategies

Once the sea turtles recognize these paradoxes, they start engaging in coping with these paradoxes. Two major themes emerged based on the interview data: defense and transcend the paradox. The defensive strategies seemed relatively easy and handy and included “clinging to one agenda” and “blocking (i.e., focusing on separating and avoiding paradoxes). These strategies were usually used as temporary expedients when the sea turtles first came back. On the other hand, the transcendent strategies are the “hard” way to manage paradoxes, as it requires sea turtles to engage paradoxes by “accepting” and “resolving” these seemingly absurd paradoxical tensions in order to capture their “enlightening potential”.

Defensive Strategies

In the examination of the sea turtles’ coping strategies, I found that, when facing paradoxes, sea turtles’ first reactions are often defensive. To this end, two specific defensive strategies emerged. The strategy of *clinging to one agenda* targets choosing one side of the paradoxical tensions by separating these tensions temporally or spatially. This strategy is commonly used as sea turtles’ temporary expedients when they first came back because by

doing so sea turtles can gain a sense of certainty. For example, upon returning to China, sea turtles usually first try to look for working (e.g. multinational companies) or living environment similar to what they experienced overseas. According to ZH, sea turtles often “either [try to choose] a foreign company in China or some place full of sea turtles.”

Such preference of sea turtles to work for multinational companies in China has been well-documented in the literature (Hao & Welch, 2012; Sun, 2013; Tharenou, 2015; Tharenou & Caulfield, 2010; Tharenou & Seet, 2014). ZBM, who returned after earning a master’s degree in business administration from Australia and currently works for a financial company in Beijing, explained why she chose to work for this particular company:

This company is special. Its system and communication styles [are] directly copied from the mother company in Germany. Most of [the] employees here are either foreigners or sea turtles. My boss is German. We use English as our language at work.

A few sea turtles have stated that they were forced to “choose a side.” When discussing paradoxes of practice caused by cultural and value differences, ZH used the term “dye vat” to describe the Chinese culture as a whole:

Working and living back home, I must replace rational logic with guanxi logic. That’s the culture. Indeed, I have my ways of doing things, but so what? You cannot fight the culture here - this big dye vat. Your color will be decided by the vat, not yourself.

Some sea turtles even alter their beliefs or actions to be consistent with one agenda. For example, WWQ, a sea turtle who came back from the U.S. with a master’s degree in Kinesiology and now works in a rehabilitation center headquartered in America, described his strategies of stressing a sea turtle’s identity as follows:

You [sea turtles] want to get what you deserve? Then, stop acting like a Chinese and try to act like an American. It does not mean coloring your hair or eating hamburgers. It means you talk, work, think, and do your research as how you were trained and taught in the U.S. If you act like land turtles, you shouldn't be expecting to be treated like sea turtles.

Although choosing one agenda may grant sea turtles temporary comfort, this study found that this strategy also has its downsides as it further polarizes the paradoxical tensions instead of solving them. Their communication styles, and ways they behave may be accepted or praised abroad, but unwelcome at home. Insisting on this kind of “foreign” style may provoke battles with coworkers. JBM’s comments illustrate why different mindsets lead to interaction maladjustments.

It is impossible not to have disagreements at work, especially with land turtles. I [have] found that land turtles easily fall into a dichotomous mindset of only “right” or “wrong.” This is the part that I [find] hard to deal with. It is not that easy for me, I don't think there are many things or decisions that you can label as only “right” or “wrong.” I think [that] when people see more and experience more, there will be more compassion and tolerance toward each other.

When facing paradoxes, the sea turtles also have the alternative to intentionally *block* their awareness of the paradoxes, shifting their attention to something else. For example, ZD, who returned to China with a master’s degree in accounting and now works for an automobile company, mentioned that her method of blocking is sleeping. “I just try not to think about it. When I wake up, those things are usually gone.” Most sea turtles try to shift their attention and focus onto work or something things. For example, WWQ choses to “going running, [singing] karaoke with my friends, having some beer in a bar, or just simply going to sleep,” while STBU focuses on work:

I will try to work harder. On one hand, I believe that hard work will eventually pay off. On the other hand, focusing on my work can keep me from thinking too much about who I am and what should I do.

Transcendent Strategies

Eventually, most sea turtles choose to *accept* the paradoxical tensions as what and how they are. The acceptance coping strategy does not imply giving in or avoidance (Lüscher & Lewis, 2008; Poole & Van de Ven, 1989). Instead, it implies that sea turtles understand that paradoxes are persistent and unsolvable. It is functional because accepting the current paradoxical situation itself can be considered an attempt to deal with the situation (Carver, Scheier, & Weintraub, 1989). In regard to how to deal with contradictory feelings of belonging and strangeness, DFSDN replied: “How to deal with it? Just bear with it, immerse myself in it. After all, we spent more time in China than overseas. I will get used to them eventually.” Acceptance can also provide sea turtles with a sense of comfort with the tensions or contradictions ingrained in the returning process, thus reducing the tendency to criticize the differences and starting looking for resolution. According to STBU,

When first coming home, there were many things [that] I [felt were] difficult to adjust [to] and even to believe. I think, to some extent, [the] others (sea turtles) all have similar feelings. However, since we decided to come home, what we should do is not complain, but keep an open mind and accept slowly. Once [we accept] what it is, we can stop criticizing the differences and start ‘*qiu tong cun yi*’ (seeking common ground, while reserving differences).

Yet, acceptance also seems precarious because such strategies may be passive or proactive. Despite majority of sea turtles respondents reported that understanding that accepting the paradoxes helps tap into the positive potential of the tensions, some seem to accept the paradoxes in more passive ways. FG described her way of dealing with paradoxes of affection as “enduring,” while “expecting:”

Everyone I know, my family, my friends, they all tell me that it (China) is what it is. Accept it! You cannot change it, anyway. At the same time, be patient. It is

changing, if it does not seem to, PLEASE be MORE patient.

Unlike defensive strategies, *resolution* does not imply removing or circumventing the paradoxes or ameliorating their effects. On the contrary, sea turtles' resolving strategy is used as a means of considering divergent ideas simultaneously by exploring cognitive shifts that reframe the relationship between polarized elements. Sea turtles' feelings of reverse cultural shocks and surprises surfaced by paradoxes signal that existing frames may no longer apply. Reframing, therefore, enables sea turtles to alter meanings attributed to changing situations. In this study, some sea turtles reframe paradoxical tensions as complementary and interwoven. For example, TDN's comments on the tension between *guanxi* and *nengli* probably best illustrate this strategy. In his view, *guanxi* and *nengli* are not mutually exclusive. Sea turtles actually should have even larger *guanxi* networks through which they can improve their *nengli* for their future professional careers.

I don't think sea turtles' *guanxi* networks are smaller than land turtles. On the contrary, [they] should be much larger. Being a sea turtle, to me, is a ticket, with which you can get into a lot of networks that are only for sea turtles, such as the Europe-U.S. sea turtle network, Beijing sea turtle network, and so on. Coupled with my old contacts, my *guanxi* networks have expanded because of my sea turtle identity... Having a sea turtle network is very beneficial to me, to my job, and [to] my professional development. For example, we start knowing each other through several QQ (a Chinese online social network app) sea turtle groups. We gather together not only for *guanxi* per se; there are also many themes. Some are about job openings; some are for professional development, such as information on CFA and FRM exams; and others are just for fun, such as dinner, partying, and travel.

Seeing paradoxes as complementary and interwoven is the key to resolution. To do so requires sea turtles to possess a special mode of thinking that can accommodate perceptions of opposites. The results of this study showed that the sea turtles seemed to be inherently equipped with such a thinking mode. ZBM believed that sea turtles, because they've "seen more and

experience more,” in general, have “more compassion and tolerance toward contradictory ideas and thoughts.” Similarly, when talking about how sea turtles differ from land turtles, almost all of the participants mentioned their thinking modes. For example, when dealing with the same problem, sea turtles are more likely to consider it from a more holistic, multi-perspective point-of-view.

Such a paradoxical thinking mode may also be spurred by Chinese culture. The Chinese “middle way” (中庸) of thinking denotes an active and “harmonious integration” of opposites rather than a reactive compromise between them (Hwang, 2011). Keller and Loewenstein (2010), for example, found that Chinese students are more willing to simultaneously engage in both cooperating and competing processes than American students. As JBM summarizes:

I believe that the world should be pluralistic... but when I talk with land turtles, the world becomes binary, either domestic or abroad, black or white, right or wrong. I think when people start to look at the world through a lens of binary thinking, they can easily embellish one side and belittle the other. With a pluralistic mindset, people are more likely to see the unique splendor of each country in the world.

Discussion

Following the cultural adjustment framework presented by Ward et al. (2001), this study reviewed the following three aspects of the extant literature on sea turtles: affective, behavioral, and cognitive. The review revealed that, as a typical nascent research stream, the sea turtle literature mainly relied on economic explanations or general descriptions of returning problems and few studies had solid theoretical backgrounds. The exceptions mostly followed the traditional paradigm in cross-cultural research and focused largely on negative reactions and consequences. Therefore, this study adopted a qualitative research approach in order to deepen our understanding of sea turtles’ returning experiences.

Building upon 20 in-depth interviews, this study found that the journey of coming home is full of paradoxical tensions, which are rendered salient by triggers, such as confusion as to who they are, dramatic changes in external environments, and mixed messages about their values and how they are expected to behave. Three types of paradoxes surfaced in this study: identity, affection, and practice, which overs three major questions that sea turtles usually experience: “who am I,” “how do I feel,” and “what is the proper way to behave”. To cope with these paradoxes, some sea turtles choose defensive strategies because they can avoid the paradoxical tensions by separating or ignoring them. Others choose to engage paradoxes by accepting their persistent and unsolvable natures. In doing so, sea turtles may have the chance to transcend paradoxes by reframing them as complementary and interwoven.

Theoretical Implications

An overview of the sea turtle and paradox literature that touches on sea turtles’ paradoxical returning experiences was provided at the beginning of this article. I will now explain how this study builds on and extends the theories in these two areas.

Returnee literature. The major contribution of this paper to returnee literature is to introduce the paradox lens as an overarching framework. According to the recent review of the reentry field, the studies on sea turtles are scattered across different aspects of their reentry processes and transitions. The affect, behavior, and cognition aspects of the sea turtles’ returning experiences have previously been investigated in a relatively segregated way (Szkudlarek, 2010). This study shows that the paradox lens can help synthesize these aspects by investigating the interrelationships among the paradoxes of identity, affection, and practice.

Second, the paradox lens offers a different way by which to think about and deal with

tensions arisen during repatriation. Researchers have long considered tensions as dilemmas based on either/or logic and responded in a contingent way by looking for a condition or context where option A seems more effective than option B (Smith & Lewis, 2011). Yet, "in today's complex organizations, models based on linear and rational problem-solving do managers a tremendous disservice" (Lewis, 2000, p. 764). A paradox lens, however, does not imply eliminating or avoiding these tensions. Instead, it aims to capture the enlightening potential of paradoxes by understanding, accepting, and transcending the tensions. This study identified two major ways by which sea turtles manage paradoxes. Defensive strategies can temporarily help sea turtles avoid confusion and stress by seeking consistency. However, coping with paradoxes is a double-edged sword because responses to paradoxes fuel reinforcing cycles that can be vicious or virtuous (Smith & Lewis, 2011). According to paradox theorists, sea turtles' defensive strategies may result in a "vicious" cycle because choosing one side between paradoxical tensions may further strengthen the other (Lewis, 2000). In order to spur a "virtuous" cycle, sea turtles must accept tensions as synergistic and persistent and reframe their thinking modes to transcend paradoxes. Only then can they create a "dynamic equilibrium" to capture the "enlightening potential" of the paradox: the sea turtles' long-term successes (Smith & Lewis, 2011, p. 393). In line with what others have proposed, exploring the paradox itself is paradoxical (Lewis, 2000; Lewis & Smith, 2014; Lüscher & Lewis, 2008; Smith & Lewis, 2011). Exploring the paradox is an "ongoing and cyclical journey," within which defense strategies still run, but transcendence strategies can help sea turtles jump out of this loop. TS has made similar comments about acceptance and reframing:

Once you come back, please put down your past and embrace whatever is coming to you back home, both the good and bad. It is like marriage. You can not expect a perfect match to prosper your long-term and satisfying relationship. It is the unconditional acceptance and understanding of all of the good and bad sides of your significant other.

Third, this study contributes to returnee literature by investigating the returning experiences of a special group of returnees – Chinese self-initiated repatriates. Although previous research has greatly enriched our understanding of the re-entry experiences of various types of returnees, such as repatriates and self-initiated repatriates, the focus has been on individuals from Western countries (Doherty et al., 2013; Richardson & McKenna, 2006; Tharenou & Caulfield, 2010) and has neglected the contextual differences (e.g., institutions, philosophies, cultural values) between the West and East, which has limited the application and development of contemporary management theories (Barkema, Chen, George, Luo, & Tsui, 2015). Therefore, this review makes a contribution to the current literature on SIR by exploring the experiences of a special group, in this case, sea turtles from China.

Paradox literature. This study contributed to this area in two ways. First, this qualitative study extended the paradox catalog. According to Ford and Backoff (1988) definition, a paradox denotes a wide variety of contradictory, yet interwoven elements which exist across a range of organizational phenomena and across differing levels of analysis. Based on this definition, scholars have categorized paradoxes in many ways. For example, recent studies have proposed four forms of paradox: paradox of belonging (i.e., us and them), learning (i.e., old and new knowledge), organizing (i.e., competing processes), and performing (i.e., conflicting goals) (Lewis, 2000; Lewis & Smith, 2014; Lüscher & Lewis, 2008). However, these paradoxes were mostly (except for the paradox of belonging, which reflects interpersonal relationships) identified at the organization level and “represent core activities and elements of organizations” (Smith & Lewis, 2011, p. 383). Therefore, this study enriched the catalog of paradoxes by identifying individual level paradoxes of identity, affection, and practice.

Second, this study also extended our understanding of the interconnections among different types of paradoxes and among different managing strategies. Paradox scholars have proposed that different types of paradoxes operate within as well as between these categories (Lewis, 2000; Lewis & Smith, 2014; Lüscher & Lewis, 2008; Smith & Lewis, 2011). As illustrated in Figure 2, this study suggested a reciprocal interrelationship among the paradoxes. For example, one paradox itself can also serve as a trigger to other paradoxes. For example, the affective paradox of feeling both adapted and unfit back home is reflected in the dramatic change in the sea turtles' living and working environments. In this case, one of the identity paradoxes may be triggered by the affective paradox when sea turtles' mixed feelings make them begin to question who they are. Likewise, the paradox of identity can also foster the paradox of practice since the complexity and plurality of the sea turtles' identities may also send out mixed guidance for their behaviors. Finally, the paradox of practice may spur the paradox of affection in that sea turtles' perceived competing codes of behaviors may result in mixed messages in regard to their competence or how valuable their overseas experiences are.

- Insert Figure 2 about here -

Sea turtles' strategies to manage paradoxes are not mutually exclusive and can form reciprocal relationships. Therefore, for sea turtles to manage paradoxes effectively, they may need to utilize all four types of coping strategies due to the interrelated nature of defense and transcendence strategies. For example, a defensive strategy may help reduce sea turtles' cognitive conflicts between seemingly competing identities, which in turn enhances sea turtles' understanding of paradoxical situation and increase the chances of sea turtles' acceptance and

resolving. Likewise, accepting and resolving paradoxes can also transcend the need to choose between dualities or the desire to avoid paradoxes.

Practical Implications

This study has practical implications for sea turtles and their employers. Sea turtles are generally viewed as an asset and the increase in the Chinese economy has been attributed partly to their repatriation. Studies have shown the essential role of sea turtles in facilitating international knowledge transfers in Chinese research institutions and universities (Yi, 2011; Zhang, 2013), local entrepreneurship and economic development (Liu et al., 2010; Wang, 2011; Wang, Duan, et al., 2014; Wright et al., 2008), and social and cultural development changes (Ding, 2014; Wen, 2013; Zweig & Yang, 2014). Consequently, various and generous policies have been introduced to entice sea turtles to swim home (Wadhwa et al., 2011) and thrive, for their employers and the entire country can benefit from this newly-acquired human capital.

Reentry research have long been focused on mostly negative reactions and their corresponding outcomes (Schwartz, Unger, Zamboanga, & Szapocznik, 2010). Indeed, most research on sea turtles' returning experiences report negative feelings, maladjustments, and reactive coping strategies (Chen et al., 2003; Gill, 2010; Hao & Welch, 2012). This study suggests that sea turtles should see and manage their returning experiences in different ways from traditional wisdom. This study offers sea turtles a holistic view to see their returning experiences as full of both happiness and sadness, sorrow and joy, risk and chances, and struggle and success. Once sea turtles accept this new constant, they can choose their managing strategies. If pursuing temporary adjustments or short-term peak performances, sea turtles can use defense paradoxes by identifying the contingent contexts under which they can emphasize

positive outcomes and suppress negative outcomes. However, if aiming for long-term success, sea turtles should confront the paradoxes by accepting and resolving them.

Chinese firms can help sea turtles manage their paradoxes by encouraging them or provide training on the Chinese “middle way” thinking mode. Based on the interviews responses, it seems natural for these Chinese returnees to accept and adopt paradoxical thinking styles. That is probably because sea turtles were born within a culture characterized by a complex product of three different and often contradictory value systems: Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism (Chen, 2002; Fang & Faure, 2009). However, a Chinese can follow all three value systems simultaneously while not becoming too attached to any of them” (Hsu, 1963).

Limitations and Future Research

The limitations of this research stem from the limited sample and the nature of qualitative study. First, as with attempts to build a theory from a limited sample, questions of the ability to generalize these findings to other contexts arise. Since all participants are Chinese, one generalization insure revolves around our focus on Chinese returnees. Although sea turtle is China-specific term, the returnee phenomenon exist in many developing countries. Future research may at least replicate this study and investigate the experiences of returnees from other developing countries such as India. On the other hand, although this study tried to recruit a balanced sample through purposeful sampling method, the sea turtles in my sample still tend to be highly educated, and all work in the industry. In sea turtle literature, extant studies have already revealed that different sea turtle social groups may have different returning experiences. For example, job search experiences are relatively smooth for sea turtles with doctoral degrees (Doherty et al., 2013), higher education degrees are associated with higher compensation and

support (Zweig & Han, 2011), and sea turtles employed by universities report high levels of satisfaction with their current working conditions (Keren et al., 2003). Therefore, future studies may also further examine the different types of sea turtles' reentry experiences.

Secondly, the long-term effects of different paradox managing strategies are still not clear. According to the paradox theory, Smith and Lewis (2011) proposed that accepting and resolving paradoxes will result in a virtuous cycle. Long-term success – sustainability – will then be achieved by the dynamic equilibrium through three mechanisms: enabling learning and creativity, fostering flexibility and resilience, and unleashing human potential. Although individuals who adopt defensive strategies may enjoy temporary comforts, in the long run they will result in a vicious cycle and, eventually, be detrimental to the long-term performance. All sea turtles recruited in this sample returned within 18 months to minimize the recall bias, so it is likely that some of them are still enjoying their temporary comforts by avoiding paradoxical tensions. Thus, whether such defensive responses to paradoxes continued and how they affected sea turtles returning experiences is still unknown. Future longitudinal studies are called for to address these questions.

Conclusion

This study offers a different way to consider and manage the challenges faced by sea turtles. These sea turtles have learned to live with and enjoy membership in more than one culture, thus paradoxes become inevitable in their return processes. Instead of seeing those tensions as mutually exclusive and obstacles to readjustment, this study argues that these multi-cultural sea turtles should be able to enjoy their boundary-spanning roles and thrive at home.

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Table 1 Detailed information about Participants

Id	Gender	Age	Time after return	Overseas country	Major	Current city	Current position /industry/industry
DCN	M	24	12 months	Holand	Finance	Beijing	Finacial analysist/real estate industry
DFSDN	M	32	18 months	New zealand	Accounting	Qingdao	Sale manager / medical equipment industry
DRZ	F	30	18 months	United States	Marketing	Shenzhen	Marketing manager / service industry
FG	F	29	16 months	France	Supply chain management	Nanning	Finacial analysist/real estate industry
GLW	F	33	10 months	Australia	Accounting	Shenzhen	Senior auditor / accounting firm
HY	M	26	13 months	U.k.	Cultural industry management	Beijing	Government official
JBM	F	25	10 months	U.k.	Sociology	Chengdu	Planner / charity ngo
KAM	F	23	6 months	Canada	Accounting	Shenzhen	Auditor/ accounting firm
LTJ	F	26	13 months	U.k.	Cultural industry management	Beijing	Editor/ publisher
MSG	M	23	12 months	U.k.	Communication	Beijing	Management trainee
RMRB	F	25	3 months	United States	Management	Shanghai	Consultant / service industry
SDCN	M	26	17 months	United States	Computer science	Beijing	Coder/ software industry
STBU	M	23	5 months	France	Business administration	Shanghai	Marketing managers / service industry
SXY	F	29	12 months	U.k	Applied economic	Shenzhen	Manager / medical service
TDN	M	30	12 months	United States	Finance	Beijing	Analysist / investment bank
TS	M	22	4 months	United States	Business administration	Shanghai	Sales / real estate industry
WWQ	M	26	10 monthes	United States	Kinesiology	Shanghai	Consultant / medical service
ZBM	F	24	5 months	Australia	Business administration	Beijing	Analysist / investment firm
ZD	F	25	9 months	United States	Accounting	Daqing	Accountant / automobile industry
ZH	M	23	15 months	U.K	MBA	Beijing	Finacial analysist/real estate industry

Figure 1 Data Structure

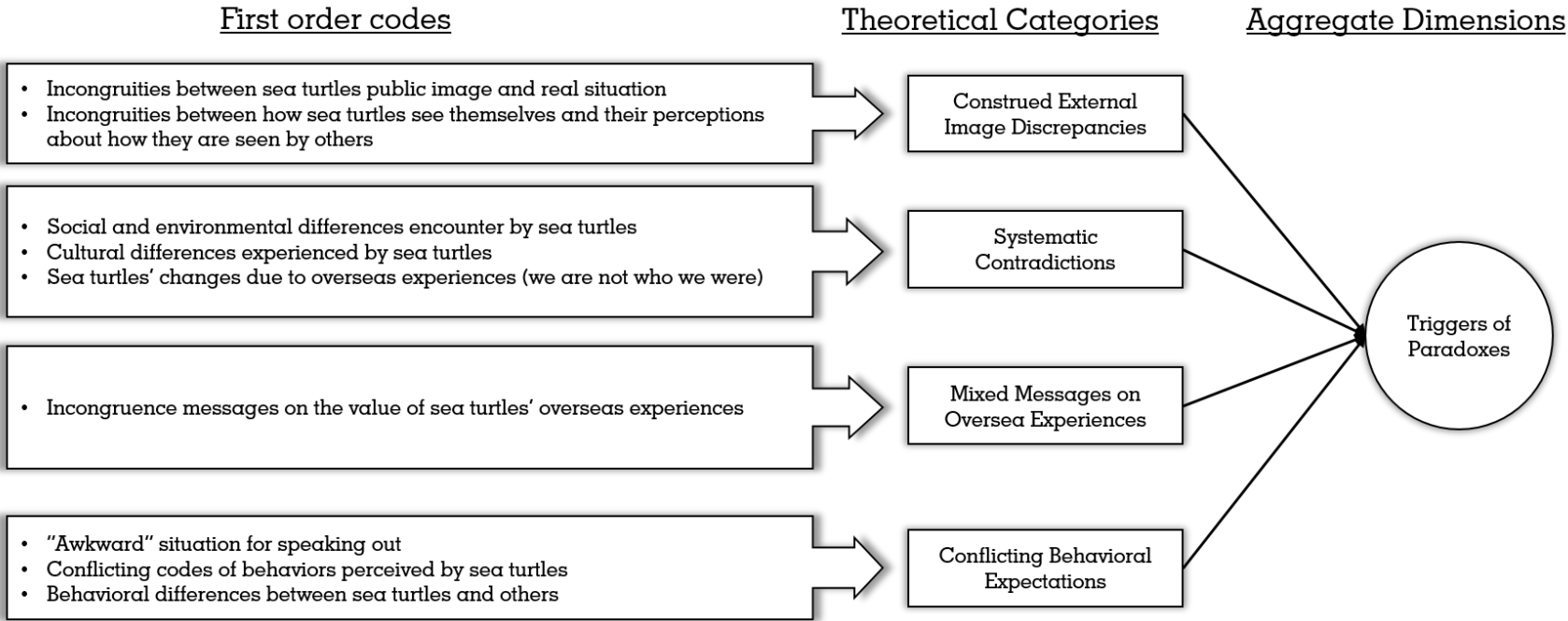


Figure 1

Data Structure (con't)

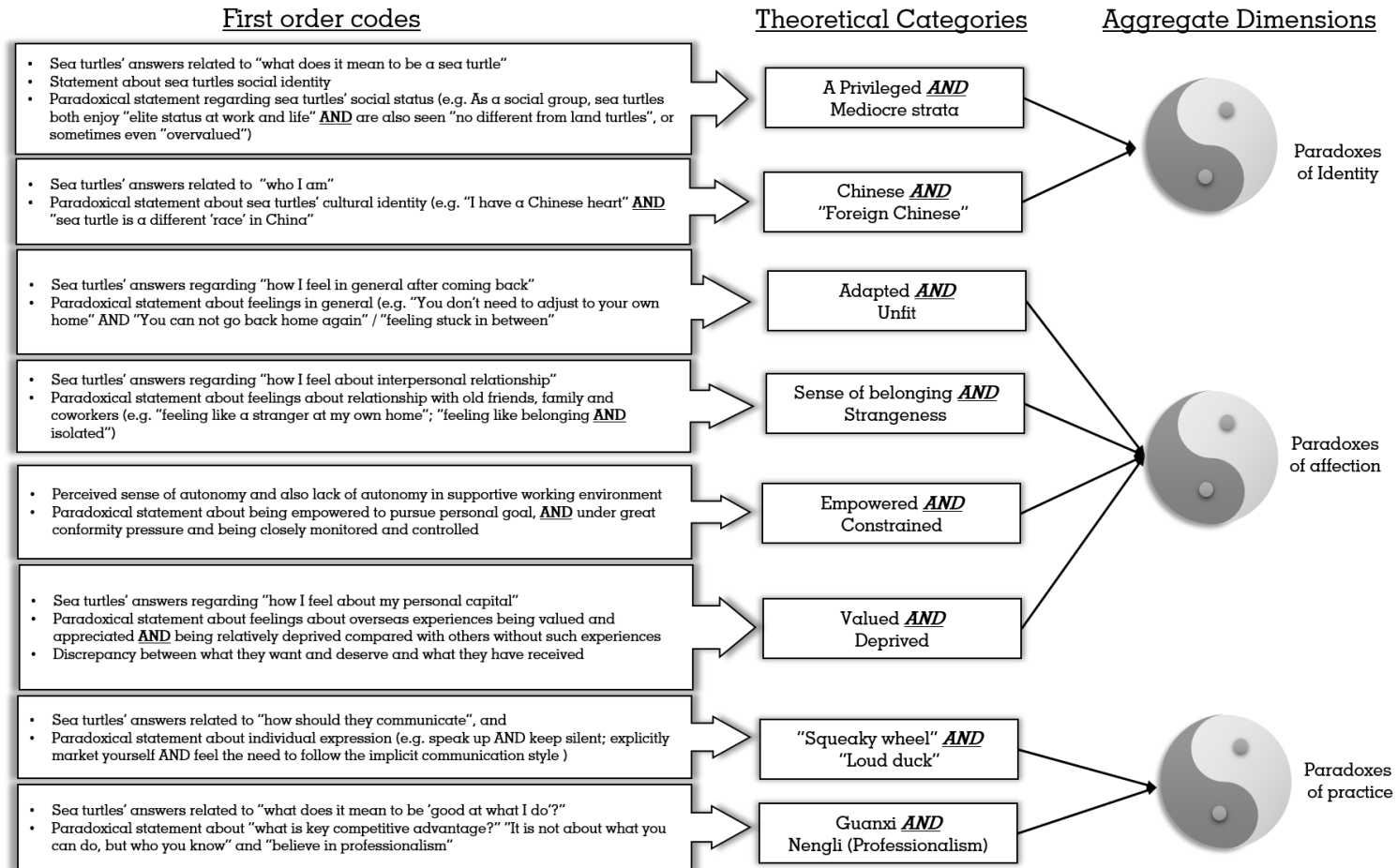


Figure 1
Data Structure (con't)

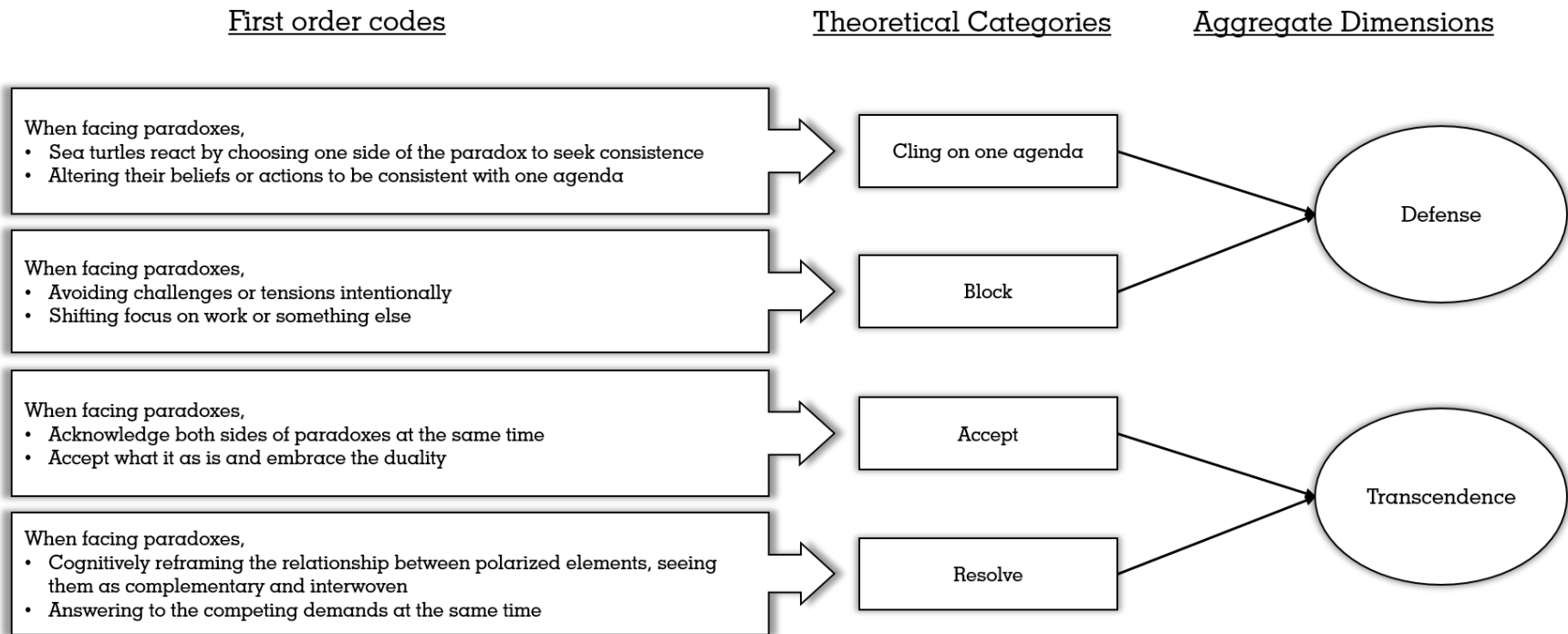
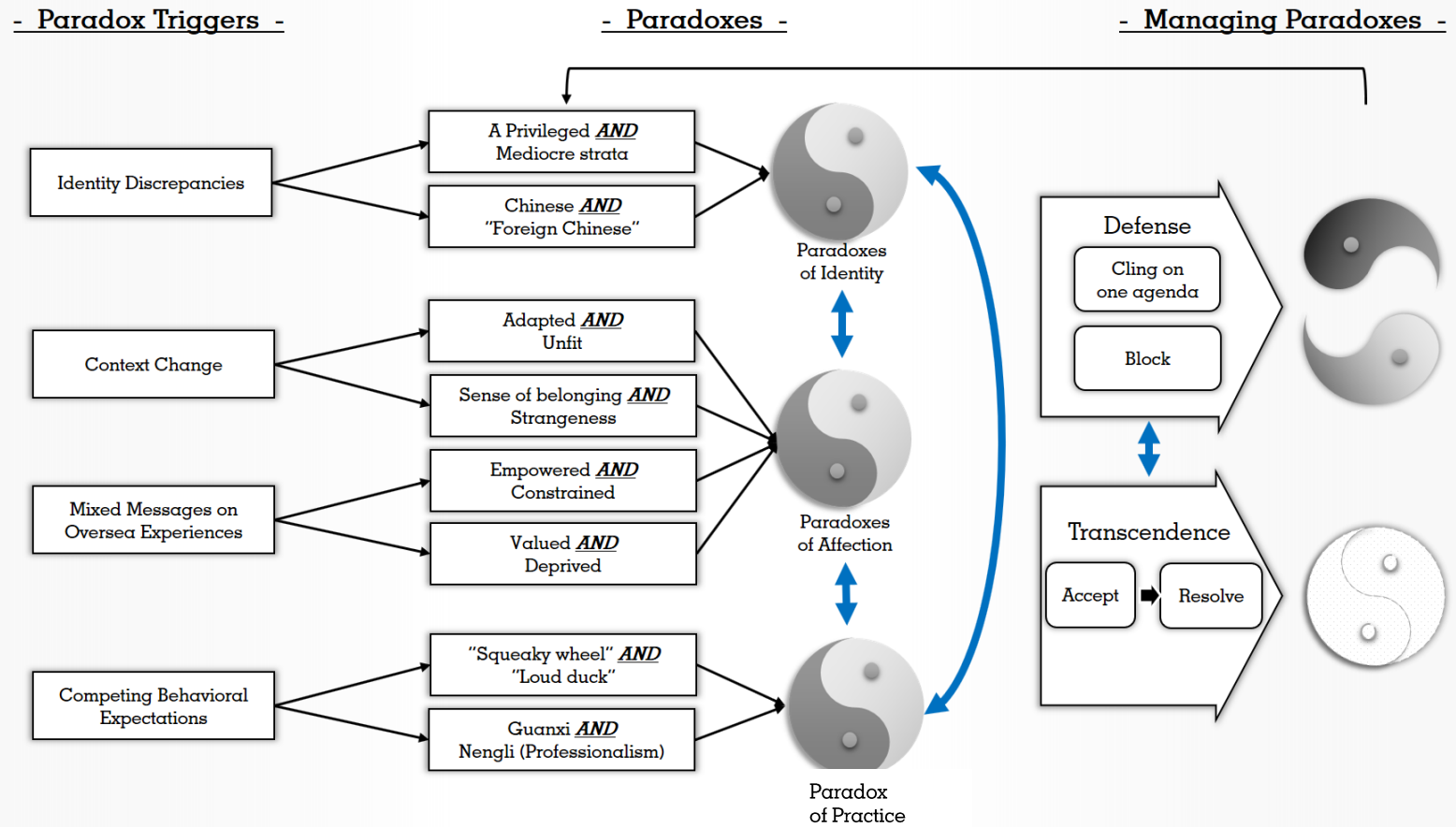


Figure 2 Intergrative Model



**ESSAY 2: SHRIVELING OR THRIVING SEA TURTLES: PARADOX OF
IDENTITY, IDENTITY STRAIN AND THRIVING AT WORK**

Paradoxes are like the weather, something to be lived with, not solved, the worst aspects mitigated, the best enjoyed and used as clues to the way forward (Handy, 1995, p. 13)

Adopting a paradox lens to examine sea turtles' returning experience, Essay 1 found that sea turtles' re-entry is not an easy and sweet journey, but one full of paradoxical tensions. A theoretical model was then developed based on 20 in-depth interviews, explaining what these paradoxes are, how these paradoxical tensions are rendered salient, as well as sea turtles' different coping strategies. Specifically, three types of paradoxes surfaced in Essay 1 and represented as paradoxes of identity, affection and practice. To cope with or manage these paradoxes, some sea turtles choose defensive strategies to avoid paradoxical tensions by separating them or simply ignoring them. Other sea turtles choose to confront paradoxes by accepting their persistence and unsolvable nature. In doing so, sea turtles may have the chance to transcend paradoxes. Building upon previous findings and paradox theories, in this Essay, I intend to extend the theoretical model developed in the previous Essay and empirically test the influence of paradox of identity on sea turtles returning experiences.

Handy's description about paradox best illuminates the purpose of this study: to investigate how "the worst aspects mitigated, the best enjoyed and used as clues to the way forward." (Handy, 1995, p. 13). Although only recently have scholars started investigating sea turtles' returning experiences (e.g. Tharenou, 2015), the "worst aspects" of sea turtles' reentry have been addressed by many scholars using both a traditional dissatisfaction-maladjustment approach and a proactive careers approach (Lazarova & Cerdin, 2007). For example, like other types of returnees (e.g. repatriates), sea turtles' home coming journey is never an easy task (Black, 1992; Szkudlarek, 2010). Limited

extant research showed that sea turtles' returning experiences are characterized with negative feelings, struggles, and maladjustment (Chen et al., 2003; Gill, 2010; Hao & Welch, 2012). Zweig and Han (2011) even documented that approximately one third of sea turtles intended to re-expatriate due to maladjustment. However, the "best aspects" remain largely unknown. This is an important omission in that, after all, seeking to thrive is the primary reason why sea turtles come back to China. Because of their global competences (e.g. mindset, education, experiences, network, etc.), sea turtles are considered a valuable asset to their employers and even to the whole country (c.f. Tharenou, 2015). Ever since the beginning of the 21st century, various and generous policies have been introduced to induce sea turtles to come back and thrive in their home country (Engardio, 2009; Tharenou & Seet, 2014). In fact, more and more sea turtles choose to come back because they believe in a brighter future at home (Annual Report of Chinese Returnee Development, 2016). Therefore, if sea turtles are suffering from or merely surviving because of these "worst aspects" of their return, the effective functioning of their global competences, which makes them as an asset to their employers, will be very difficult to achieve. Moreover, based on my review in Essay 1, negative and positive aspects of returning experiences are mostly examined in a relatively segregated way. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate one overarching question: how sea turtles can mitigate the negative sides of coming back and thrive at home country?

Paradox lens offers a holistic way to consider both negative and positive perspectives of sea turtles' reentry at the same time (Lewis & Smith, 2014). Drawing from the first essay, sea turtles' home-coming journey is replete with paradoxes, which

are defined as contradicted and interrelated elements that persist over time (Schad, Lewis, Raisch, & Smith, 2016). This study focuses on Paradox of identity, one of the three types of paradoxes (identity, affection and practice) that surfaced based on my first study. Paradox of identity refers to sea turtles' opposing yet distinct identities. It denotes the multi-faceted, tenuous and seemingly absurd nature of sea turtles' identity. Although there have been no studies explicitly addressing how sea turtles' paradox of identity influences their returning experiences, most of the studies that examined the role of sea turtles' competing identities focused on the negative side of paradox (Chang, 2010; Ip, 2006; Zhang et al., 2012). For example, Ip (2006) found that sea turtles had been profoundly influenced by their overseas experience and developed a dual identity. However, these returnees experienced difficulties in interpersonal relationships with colleagues who had not been abroad. Similarly, Chang (2010) in a study shows that Chinese students undergo subtractive shifts in national identity and become less Chinese. Such subtractive shifts cause difficulties in interacting with family members. However, according to paradox theory, paradoxes *per se* are not inherently detrimental. In fact, they have the potential to foster many positive effects such as motivation, creativity, and learning etc. (Fairhurst et al., 2016; Lewis & Smith, 2014; Schad et al., 2016).

To examine sea turtles' paradox of identity in a comprehensive way, I first briefly reviewed paradox literature to set boundaries and elaborate the double-sided nature of paradox. Since paradox of identity is newly developed and a construct that cross paradox and identity literature, I then turned to identity studies to find the underlying connections and built up theoretical foundation. Drawing insights from both areas, I contend that the role sea turtles' paradox of identity is paradoxical – both negative and positive. On one

hand, paradox of identity raises sea turtles' psychological toll, on the other, it also serves as a source of sea turtles' exploration and thriving. The key to "switch" between such positive and negative alternatives is sea turtles' response to paradox of identity.

This study contributes to the literature by developing and testing a model explaining the paradoxical outcomes of paradox of identity. It provides an important theoretical contribution to the understanding of sea turtles' return by integrating paradox lens to understand how sea turtles may benefit from, even thrive on paradoxical tensions.

Paradox literature

What Paradox Is and Is Not

To provide a foundation of my arguments and define boundaries for paradox, I begin by discussing what paradox is and what it is not. Scholars have developed different definitions of paradox. Although the specific wording of each definition may defer, a recent review study identified that these definitions share three key features: contradiction, interdependence and persistence (Schad et al., 2016). Contradiction emerges as oppositional elements foster a tug of war experience. As Lewis (2000) described, those oppositional elements "seem logical in isolation but absurd and irrational when appearing simultaneously" (p.760). Similarly, Poole and Van de Ven (1989) described paradoxes as "interesting tensions, oppositions, and contradictions between theories which create conceptual difficulties" (p.545). In a review study, Smith and Lewis (2011) depicted this contradictory relationship using the contrasting black-and-white slivers of the yin-yang. Interdependence describes the inextricable connections between the contradictory elements in paradoxes. Although it is possible to temporally separate

these elements, the more that members seek to separate them, the more likely they become enmeshed in the self-referential binds of paradox (Smith & Berg, 1987). Moreover, a greater sense of wholeness can be achieved if considering these contradictory elements simultaneously, as well as increased effectiveness and creativity (Poole & Van de Ven, 1989). Lastly, persistence is engendered by the former two key features. It adopts a processual perspective, and describes that relationship between opposing elements is dynamic and cyclical, in which each element continually informs and defines each other, and impervious to resolution (Schad et al., 2016).

Paradox is similar to, but distinct from, a variety of other constructs. Recent reviews describes the differences between paradox from dialectics and dualities (Putnam, Fairhurst, & Banghart, 2016; Schad et al., 2016). Although these similar constructs also explore interdependent contradictions, the focus and emphasis are different. Even though studies often confound these terms and use them interchangeably (see discussions by Evans & Doz, 1992; Janssens & Steyaert, 1999; Quinn & Cameron, 1988), there is some convergence for how researchers are defining these key constructs. Table 1 shows a summary of these similar constructs and the relevant definitions. A dialectic denotes an ongoing process of resolving tensions through integration (Schweiger, Sandberg, & Ragan, 1986). Dialectics literature accentuates power, conflict, and change in describing the interactions between underlying elements. Paradox scholars diverge from the dialectics tradition when the new synthesis renders the underlying tension obsolete—in dialectics the synthesis meets a newly emerging antithesis, while the tension in paradox persists. Dualities emphasize an interdependent relationship between contradictory elements. According to Fairhurst et al., (2016), duality scholars stress the interplay between

contradictory elements as mutually constituted and ontologically inseparable, such that it would be impossible to describe one without the other. As with paradox insights, duality scholars highlight the relationship between alternatives, however place less stress on understanding their contradictions, inconsistencies, and conflicts.

- Insert Table 1 about here -

Nature of Paradox – A Thing, A Dynamic Process, and A Meta-Theory

With roots residing in traditional psychology and both Eastern and Western philosophy, the nature of paradox has been examined in many ways. Scholars have investigated types of paradox (as a thing), relationships of paradox (as a dynamic process) and recently posed paradox as a meta-theory [for detail, refer to Schad et al. (2016)].

Scholars that view paradox as a “thing” consider paradox as a tension between distinct elements and highlight their oppositional nature. According to the recent review, most of the paradox studies emphasized types of paradox (Schad et al., 2016). At the individual level [for macro level, organizational level and group level studies, please see Fairhurst et al., (2016) and Schad et al., (2016)], research depicts contradictory elements of leadership capabilities (Gebert et al., 2013) and behaviors (Zhang, Waldman, Han, & Li, 2015). Other studies documents the paradoxical experiences of employees in everyday work and life, including change and stability (Lüscher & Lewis, 2008), or motivating and controlling (Dobrow, Smith, & Posner, 2011). Smith and Lewis (2011)

further grouped different types of paradox into four categories: learning, organizing, belonging and performing paradoxes (see also the first essay).

According to Schad et al. (2016), fewer research highlighted the relationship nature of paradox. Relevant research detailed the interplay between elements of paradox, emphasizing the “persistence” characteristic of paradox. Studies describe the underlying elements of paradox as complementary and mutually constituted - like the Taichi label – each pole containing the seeds of its opposite, such as the paradox of stability and change, where stability only occurs when system makes constant changes (Farjoun, 2010).

As paradox scholars increasingly explore its nature, types and impact, some use paradox as a tool for theorizing (Dameron & Torset, 2014). This versatility of applications renders paradox a meta-theory (Lewis & Smith, 2014), which is defined as “an overarching theoretical perspective” (Ritzer, 1990, p.3). Individual level research applying paradox as a meta-theorizing tool accentuates on leadership literature (Schad et al., 2016). For example, leadership scholars have examined the effectiveness of different styles of influence (Van Knippenberg & Sitkin, 2013), found that dynamic decision making, iterating between emphasis on exploration, exploitation and their integration, helps leaders manage innovation tensions. Others proposed paradoxical leadership models, aiming at enabling leaders to address paradoxical demands (Smith, Besharov, Wessels, & Chertok, 2012), or achieving long term success (Zhang et al., 2015).

Paradox's Paradoxical Effects: Vicious vs. Virtuous Cycles

Because of various coping strategies, the effects of paradox can be “paradoxical”- both constructive and destructive (Lewis, 2000; Smith & Lewis, 2011). For example, individuals who have both positive and negative emotional experiences at the same time results in both positive and negative consequences (Rothman, Pratt, Rees, & Vogus, 2016). Paradox scholars propose that different responses to paradox fuel reinforcing cycles that can be negative or positive, resulting in “vicious and virtuous cycles” (Lewis, 2000).

On the negative side, defensive responses spur vicious cycles. Defensive responses root deeply in Freudian psychology, which argues that individuals strive for consistency in their attitudes and beliefs, and cognitions and behaviors (Schneider, 1990). Inconsistencies normally lead to discomfort, thus actors attempt to avoid them (Festinger, 1962; Schneider, 1990). However, paradox scholars acknowledged that the more that members seek to separate contradictory elements or pulling toward one extreme, so they can avoid inconsistencies or discrepancies, the more likely they become enmeshed in the self-referential binds of paradox – the vicious cycle (Smith & Berg, 1987; Smith & Lewis, 2011). As a result, these defensive responses which are originally adopted as coping mechanism, will fuel vicious cycles, where paradoxes foster anxiety, uncertainty and frustration (Schad et al., 2016; Smith & Lewis, 2011). Lewis (2000) catalogued six defensive strategies, including: (1) splitting elements to emphasize their contradictions, (2) projecting the anxiety to a third party, (3) repressing the tensions, (4) regressing to more secure actions or understandings, (5) reaction forming, or cultivating an oppositional action or belief, and (6) ambivalence, which involves compromising to

engage both alternatives with “‘lukewarm’ reactions that lose the vitality of extremes” (p. 763). Previous findings also support vicious cycles argument in paradox theory. For example, previous research has shown that when facing paradoxes, individuals who demonstrated a strong preference for consistency between their cognition and behaviors are more likely to adopt defensive coping strategies to avoid or deny inconsistencies (Festinger, 1962; Smith & Lewis, 2011). Vince and Broussine (1996) examined how tensions create paradoxical emotions which prompt counterproductive defenses and lead to undesired consequences. There are also evidence showing that if not managed effectively, paradoxical forces can neutralize each other’s beneficial side (Gebert et al., 2013), or spark conflict (Chung & Beamish, 2010).

While on the positive side, although traditionally viewed as something to be avoided, paradox scholars have been exploring the positive outcomes of contradiction and inconsistencies. Management studies have identified individual capabilities such as greater cognitive and behavioral abilities to manage paradox strategically, because these abilities foster more openness to paradox, enable individuals to attend to competing demands simultaneously (Smith & Lewis, 2011), and to view paradoxes as an opportunity for creativity (Beech, Burns, de Caestecker, MacIntosh, & MacLean, 2004). Similarly, Smith and Lewis (2011) propose that to break vicious cycles and enable virtuous cycles requires cognitive and behavioral complexity, emotional equanimity, and dynamic organizational capabilities. Cognitive complexity reflects an ability to recognize and accept the interrelated relationship of underlying tensions. Behavior complexity refers to a facility to adopt competing behaviors. Emotional equanimity is an emotional calm and evenness. Altogether, these three individual capabilities enable individuals to

accept and transcend paradox. Supporting evidence has shown that tapping the positive potential of paradox can benefit actors across different levels. For example, paradoxes, if coped effectively, may improve individuals' creativity (Miron-Spektor, Gino, & Argote, 2011; Schneider, 1990), adaptability (Molinsky, 2013), career success (O'Mahony & Bechky, 2008), paradoxical leadership capabilities (Denison, Hooijberg, & Quinn, 1995; Zhang et al., 2015), as well as team level performance (Murnighan & Conlon, 1991), and organizational sustainability (O'Reilly & Tushman, 2011; Smith & Lewis, 2011; W. Smith, Lewis, & Tushman, 2011).

Paradox of Identity and Identity Gaps

What Is Paradox of Identity and What Is Not

Following the definition posed by (Schad et al., 2016) and building upon my first essay, this study considers paradox as a noun (or a “thing”) and examine the role of a new type of paradox – paradox of identity in sea turtles' returning journey. Paradox of identity refers to sea turtles' opposing yet interrelated identities. It denotes the multi-faceted, tenuous and seemingly absurd nature of sea turtles' identity after coming back. Based on my first essay, latent identity tensions became salient when sea turtles are exposed to different views about who they are from multiple sources, then in turn surface as paradoxes in two forms: privileged AND mediocre strata, and Chinese AND 'foreign Chinese'. Privileged AND mediocre strata paradox refers to the discrepancies between sea turtles' own views about themselves (superior) and their perception of how others view them (mediocre). My first essay revealed that most sea turtles confirmed that with overseas education and experiences, they were treated as superior strata at home country

(e.g. job hunting, favorable policies, more growth opportunities etc.). At the same time, this did not always correspond, sometimes in contrary with what they experienced, or what they heard from their coworkers, or even employer. Chinese AND ‘foreign Chinese’ paradox refers to the discrepancies between sea turtles’ self-view and the identity they express. It is frequent to hear sea turtles stress their cultural identity as Chinese, but also complain that during communication process, others usually misunderstand them by seeing them “less Chinese” or “foreign Chinese”. These feelings of misunderstanding were often evident based on sea turtles’ different behaviors and mindsets revealed during personal interactions.

Although these two forms of identity paradox are different in notable ways, they share two common characteristics. First, they both stem from the incongruences among sea turtles’ complicated identities. Second, they are both rendered salient during sea turtles’ interacting process with others. In other words, such comparative incongruent identities are revealed through communication and interaction between sea turtles and others, then become two types of identity paradoxes. In the next section, I am going to discuss in detail the similarity and differences between paradox of identity and identity gaps.

Paradox of Identity and Identity Gaps

Because of the absence of paradox of identity in the current literature, I turned to identity literature for further insights. Paradox of identity is similar to several constructs in social identity and cultural identity literature, such as dual identity, multicultural identity and identity gap. Specifically, based on social identity theory (Burke & Reitzes,

1991; Stets & Burke, 2000), dual identity refers to the identification with both a subgroup and a superordinate group (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000, 2014). Fitzsimmons (2013) proposed that multicultural identity is formed when individuals internalized two or more “cultural schemas”, which includes a set of associated knowledge, beliefs, values, norms and guides individual behaviors. While both dual identity and multicultural identity stress the juxtaposition of multiple identities, neither of them emphasizes on the contradictory and interdependent relationship between/among these identities.

Deriving from Communication Theory of Identity (CTI) (Hecht, 1993; Hecht, Warren, Jung, & Krieger, 2005), the construct of identity gap, on the other hand, can be considered as the closest existing construct to paradox of identity because of both theoretical and practical reasons. First, the theoretical basis of identity gap views identity through the lens of paradox and polarity, as well as the interplay between and among these constructs (Hecht et al., 2005). Western traditions of identity theories tend to argue that identity resides in an individual as a cognitive schema by which one understand and interprets the social world (Hecht & Choi, 2012; Markus & Kitayama, 1991), and it can also reside in social interaction and seen as social process, existing in the social world between and among people (Burke & Reitzes, 1991; Stets & Burke, 2000). However, CTI draws from Eastern philosophy (e.g., Taoism and Confucianism; see Hecht et al., 2004) and postmodernism (Kellner, 1992) as vehicles for this integration. From Eastern thought, identity is viewed as paradoxical, with polarities driving process but not necessarily dysfunction. From postmodernism comes the understanding that identities are layered and most identity theories are layer specific. Building on these traditions, the communication theory of identity expands the notion of identity to view it as layered

(Faulkner & Hecht, 2007). From this theorizing emerged CTI's definition of identity as the multilayered ways that individuals and communities socially construct themselves (Hecht, 1993; Hecht et al., 2005). The way CTI considers identity is parallel to how "self" is defined in the context of sea turtles' home culture. according to Chuang, Hsu, Wang, and Judge (2013), in Chinese culture, the "self" is construed as relational, or a center of relationships. The self is neither independent from others (i.e., the self under individualism) nor defined by its membership in certain groups (i.e., the self under collectivism), but is meaningful primarily in relation to others. Communication Theory of Identity argue that there are four layers of identities—personal, enacted, relational, and communal layers—that interact with and are influenced by each other (e.g., Hecht, 1993; Hecht, Jackson, & Ribeau 2003). The personal layer of identity refers to an individuals' self-concepts, self-views, or self-images. Preattentional layer is an individual's identity ascribed by others – that is, an individual's perception of how others see him or her. The enacted layer of identity is an individual's self as expressed in communications. This layer of identity resides in one's communication messages or behaviors. The communal layer is identity of a group, whereas the other three are identities at an individual level. Second, the development in CTI and the measurement of identity gaps provide this study the practical reason. So far, empirical paradox studies are limited, because of the lack of measurement and appropriate quantitative research method, as well as the counterintuitive and complicated nature of paradox (Fairhurst et al., 2016; Zhang et al., 2015).

An identity gap refers discrepancies between or among the four layers of identity (Hecht et al., 2005), and this study focuses on two identity gaps combining two layers of

identity at individual level. The personal-relational identity gap is defined as discrepancies between an individual's personal identity and ascribed relational Identity, that is, discrepancies between how a person views him/herself and his/her perception of how others view him/her. Therefore, personal-relational identity gap is parallel to one of the identity paradox: privileged AND mediocre strata - the paradox of “I” and “me”. An individual's personal identity also can differ from his or her enacted identity. In other words, an individual's expressed identities in communication can be different from his or her self-views. Such discrepancies between one’s self-view and presented-self constitute personal-enacted identity gap, which is parallel to the other identity paradox: Chinese AND foreign Chinese - the paradox of “I” and “expressed me”.

However, despite the similarity between paradox of identity and identity gap in terms of theoretical basis, they are also different in notable ways. For example, paradox of identity denotes that different identities are “contradictory but interrelated”, while although identity gap implies different identity layers are interrelated, it mainly stresses the “differences” rather than “contradiction” among these layers.

- Insert Figure 1 about here -

Overview of the Model of Paradox of Identity

Figure 1 shows the conceptual model of this study. As mentioned earlier, paradox, although traditionally seen as something to be avoided, is not necessarily detrimental to individuals’ psychological health. Instead, paradox scholars argue that the effects of

paradox can be both beneficial and detrimental to individuals, and the key to trigger such “paradoxical” outcomes is individuals’ responses. For example, defensive responses activate vicious cycle, leading to undesirable outcomes. On the other hand, actively engaging paradox may trigger virtuous cycle, which enables individuals to “tap in” the positive potential of paradoxes. Therefore, instead of proposing direct relationship between paradox and its positive/negative outcomes, I contend moderating relationships in which paradox of identity is likely to yield both positive (i.e. thriving at work) and negative (i.e. Identity strain) consequences to their reentry, depending on sea turtles’ different types of responses. In the following sections, I develop arguments for such moderating effects of sea turtles’ preference for consistency and paradoxical thinking.

Paradox of Identity and Identity Strain

Paradoxes (e.g. discrepancies, conflicting tensions) are not inherently detrimental, instead they may enable positive reinforcing cycles depending on how actors reacting to these paradoxes. People with high level of preference for consistency are more likely to behave defensively to paradox and fuel vicious cycle, thus they suffer from the discomfort brought by paradox. One type of such discomfort is identity strain, which is defined as a person’s feelings of tension associated with his or her identity being inconsistent with the reinforcement from current environment (Kraimer et al., 2012). However, people with abilities such as cognitive complexity are more likely to engage paradox and enable the virtuous cycles, and “tap into the positive potential” of paradox (Fairhurst et al., 2016; Schad et al., 2016).

Such paradoxical arguments are not new in identity literature. There are two competing hypotheses about the effect of inconsistent identities. Many theories (e.g. self-

verification theory, identity theory, self-discrepancy theory) argue that individuals behave in certain ways to remain consistent with their identity (Baumeister, Shapiro, & Tice, 1985; Tajfel, Billig, Bundy, & Flament, 1971) and the interpretation of self (Schlenker, 1985), therefore, when individuals have multiple identities, these identities may conflict with each other, thus increasing identity strain as they become less useful for guiding behavior [for a detailed review, see Fitzsimmons (2013)]. On the contrary, according to the identity accumulation hypothesis, more identities lead to less strain because each identity gives meaning and helps guide behavior (Thoits, 1983). This hypothesis claims that individuals with multiple identities may be better able to buffer feelings of stress or depression, due to a sense of self that is less bound to any one aspect of the self (Linville, 1987; Thoits, 1983, 1986).

Drawing from paradox theory, these seemingly conflicting arguments are compatible. Paradox of identity only causes identity strain for defensive sea turtles – those who respond by seeking to regain alignments and consistency. Preference for consistency was considered as assumptions in many identity theories, however, this traditional assumption has been questioned in the past research. For example, Cialdini, Trost, and Newsom (1995) showed that the majority of their participants did not show strong inherent preference for consistency between internal factors such as belief and identity, and external factors such as behaviors. Therefore, I contend that preference of consistency moderates the relationship between sea turtles' paradox of identity and identity strain. In sea turtles' context, such a strain may stem from both forms of identity paradox - incompatibility between sea turtle's self-identity and perceptions of how others see them (paradox of "I" and "me"), and between sea turtles' self-identity and their

presented self (paradox of “I” and “expressed me”). When facing paradox of identity, for the sea turtles who try to maintain consistency, both types of paradox of identity is more likely to appear its conflicting and competing side, thus foster identity strain. However, for those sea turtles who are low in preference for consistency, paradox of identity provides richer meaning and more helps to guide their behavior. Therefore, paradox of identity is more likely to reduce sea turtles’ bound to any one aspect of the self, resulting in lower level of identity strain.

Hypothesis 1 a & b: Sea turtles’ preference of consistency moderates the relationship between both forms of sea turtles’ identity paradox - a) “I” and “me” and b) “I” and “expressed me” - and identity strain. When preference of consistency is high, paradox of identity increases identity strain, whereas when preference of consistency is low, paradox of identity reduces identity strain.

While some sea turtles seeking for consistency react defensively to paradox and suffering from identity strain, those with cognitive complexity abilities may actively engage paradoxes, experiencing less identity strain in virtuous cycles. Paradoxical thinking has been considered as one of the cognitive abilities that enable virtuous cycles (Miron-Spektor, Gino, & Argote, 2011; W. K. Smith & Tushman, 2005; Zhang & Wei, 2011). Paradoxical thinking refers to ways of thinking which can operate contradictory yet interrelated elements simultaneously in a framework of “both-and” rather than “either-or” (contingent mindset) (Fairhurst et al., 2016).

I contend that paradoxical thinking enables sea turtles to view paradox of identity as interrelated and interwoven, rather than unreconcilable, thus helps reduce sea turtles’ psychological toll. Just as Smith and Lewis (2011) argued, by adopting a paradoxical

mindset, sea turtles may “shift their expectations from rationality and linearity to accept paradoxes as persistent unsolvable puzzles” (Smith and Lewis, 2011: 385). Instead of feeling threatened by paradox of identity, sea turtles who are able to think paradoxically have a higher chance to accept and become comfortable with the tensions generated by paradoxes, thus experience less identity strain. Although empirical evidence is limited, the laboratory findings suggest that individuals paradoxical thinking style are more tolerant to contradictories. Specifically, whereas Westerners are more likely to polarize phenomena into either/or notions, East Asians generally think in a more paradox, both/and way (Spencer-Rodgers, Peng, Wang, & Hou, 2004). Therefore, Easterners tend to view interdependent opposites as dual sides of an inseparable combination, thus are likely to accept and resolve the paradox (Chen, 2002). Process research from Lüscher and Lewis (2008) also found that managers with ability of paradoxical thinking are more likely to accept tensions rather than avoiding or attempting to quickly solve them. Consequently, managers feel less stress and are able to “work through” paradoxes. Lastly, Fitzsimmons (2013) also propose that when individuals consider their different cultural identities are incompatible and are not able to consider these identities simultaneously, the psychological toll increases. Recent evidence in identity study also shows that individuals who integrated their cultural identities experienced higher levels of personal well-being than those who separated them (Fitzsimmons, Liao, & Thomas, 2016). Therefore, I contend that sea turtles with paradoxical thinking may more comfortably tolerate the two types of paradox of identities. For these sea turtles, coexistence of contradictory aspects of the self are viewed as mutually dependent and as existing in active balance within the individual, resulting in less identity strain.

Hypothesis 2 a & b: Sea turtles' paradoxical thinking moderates the relationship between both forms of sea turtles' identity paradox - a) "I" and "me" and b) "I" and "expressed me" - and identity strain. When paradoxical thinking is high, paradox of identity reduces identity strain, whereas when paradoxical thinking is low, paradox of identity increases identity strain.

Paradox of Identity and Thriving at Work

Thriving at work is defined as the psychological state in which individuals experience both a sense of vitality and learning at work (Porath, Spreitzer, Gibson, & Garnett, 2012; Spreitzer, Sutcliffe, Dutton, Sonenshein, & Grant, 2005). Learning refers to the acquisition and application of new knowledge and skills, and vitality denotes positive feelings of alive and energetic (Wallace, Butts, Johnson, Stevens, & Smith, 2016). According to the Socially Embedded Model of Thriving, Individuals are more likely to thrive when they engage in exploratory behaviors (Spreitzer et al., 2005). Exploration entails exposure to novel ideas, information, and strategies for doing work; this exposure to novelty can provide and restore energy (e.g., Kaplan and Kaplan 1995). Exploration also facilitate learning by increasing the knowledge and skills that they possess and can apply (Spreitzer et al., 2005).

According to paradox theory, paradoxical tensions paradoxically foster and paralyze exploration and learning (Lewis & Dehler, 2000). Again, the key to solve this puzzle of conflicting relationship is individuals' responses. For people with high level of preference for consistency, conflicting identities are often viewed as threats that endanger the ego. Therefore, they often response to paradoxes by clinging to the security such as order of extant frames and structure to avoid paradoxical tensions, inhibiting exploration

and change (Schneider, 1990). Empirical evidence has shown that people with high level of preference for consistency have higher need for structure and less open to new experiences and ideas (Cialdini et al., 1995). Defenses such as seeking consistency initially may provide some comfort but inevitably exacerbate tensions, fueling anxiety and defensive reactions into vicious cycle. Consequently, sea turtles locked in such vicious cycles and are restrained from exploration activities. Therefore,

Hypothesis 3 a & b: Sea turtles' preference of consistency moderates the relationship between both forms of sea turtles' identity paradox - a) "I" and "me" and b) "I" and "expressed me" - and thriving. When preference of consistency is high, paradox of identity hinders thriving, whereas when preference of consistency is low, paradox of identity enhances thriving.

On the other hand, paradox theory also argues that conflicting demands, feelings and identities can also serve as cues to rethink polarities, motivating individuals to explore new and more insightful understandings of paradoxical tensions (Lewis & Dehler, 2000). Therefore, paradox has the potential to be a resource for sea turtles to thrive after they return to their home county. Thriving through paradox can be very difficult because the ways of escaping paralysis is sometimes counterintuitive. When paradox of identity is seen to pose a threat to one's identity, one may respond with increased anxiety and withdrawal, or alternatively, with increased persistence and motivation to succeed—when threat provokes a challenge response. Paradoxical thinking is the key to trigger such virtuous alternative. While paradox is seen generating identity strain for sea turtles who seek for the alignment or consistency between conflicting paradoxical tensions, paradoxical thinking enables individuals to see paradoxes as

invitations to explore the link between opposing forces and new meanings to the apparent contradictions (Lewis, 2000; Smith & Berg, 1987). Rothenberg (1979) described the power of paradoxical thinking as the capacity for Janusian thinking: “In an apparent defiance of logic or of physical possibility, the creative person consciously formulates the simultaneous operation of antithetical elements and develops those into integrated entities and creations. It is a leap that transcends ordinary logic” (1979:55).

I contend that paradoxical thinking moderates the relationship between paradox of identity and thriving at work in that, the relationship between both forms of sea turtles’ identity paradox and thriving is positive for sea turtles with high level of paradoxical thinking, and negative for sea turtles with low level of paradoxical thinking. Paradoxical thinking may help sea turtles reframe their assumptions, learn from existing tensions, and motivate them to explore a more complicated repertoire of understandings and behaviors to better reflect intricacies (Denison et al., 1995; Lawrence, Lenk, & Quinn, 2009; Quinn, 1988). It can also help sea turtles immerse themselves in paradoxical tensions of identity, question these competing assumptions, explore more effective responses, thus fostering a state of thriving at work. Field and laboratory findings in paradox studies reveal that managers and individuals with paradoxical frames learn more effectively and are more creative than those with other frames (Ingram, Lewis, Barton, & Gartner, 2014; Miron-Spektor et al., 2011). Related support for this hypothesis also stems from research on the positive side of identity gaps. Specifically, identity gaps can be useful when individuals interpret these gaps as a motivator in learning and change (Hecht & Choi, 2012). Binns, Smith, and Tushman (2011) suggest that the ability of senior management teams to embrace tension between old states and activities and the new ones helps the team to

learning and adapt to and thrive in the changing environment. Furthermore, in cultural identity literature, support evidence shows that the ability of complex thinking, such as cultural metacognition (Thomas et al., 2008), enhances cultural awareness of individuals with multiple identities (Benet-Martínez, Lee, & Leu, 2006), pushes individuals to learn and explore more about the different cultural content (Thomas, 2006), and resulting in improved learning and creativity (Crotty & Brett, 2012). Lastly, recent empirical research also show support that experiences of paradoxes are positively related to innovation for those with paradox mindset (Miron-Spektor, Ingram, Keller, Smith, & Lewis, 2017). Therefore,

Hypothesis 4 a & b: Sea turtles' paradoxical thinking moderates the relationship between both forms of sea turtles' identity paradox - a) "I" and "me" and b) "I" and "expressed me" - and thriving. When paradoxical thinking is high, paradox of identity enhances thriving, whereas when preference of consistency is low, paradox of identity hinders thriving.

Model Complexities: 3-Way Interaction

To further investigate how to enjoy the “best aspects” and mitigate the “worst aspects”, I expect that positive relationship between paradox of identity and identity strain should be the weakest for sea turtles with low level of preference for consistency and high level of paradoxical thinking. Moreover, the positive relationship between paradox of identity and thriving at work is the strongest for sea turtles with low level of preference of consistency and high level of paradoxical thinking. The reasons are two folds. First, in line with Smith and Lewis’s (2011) theory of paradox, both cognitive complexity and behavioral complexity are necessary for actors to act strategically to

paradox. Specifically, cognitive complexity enables individuals to host paradoxical cognitions and in turn accept the contradictions. Behavior complexity, a facility to adopt behaviors that may be conflicted to one's belief, enables acceptance of paradoxical tensions (Denison et al., 1995; Lavine, 2014). Although the role of interaction between cognitive and behavioral complexity in coping paradoxes has rarely been seen in extant literature, Zhang et al. (2015) have found that leaders' ability to think in a holistic and complex way was positively associated with their paradoxical behavior in managing people.

Secondly, any other combination of preference for consistency and paradoxical thinking should be suboptimal, resulting in less openness to paradox and higher strain. As discussed above, sea turtles' ability to think paradoxically and behave inconsistently are both needed to ease the discomfort, leading to less identity strain. If sea turtles high or low in paradox thinking and preference for consistency at the same time, such defensive and strategic responses will be mutually offsetting (although paradoxical thinking improves sea turtles' openness to paradoxes, high preference for consistency should drive them toward defensive responses such as avoidance). Lastly, for sea turtles who have high preference for consistency and fail to engage in paradox thinking, this will be the worst scenario, resulting in highest identity strain as well as lowest thriving at work.

Hypothesis 5 a & b: The positive relationship between both forms of sea turtles' identity paradox - a) "I" and "me" and b) "I" and "expressed me" - and identity strain is weakest for sea turtles with low level of preference of consistency and high level of paradoxical thinking.

Hypothesis 6 a & b: The positive relationship between both forms of sea turtles' identity paradox - a) "I" and "me" and b) "I" and "expressed me" - and thriving at work is strongest for sea turtles with low level of preference of consistency and high level of paradoxical thinking.

Method

Sample

Data was collected using an anonymous survey link created through a web-based online instrument (University of Wisconsin in Milwaukee Qualtrics). The survey link was sent out through personal contacts, sea turtle associations (e.g. Chinese Scholar/Students Association - CSSA) and online social network (e.g. Sea Turtle WeChat Group and Sea Turtle QQ Group). The following criteria were used for sea turtles to be eligible for this study: 1. they were born in China; 2. they have lived in a different country for more than one year; 3. they must be currently employed (full-time) in companies for the long term. 4. only those who returned within the past 18 months were recruited to mitigate recall bias (Kraimer et al., 2012). A total of 58 sea turtles were contacted individually by the author and 5 sea turtles' associations which include 725 members in total agreed to pass along the recruitment emails. 112 responses were received, and then 21 were removed because of missing data, resulting a sample of 91 sea turtles. The survey questions were in English, because most sea turtle participants went to English-speaking countries (e.g. U.S., Canada, U.K., Australia, New Zealand, etc.), and for those who went to non-English-speaking countries (France, Germany and Macau), English is the primary language at their work or school.

The age of majority of sea turtle participants is between 25 and 30 years old. Most of them are highly educated (40% have master degree, 22% have doctoral degree, and 10% working as Post-doc). More than half are male and about 40% of these sea turtles are married. 52.4% percent of them went abroad for higher education, about 10% were employed by overseas companies before coming back home, and about 28% are exchanging scholars. The majority of these sea turtles works for multinational companies (68%), 25% works in the state-owned companies, and 5% works in the government. As for position, more than half of the participants report themselves as professionals (50.7%), 21% are general managers and 16% of them currently work as general employees. They have lived, on average 3.5 years overseas. The top five destination countries include U.S. (35%), U.K. (19%), Australia (15%), Canada (9%), New Zealand (5%).

Measures

All measures used have been previously validated in published research. Each measure used a 5-point response scale

Paradox of Identity. The Identity Gap developed by Jung and Hecht (2004) was slightly modified to assess sea turtles' two types of paradox of identity. Table 2 shows the items used in this study as well as the original items. Specifically, Paradox of "I" and "me" was measured using Personal-Relational Identity Gap Scale. Participants indicated their agreement on a scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), with 6 items (e.g., "I feel that others have opposite images of me.'). Jung and Hecht (2004) revealed a .86 alpha. The Cronbach's alpha for this study was .79.

Paradox of “I” and “Expressed Me” was measured using slightly modified Personal-Enacted Identity Gap Scale. Participants indicated their degree of agreement on a scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), with 4 items (e.g., “When I communicate with others at work, they get to know the ‘real me’.”). Jung and Hecht (2004) revealed a .89 Cronbach’s alpha. For this study, the Cronbach’s alpha was .72 after deleting Item 3.

Identity Strain. Identity strain was measured using a slightly modified scale developed by (Kraimer et al., 2012). Table 2 shows the items used in this study as well as the original items. Participants indicated their degree of agreement on a scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) on 5 items (e.g. “There are times when there seems to be a conflict between what I am asked to do now and what I had learned overseas.”, “I feel that my role as a sea turtle (haigui) is not compatible with my current role as a member of this organization.”). For this study, the Cronbach’s alpha was .84.

- Insert Table 2 about here -

Thriving at Work. Thriving at work was measured with a 9-item measure of thriving at work from (Porath et al., 2012). Participants responded to four items representing learning (e.g., “I find myself learning often”) and four items representing vitality (e.g., “I feel alive at work”) facets of thriving on a scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). For this study, the Cronbach’s alpha was .93.

Paradoxical Thinking. Paradoxical thinking was measured with a 4-item scale developed by Zhang and Wei (2011), which was built upon the Dialectical Self Scale (Spencer-Rodgers, Boucher, Mori, Wang, & Peng, 2009) and Holistic Thinking Scale (I. Choi, Koo, & Choi, 2007). Participants indicated their degree of agreement on a scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) on 4 items (e.g. “I sometimes believe two things that contradict each other.”, “When I hear two sides of an argument, I often agree with both.”, “When two sides disagree, the truth is always somewhere in the middle.”, “There are always two sides to everything, depending on how you look at it.”). For this study, the Cronbach’s alpha was .74.

Preference for Consistency. Preference for consistency was measured with Preference for Consistency Scale from Cialdini, Trost, & Newsom (1995). Participants indicated their degree of agreement on a scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) on 8 items (e.g. “I get uncomfortable when I find my behavior contradicts my beliefs.”). For this study, the Cronbach’s alpha was .77.

Control Variables. Following the suggestions from (Spector & Brannick, 2010), I controlled basic demographic variables (i.e. age, gender), as well as variables may offer alternatives to my proposed hypotheses (i.e., education, marital status, position). Participants were asked to type in their age (years), and the rest of demographic variables were categorical variables (details are shown in Table 3). Previous studies on sea turtles showed that married sea turtles, or those with higher education, or those work as middle managers report higher level of adjustment and life/work satisfaction (Doherty et al., 2013; Hao & Welch, 2012; Kan, 2004; Sun, 2013; Zweig & Han, 2011). Time spent overseas was also controlled because theoretically, the length of time spent overseas is related sea turtles' identity, as the longer they stay overseas, the more salient their sea turtle identity will become, which in turn will influence identity gaps and stress. I controlled for length of time since returning to partial out the possible decay effect that this may have on paradox of identity, identity strain and thriving at work. Moreover, the percentage of sea turtles was also controlled as a proxy for working environment. Because my Essay 1 and previous studies have shown that when sea turtles are surrounded by people with similar background, their sea turtle identity is less likely to be rendered salient. Without these environmental trigger, sea turtles' paradox of identity will remain latent and thus will not be noticed. Furthermore, when testing one type of paradox identity, I also controlled the other type for more rigorous results.

- Insert Table 3 about here -

Results

Overview

Table 3 shows the descriptive statistics of all variables and the correlation matrix. There are seven control variables which may raise the concern as to whether my sample size has adequate power for all the hypothesized relationships. So before proceeding with the overall analysis, I conducted a power analysis (Cohen, Cohen, West, & Aiken, 2013), and the results indicated that, given the present sample sizes for this study, statistical power was 86.6 % to detect a medium effect of 0.25 at $p < 0.05$, two-tailed, which is above the suggested power level (80%) (Cohen, 1992).

Very high correlations between two types of paradox of identity ($0.51, \rho < 0.01$) also raise the concern as to whether the subscales are independent. I used confirmatory factor analysis of both paradox of identity scales to determine whether participants in this study appeared to discriminate between paradox of “I” and “Me” and paradox of “I” and “Expressed Me”. A two-factor model with two types of paradox of identity as separate but correlated factors ($\chi^2 = 37.36, df = 18; CFI = 0.95, TLI = 0.92$) fitted the data significantly better than did a one factor model with two types of paradox of identity aggregated. ($\chi^2 = 259.72, df = 17; CFI = 0.82, TLI = 0.89; \Delta\chi^2 [\Delta df] = 222.36 [1]; \rho < 0.001$).

Lastly, to assess the factor structures of two types of paradox of identity, paradoxical thinking, preference for consistency, identity strain and thriving measures obtained from employees, I also conducted a confirmatory factor analysis (Bentler & Dudgeon, 1996). The full model of six factors achieved good fit with the data (χ^2

=596.67, $df=473$; CFI=0.94, NFI=0.92, RMSEA=0.06). Chi-square difference tests showed that all alternative nested models achieved significantly poorer fit. For example, the model excluding thriving produced a significantly worse fit to the data ($\chi^2 = 414.76$, $df=393$; CFI=0.84, NFI=0.87, RMSEA=0.08; $\Delta\chi^2 [\Delta df] = 181.91 [80]$; $p < 0.001$).

Hypothesis Testing

I tested Hypotheses 1 to 4 by regressing each of the two dependent variables on blocks of predictor variables. Table 4 a & b presents the results of these regression analyses. I entered the control variables into the first block of the regression. The second block contained the predictor variables (model 2, Table 4), which I also centered to reduce multicollinearity (Aiken, West, & Reno, 1991). Variance inflation factor (VIF) scores varied but are all below 2.0 (from 1.07 to 1.75) over the regressions, suggesting multicollinearity did not distort regression results. The third block contained the interaction term of both predictor variables (models 2 and 3, Table 4), and only the two predictors that composed the interaction term were entered in the prior step. I examined three-way interactions to test Hypothesis 3 (model 5, Table 4) by adding a fourth step with the interaction term computed from all predictor variables, after all three 2-way interactions had been included in a previous block (Aiken et al., 1991).

- Insert Table 4 about here -

Hypothesis 1. Hypothesis 1 proposes a moderating effect of Preference of Consistency whereby the positive relationship appears between both forms of sea turtles'

identity paradox of identity and identity strain for sea turtles high in preference of consistency, whereas negative relationship appears for sea turtles low in preference of consistency. Results displayed in Model 3 in both Table 4a and 4b reveal that all interactions are not significant. Hypothesis 1 was not supported.

Hypothesis 2. Hypothesis 2 proposes that the relationship between sea turtles' paradox of identity and identity strain is contingent upon sea turtles' ability to think paradoxically. In such a way that such relationship is negative for those with high level of paradoxical thinking, whereas positive for those low in paradoxical thinking. Results displayed in Table 4 a & b (model 4 under Identity Strain) reveal a significant interaction effect between paradoxical thinking and both types of paradox of identity ($\beta = -.55$, $\rho < .001$; Table 4a, model 4; $\beta = -.54$, $\rho < .001$; Table 4b, model 4 under Identity Strain). To facilitate interpretation of the interactions, I plotted relationships, indicating high and low levels of paradoxical thinking by values one standard deviation above and below the mean. As shown in Figure 2a & 2b, although slight difference exists, the significant moderating effects on identity strain are similar for both types of identity paradox. Furthermore, I also did simple slopes tests to investigate the significance of these moderating effects on different levels of paradoxical thinking. The results are only significant when sea turtles with low level of paradoxical thinking, For example, Paradox of I and Me is positively associated with identity strain (0.84, $p < 0.05$). Although the relationship is negative for sea turtles who are able to think paradoxically, the results are not significant (-0.30 , $p > 0.05$). Therefore, Hypothesis 2 was partially supported.

- Insert Figure 2 a & b about here -

Hypothesis 3. Hypothesis 3 poses that the relationship between sea turtles' paradox of identity and thriving at work is negative for sea turtles with high level of preference of consistency, and positive for those with low in preference of consistency. Results displayed in Model 3 (under Thriving at Work) in both Table 4a and 4b reveal that all interactions are not significant. Hypothesis 3 was not supported.

Hypothesis 4. Hypothesis 4 poses that sea turtles who possess the ability of paradoxical thinking may tap the positive side of identity paradox and thus thrive at home country. Results displayed in Table 4a & 4b (model 4 under Thriving at work) reveal a significant interaction effect between paradoxical thinking and both types of paradox of identity ($\beta = .62, p < .001$; Table 4a, model 4; $\beta = .74, p < .001$; Table 4b, model 4; under Thriving at work). To facilitate interpretation of the interactions, I plotted relationships, indicating high and low levels of paradoxical thinking by values one standard deviation above and below the mean. As shown in Figure 3 a & b, again the significant moderating effects on thriving at work are similar for both types of identity paradox. Furthermore, I then conducted simple slopes tests to investigate the significance of these moderating effects on different levels of paradoxical thinking. The results are significant for sea turtles with both high and low level of paradoxical thinking. For example, Paradox of I and Me is positively associated with thriving for sea turtles high in paradoxical thinking ($0.88, p < 0.05$), while negatively related to thriving for those low in paradoxical thinking ($-0.35, p < 0.05$). Hypothesis 4 was supported

- Insert Figure 3 & b about here -

Hypothesis 5 and Hypothesis 6. Hypothesis 5 and 6 proposes that paradox of identity will have the weakest negative relationship with identity strain and the strongest positive relationship with thriving at work if sea turtles' paradoxical thinking is high and do not tend to seek consistency. Results displayed in model 5 (Table 4a and 4b under both Identity Strain and Thriving at work) reveal that Hypothesis 5 was not supported, but for Hypothesis 6, both proposed interactions are in the predicted direction. Figures 4a and 4b illustrate such significant moderator effects shown in Table 4, block 4 (for paradox of "I" and "me", β Three-way interaction = $-.71$, $\rho < .01$; for paradox of "I" and "Expressed Me", β Three-way interaction = $-.87$, $\rho < .01$). Figures 4a and 4b illustrate that when paradoxical thinking and preference for consistency are both low or high, paradox of identity is detrimental to sea turtles thriving at work (the downward dot lines in both Figure 4a and 4b shows a negative effect). Although such relationship becomes positive (solid lines) when paradoxical thinking is low and preference for consistency is high, such relationship is stronger when paradoxical thinking is high and preference for consistency is low. To better understand the positive potential of paradoxes, I also examined the conditional effects of paradox of identity on thriving at work across different levels of the two moderators. As a result, I found that the positive relationship is only significant under the proposed condition (high paradoxical thinking and low preference for consistency), in particular, for paradox of "I" and "me", $\beta = .27$ $\rho < .01$;

for paradox of “I” and “Expressed Me”, $\beta = .29$, $\rho < .001$. Hypothesis 6 was fully supported.

Discussion

This study offered a different view on the role of paradox of identity - competing or conflicting identities - on individuals returning home. Specifically, I contend that discrepancies or conflicting elements in these returnees’ identity structure are not necessarily detrimental, instead, they have the potential to foster individuals’ exploration behaviors which lead to thriving at work. The key to tap in such positive potential is the coping mechanism.

This study applied paradox lens into identity literature and developed and tested a model to examine the “paradoxical” effects of sea turtles’ paradox of identity on their returning experiences. The findings showed if paradox of identity is managed effectively (with the ability of paradoxical thinking), sea turtles can benefit from paradoxes and thrive at home country. The results did not support moderating effects of preference for consistency, which can be explained by the “paradoxical” outcomes of defensive responses on individuals. According to paradox scholars, defensive response can be cognitive, behavioral, or institutional (Lewis & Smith, 2014). For example, Lewis (2000) defined six defensive reactions to paradox: splitting, projecting, repressing, regressing, reaction formation, and ambivalence. In the long run, coping with paradox defensively is detrimental since it does not solve tensions, instead, it further reinforces them by stressing the opposing distinctiveness between paradoxical tensions (Lewis, 2000). However, in the short run, seeking for consistency enables actors to avoid risk and conflict raised by paradoxical tensions and brings temporally ease and comfort (Smith &

Lewis, 2011), even peak performance (Lewis & Smith, 2014). To avoid recall bias, all the sea turtle participants in this study came back to China within 18 months (70% of the participants returned within a year). It is possible that they are still in their temporally comfort zone, and the detrimental effects of defensive response has not started showing up. Furthermore, the results found in Essay 1 also shows some support. Specifically, some sea turtles who adopted defensive coping strategies such as clinging on one agenda (e.g. looking for jobs in international companies, etc.) also reported high satisfaction with work.

Theoretical Implications

Three major theoretical implications stand out from the results. First, this study contributes to identity literature by demonstrating the value of paradox lens in dealing with the competing hypotheses on multiple identities. On one hand, many identity theories contend that as the number of identities increases, the potential for identity conflict also increases, resulting in greater stress. For example, Self-Verification Theory acknowledges that discrepancies often exist between self-concepts and others' appraisals, and argues that stress arises when people fail to seek out consistency (Giesler & Swann Jr, 1999; Polzer, Swann, & Milton, 2003; Swann Jr, 2011). Identity Theory (Burke & Reitzes, 1991) also focus on internal standards of individual and environmentally determined situations that may include others' evaluations of an individual. These theories posit that discrepancies are aversive and that people seek to reduce or avoid them. Self-Discrepancy Theory reported that discrepancies between a person's own actual self and ideal selves imposed by others were associated with depressive feelings (Higgins, Bond, Klein, & Strauman, 1986; Higgins, Klein, & Strauman, 1985). Similarly,

early conceptualizations of multiculturalism portrayed the experience as individually detrimental, causing feeling such as conflicted and stressed. (Fitzsimmons, 2013). On the contrary, identity accumulation hypothesis argues that more identities lead to less stress because each identity gives meaning and helps guide behavior (Thoits, 1983, 1991, 1995). Individuals with multiple identities should be able to buffer the psychological toll arose among different identities, because they are less bound to any aspect of the self (Linville, 1987). Recent theoretical development and empirical evidence in identity study started tapping into the positive side of multiple identities. For example, Fitzsimmons and her colleagues in a couple of recent studies show that individuals who are able to integrate their cultural identities experience higher levels of personal well-being than those who separate them (Fitzsimmons, 2013; Fitzsimmons et al., 2016). Sanchez, Spector, and Cooper (2000) proposed that the internal conflict experienced by expatriates stems from polarizing two cultural identities as mutually exclusive. This study offers a different way to examine the role of competing multiple identities (paradox of identity) in returnees' re-entry experiences. Consistent with the vicious and virtuous cycles argument in paradox theory, instead of arguing identity paradox inherently leads to undesirable outcomes, I proposed and found evidence that paradox of identity also has its enlightening potential which can help sea turtles thrive on land, if they do not response defensively.

Second, by delineating the boundary of paradox of identity at individual level and testing the model empirically, this study also contributes to paradox research in both theoretical and empirical aspects. On one hand, this study extends understanding the paradoxical catalog. According to Ford and Backoff (1988)'s definition, paradox denotes a wide variety of "contradictory yet interwoven" elements (e.g. perspectives, feelings,

identities, messages, demands, interests or practices), which exist across a range of organizational phenomena and across differing levels of analysis (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Following this definition, scholars have categorized paradoxes in many ways (c.f. first essay and Schad et al.'s review in 2016). Schad et al. (2016)'s review revealed that among different types of paradoxes (e.g. learning, organizing, belonging and performing), paradox literature has showed an emphasis on learning paradoxes, such as exploration and exploitation tensions that enable and drive organizational change. Less research emphasizes belonging paradoxes, such as those emerge between competing identities. Furthermore, as for the research methodology in studies that examine contradictions and paradoxes, scholars often use grounded theory, particularly in deciphering content themes that emerge in interviews and mixed-method studies (Putnam et al., 2016). On the other, this study also enriches the understanding of micro-level paradoxical phenomenon. Paradox research accentuate on macro level phenomenon, and management studies have remained relatively silent about individual approaches, such as how individuals experience and react to paradox (Schad et al., 2016). Studies that explore micro-level response focus extensively on leadership (Fiol, Pratt, & O'Connor, 2009; Lüscher & Lewis, 2008; Smith et al., 2012; Zhang et al., 2015). Among the studies of paradox at individual level, few studies examined how competing identities foster paradoxes and micro-level responses (Schad et al., 2016). Lastly, this study also provides empirical evidence showing the positive potential of paradoxes, and the important role of individuals' ability of cognitive complexity.

Third, this study also enriches sea turtle literature by empirically investigating sea turtles' psychological experiences after returning. Based on the review from my first

Essay, current research on sea turtles has been largely descriptive and exploratory with relatively little theory behind it [see (Doherty, et al., 2013) for an exception]. Most studies on sea turtles focus on why they repatriate and their essential role in economic or organizational development, but their reentry experiences are usually neglected except for some general descriptions of problems after returning home (e.g. Hao & Welch, 2012; Tung, 2007). Specifically, this study adopts paradox lens to examine how sea turtles' interrelated and competing identities are associated with both identity strain and thriving at work at the same time, and how their consistency preference and cognitive ability foster vicious and virtuous cycles, providing a different theoretical perspective and also empirical support.

Practical Implications

This study has two important practical implications. First, as mentioned earlier, sea turtles' home coming is a bitter and sweet journey. This study suggests that sea turtles and their employers should manage their returning experiences differently from traditional wisdom and start considering both the "bitter" and "sweet" side at the same time. Specifically, instead of merely viewing sea turtle's reentry a stressful experience and seeking ways to mitigate its negative effects, this study offers a holistic view to include a more positive or proactive perspective to manage sea turtles' reentry. After all, both the number and the return rate of sea turtles are increasing because of the attractions of China, such as Chinese government incentive programs (Tharenou & Seet, 2014). In other words, sea turtles are coming back to China to thrive, and most importantly, sea turtles' effective functioning depends on their psychological well-being.

Second, this study also offers practical suggestion for employers on sea turtle's selection and training. Since the results showed the role of paradoxical thinking as the "turning key" to sea turtles' virtuous cycles, it is important for organizations to recognize and develop the ability of cognitive complexity for sea turtle employees. More importantly, unlike belief or personality which are relatively difficult to change, Lüscher and Lewis's (2008) study revealed that, paradoxical thinking is an ability that can be obtained through human resource training and development. One possible way to achieve this is to help sea turtles to first realize tensions among different identities as problems to solve, then as dilemma, and finally as the tensions persisted, as a paradox to live with on an ongoing basis.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

First and foremost, all data were collected at the same time, which neglects the dynamic nature of paradox. Managing paradox is a dynamic and on-going process (Fairhurst et al., 2016). A paradox perspective emphasizes the embedded and constitutive nature of paradoxes in changing and complex settings, thus encourages a longitudinal perspective which can explore the dynamic relationship between the poles of a paradox, and how paradoxes evolve over time and interact with each other (Lewis, 2000; Lewis & Smith, 2014; Smith & Lewis, 2011). Therefore, future longitudinal research is clearly desirable to extend findings.

Second, all participants are from China, which raises the concerns about lacking enough variance in paradoxical thinking ability. Cultures idealize a certain way of thinking. For example, the emphasis on debate in Greek culture is in stark contrast to the

East Asian philosophy of science, which usually discourage debate and argument (Cerna, 2015; Chen, 2002; Faure & Fang, 2008). In contemporary Western cultures, individuals are encouraged to be analytic in their reasoning. In contrast, Eastern cultures encourage individuals to be holistic in their reasoning (Nisbett, Peng, Choi, & Norenzayan, 2001). Therefore, future studies are encouraged to replicate this research in other cultures, or with a more culturally diverse sample to gain more insights.

Third, all questions that the participants answered are in English. This may cause some problems since prior study has shown that language may influence peoples' value and belief (Milligan, Astington, & Dack, 2007). Because languages carry meanings some of which are unique to cultural perspectives, when an individual is speaking a language, he/she is more likely to adopt the corresponding cultural perspectives, beliefs and practices as well (Barrett, Huber, & Reynolds, 2014). In this case, since the questionnaire is in English, there is a chance that they answered all those questions with their "western hat" on. Therefore, future research may replicate this study based on a questionnaire in Chinese or in both languages.

Conclusion

Paradox lens and empirical results of this study shed light on how sea turtles can thrive upon their journey back to China. I found that the tensions raised from sea turtles' paradox of identity are not necessarily detrimental. On the contrary, if coped effectively, paradox may lead to virtuous cycle and facilitate sea turtles thriving at work. Particularly, I found that those who are equipped with the ability to think paradoxically and have low level of preference for consistency are more likely to react strategically to paradoxical tensions, resulting in their thriving at work. Thus, this study provides an important

theoretical contribution to the understanding of sea turtles literature by integrating paradox lens to understand how sea turtles may benefit from, even thrive on paradoxical tensions.

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Table 1 Definition of Constructs

Constructs	Definition
Paradox	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contradictions that persist over time, impose and reflect back on each other, and develop into seemingly irrational or absurd situations because their continuity creates situations in which options appear mutually exclusive, making choices among them difficult (Schad et al., 2016) • Contradictory and interrelated elements that persist over time and exist simultaneously and synergistically and expose seemingly irrational and absurd relationships, processes and practices (Lewis, 2000) • Perceptual or cognitively constructed polarities that mask the simultaneity of conflicting truths (Smith & Lewis, 2011)
Duality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interdependence of opposites in a both/and relationship that is not mutually exclusive or antagonistic (Putnam et al., 2016) • Dualistic elements that may be interdependent and conceptually distinct, rather than opposed (Sutherland & Smith, 2011) • Opposites that exist within a unified whole; internal boundary creates distinction and highlights opposition; external boundary encourages synergies by constructing the unified whole (Smith & Lewis, 2011)
Dialectics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interdependent opposites aligned with forces that push-pull on each other like a rubber band and exist in an ongoing dynamic interplay as the poles implicate each other. Focuses on the unity of opposites and the forces or processes that connect them (Putnam et al., 2016) • Interplay of thesis and antithesis in the interdependence of opposites that leads to change through creating a synthesis (Spencer-Rodgers, Peng, Wang, & Hou, 2004) • An ongoing process of resolving tensions through integration in which A and B are contradictory (thesis and antithesis) and merged into a synthesis, which becomes a new thesis that spurs an antithesis (Smith & Lewis, 2011)
Contradiction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bipolar opposites that are mutually exclusive and interdependent such that the opposites define and potentially negate each other (Schad et al., 2016) • Diametrically opposed and mutually exclusive choices (Putnam, 1986)

Table 2 Items of Paradox of Identity and Identity Strain

Personal-Relational Identity Gap	Paradox of “I” and “Me”
1. I am different from the way others see me.	1. I am totally different from the way others see me
2. I feel that others have wrong images of me	2. I feel that others have the opposite images of me
3. I feel that others stereotype me.	3. I feel that others stereotype me.
4. I feel that others do not realize that I have been changing and still portray me based on my past images.	4. I feel that others do not realize that I have been improving and still portray me based on my past images.
5. When others talk about me, I often wonder if they talk about me or someone else.	5. When others talk about me, I often wonder if they talk about me or the opposite of me.
6. I feel that there is no difference between who I think I am and who others think I am. (R)	6. I feel that there is no difference between who I think I am and who others think I am. (R)
Personal-Enact Identity Gap	Paradox of “I” and “Expressed Me”
1. I feel that I can communicate with others in a way that is consistent with who I really am. (R)	1. I feel that I can communicate with others in a way that is consistent with who I really am. (R)
2. I express myself in a certain way that is not the real me when communicating with others.	2. I express myself in a certain way that is opposite to the real me when communicating with others.
3. I do not reveal important aspects of myself in communication with others.	3. I do not reveal important aspects of myself in communication with others.
4. I sometimes mislead others about who I really am.	4. I sometimes mislead others about who I really am.
5. There is a difference between the real me and the impression I give others about me.	5. The real me and the impression I give others is opposite.
6. I freely express the real me in communication with others. (R)	6. I freely express the real me in communication with others. (R)
Identity Strain	Modified Identity Strain
1. I have been having trouble defining who I am here at home.	1. I have been having trouble defining who I am here at home.
2. Sometimes, I feel like my overseas experience doesn't fit my current job.	2. Sometimes, I feel like my overseas experience doesn't fit my current job.
3. There are times when there seems to be a conflict between what I am asked to do now and what I had learned overseas.	3. There are times when there seems to be a conflict between what I am asked to do now and what I had learned overseas.
4. There is a tension between who I am on my current job and who I was before I came back.	4. There is a tension between who I am on my current job and who I was before I came back.
5. I feel that my role as an international employee not compatible with my current role as a member of this organization.	5. I feel that my role as a sea turtle (haigui) is not compatible with my current role as a member of this organization.

(R): Reverse coded.

Table 3 Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

	Mean	S.D.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1.Gender	1.59	0.50												
2.Education	2.28	0.66	-.21											
3.Age	2.61	0.87	-.01	.40**										
4.Marital Status	1.48	0.56	-.06	-.33**	-.55**									
5.Position	3.38	1.05	-.19	.28*	.23	-.02								
6.Time spent overseas	3.46	3.42	-.03	.08	-.01	-.01	.09							
7.Time spent after coming back to China	1.27	1.17	.03	-.01	.09	-.12	.17	.18						
8.Thriving	2.08	0.93	-.12	-.03	-.16	.32**	.11	.38**	.00					
9.Identity Strain	3.06	0.97	.11	-.15	.09	-.14	-.04	-.32**	.08	-.46**				
10.Paradox Thinking	2.65	0.73	-.32**	.17	.02	.17	.12	.28*	-.04	.67**	-.38**			
11.Preference for Consistency	2.09	0.61	-.03	-.16	.09	-.17	-.16	-.12	.04	-.18	.32**	-.15		
12.Paradox of I and Me	3.15	0.63	-.13	.06	-.12	-.01	.07	.14	.11	.30*	.12	.39**	-.23	
13.Paradox of I and Expressed Me	3.26	0.62	-.16	.12	-.16	.16	.07	.10	.06	.18	.11	.35**	-.17	.51**

Measurements details: Gender:1 for male, 2 for female; Education:1 for bachelor, 2 for master degree, 3 for doctoral degree, 4 for post-doc; Age: 1 for age between 21 and 25, 2 for age between 26 and 30, 3 for age between 31 and 35, 4 for age between 36 and 40, 5 for age between 41 and 45; Marital Status: 1 for Never married, 2 for Married, 3 for divorced or widowed; Position: 1 for general employee, 2 for general manger/supervisor, 3 for senior manager, 4 for professionals (non-management position).

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 4a Results of Multiple Regression Analysis for Sea Turtles Paradox of “I” and “Me”, Identity Strain and Thriving

	Identity strain					Thriving				
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Block 1 Controls										
Gender	0.13	0.52	0.19	0.24	0.06	-0.09	0.05	-0.06	0.08	0.13
Education	-0.39*	-0.33*	-0.28*	-0.18	-0.13	0.05	-0.01	0.01	-0.18	-0.24*
Age	0.15	0.27	0.13	0.15	0.13	0.02	-0.08	0.09	0.06	0.18
Position	0.10	0.10	0.20	0.08	0.12	0.08	0.05	-0.01	0.08	0.11
Marital Status	-0.19	-0.06	-0.09	-0.01	0.05	0.32*	0.24	0.34*	0.18	0.20*
Percentage of sea turtles	-0.13	-0.17	-0.09	-0.14	-0.16	-0.19	-0.09	-0.19	-0.13	-0.13
Time spent overseas	-0.22	-0.20	-0.24*	-0.11	-0.15	0.22	0.22*	0.23	0.11	0.08
Time spent after back to China	0.71	0.02	-0.01	0.05	-0.02	0.02	0.04	0.06	0.02	0.06
Paradox of "I" and "Expressed Me"	0.26*	0.28	0.20	0.32*	0.29*	0.14	-0.11	0.05	-0.14	-0.10
Block 2 Main Effects										
Paradox of "I" and "Me"		0.26*	0.27	0.24*	0.31*		0.09	0.15	0.11	0.10
Preference for Consistency		0.33*	0.33*		0.08		-0.05	-0.02		0.26*
Paradox Thinking		-0.48***		-0.10	-0.11		0.63***		0.21	-0.07
Block 3 Two-way interactions										
Paradox of "I" and "Me" * Preference for Consistency			0.22		0.06			-0.30		0.16
Paradox of "I" and "Me" * Paradox Thinking				-0.55***	0.06				0.62***	-0.08
Paradox Thinking * Preference for Consistency					-0.10					-0.09
Block 4 Three-way interaction										
Paradox of "I" and "Me" * Paradox Thinking* Preference for Consistency					0.64					-0.71*
<i>R</i> ²		0.23	0.18	0.31	0.35	0.16	0.18	0.41	0.59	0.65
<i>F</i>		2.94**	2.27*	3.68**	3.28***	5.59***	2.27*	5.59***	8.01***	8.51***

Table 4b Results of Multiple Regression Analysis for Paradox of “I” and “Expressed Me”, Identity Strain and Thriving

	Identity strain					Thriving				
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Block 1 Controls										
Gender	0.13	0.05	0.19	-0.02	0.05	-0.07	0.05	-0.06	0.15	0.14
Education	-0.35*	-0.33*	-0.27	-0.22	-0.11	0.06	0.06	-0.05	-0.16	-0.30*
Age	0.16	0.27	0.11	0.13	0.13	0.06	0.06	0.15	0.11	0.21*
Position	0.08	0.10	0.14	0.12	0.10	0.07	0.07	0.06	0.03	0.13
Marital Status	-0.12	-0.06	-0.06	-0.07	0.02	0.38*	0.38*	0.33*	0.24*	0.23
Percentage of sea turtles	-0.07	-0.17	-0.09	-0.15	-0.14	-0.17	-0.17	-0.20	-0.12	-0.16*
Time spent overseas	-0.23	-0.20	-0.24*	-0.12	-0.17	0.23	0.24	0.24	0.10	0.10
Time spent after back to China	0.07	0.02	0.11	0.03	-0.01	-0.01	-0.01	0.06	0.03	0.08
Paradox of "I" and "Me"	0.20	0.26	0.20	0.27*	0.33*	0.29*	0.29*	0.23	0.07	0.05
Block 2 Main Effects										
Paradox of "I" and "Expressed Me"		0.29*	0.22	0.32***	0.26*		-0.06	-0.04	-0.15	-0.05
Preference for Consistency		0.33*	0.30*		0.23		-0.02	0.05		0.05
Paradox Thinking		-0.48***		-0.10	-0.13		0.63***		0.11	-0.05
Block 3 Two-way interactions										
Paradox of "I" and "Expressed Me"			0.15		-0.11			-0.35*		-0.17
* Preference for Consistency										
Paradox of "I" and "Expressed Me"										
* Paradox Thinking										
Paradox Thinking * Preference for Consistency										
										0.16
Block 4 Three-way interaction										
Paradox of "I" and "Expressed Me"										
* Paradox Thinking* Preference for Consistency										
										-0.87**
R^2		0.23	0.18	0.31	0.35	0.16	0.18	0.41	0.59	0.65
F		2.94**	2.27*	3.68**	3.28***	5.59***	2.27*	5.59***	8.01***	8.51***

Figure 1 Conceptual Model of This Study

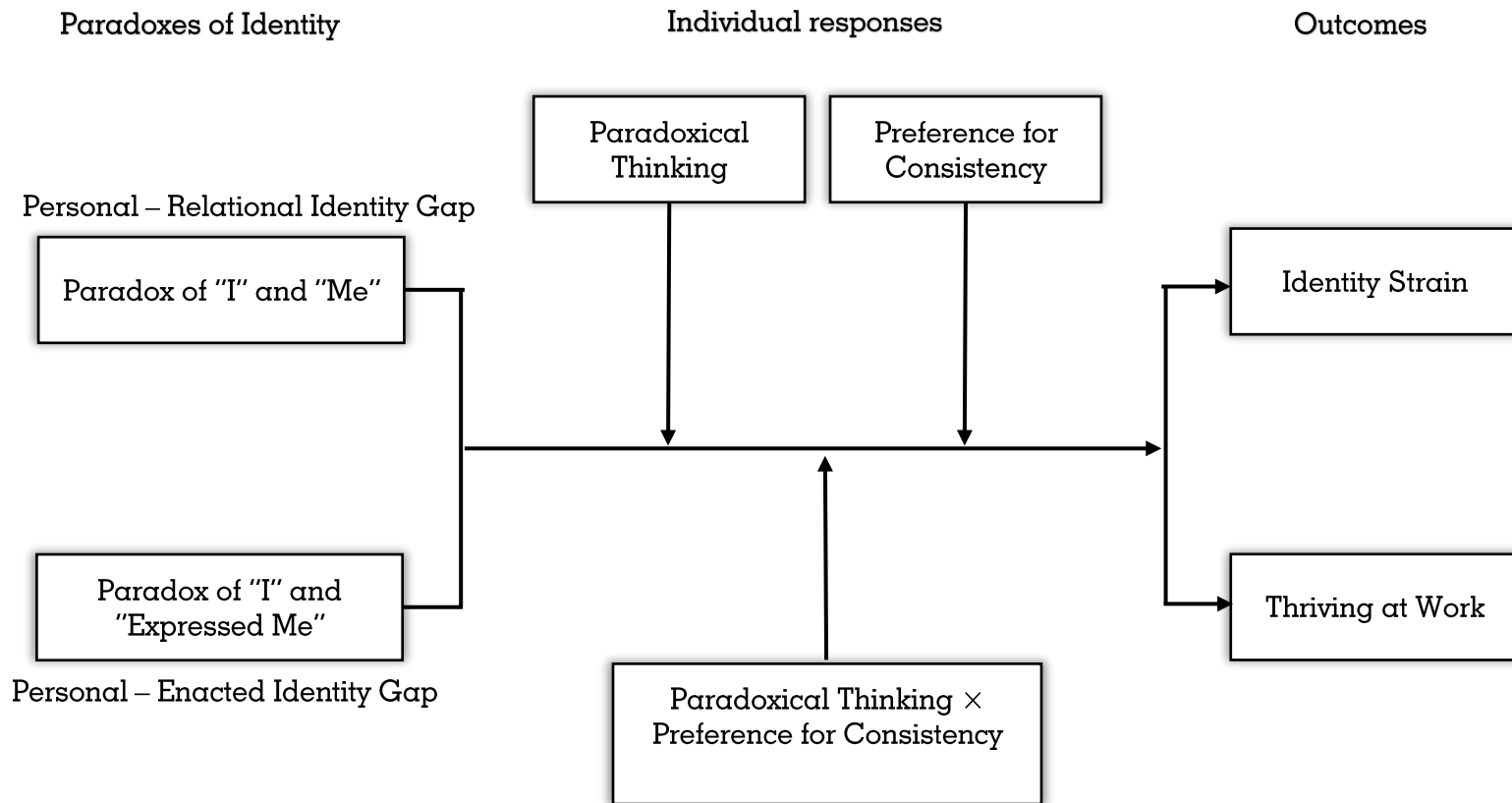


Figure 2a Paradoxical Thinking as a Moderator of the Relationship between Paradox of “I” and “Me” and Identity Strain

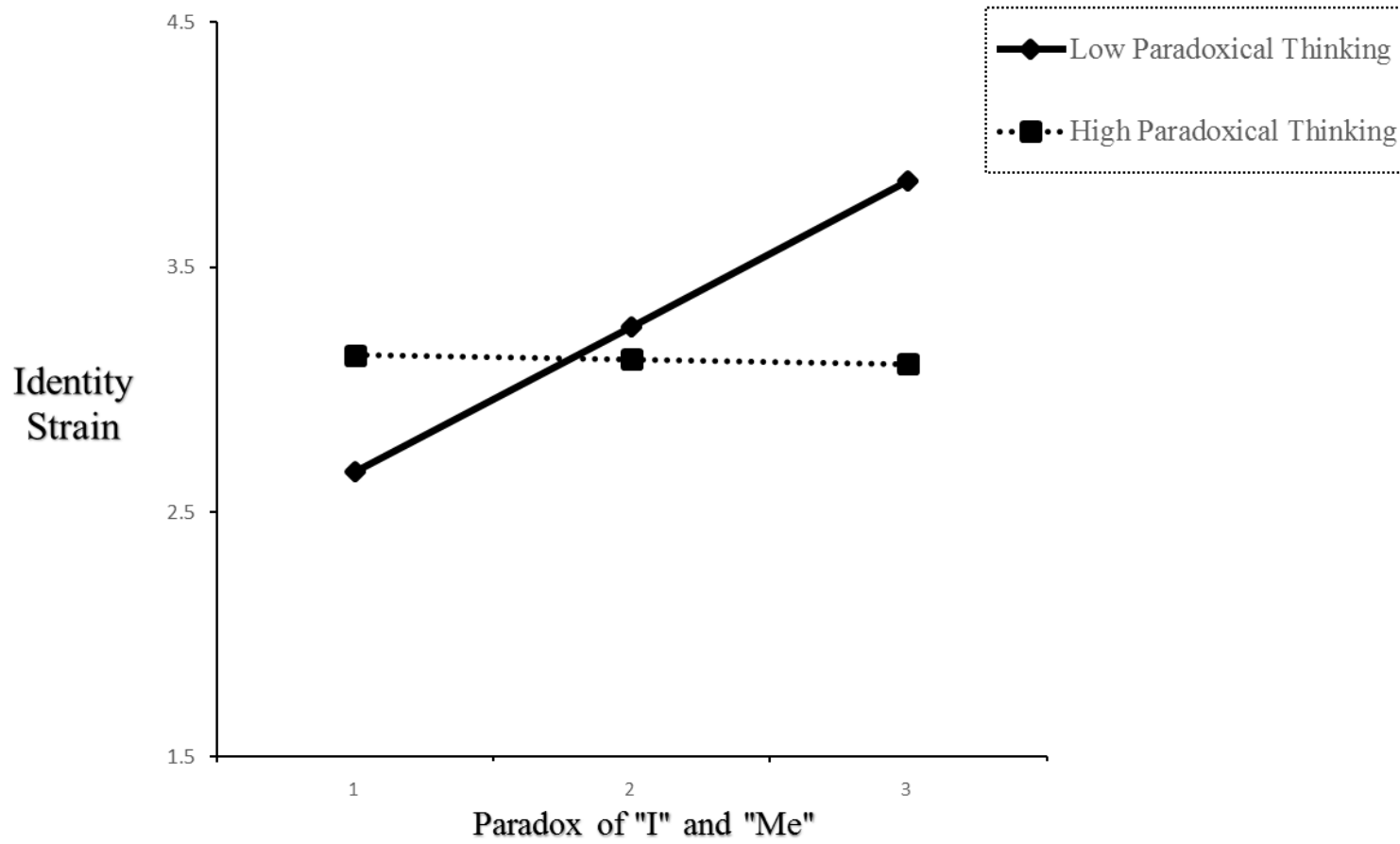


Figure 2b Paradoxical Thinking as a Moderator of the Relationship between Paradox of “I” and “Expressed Me” and Identity Strain

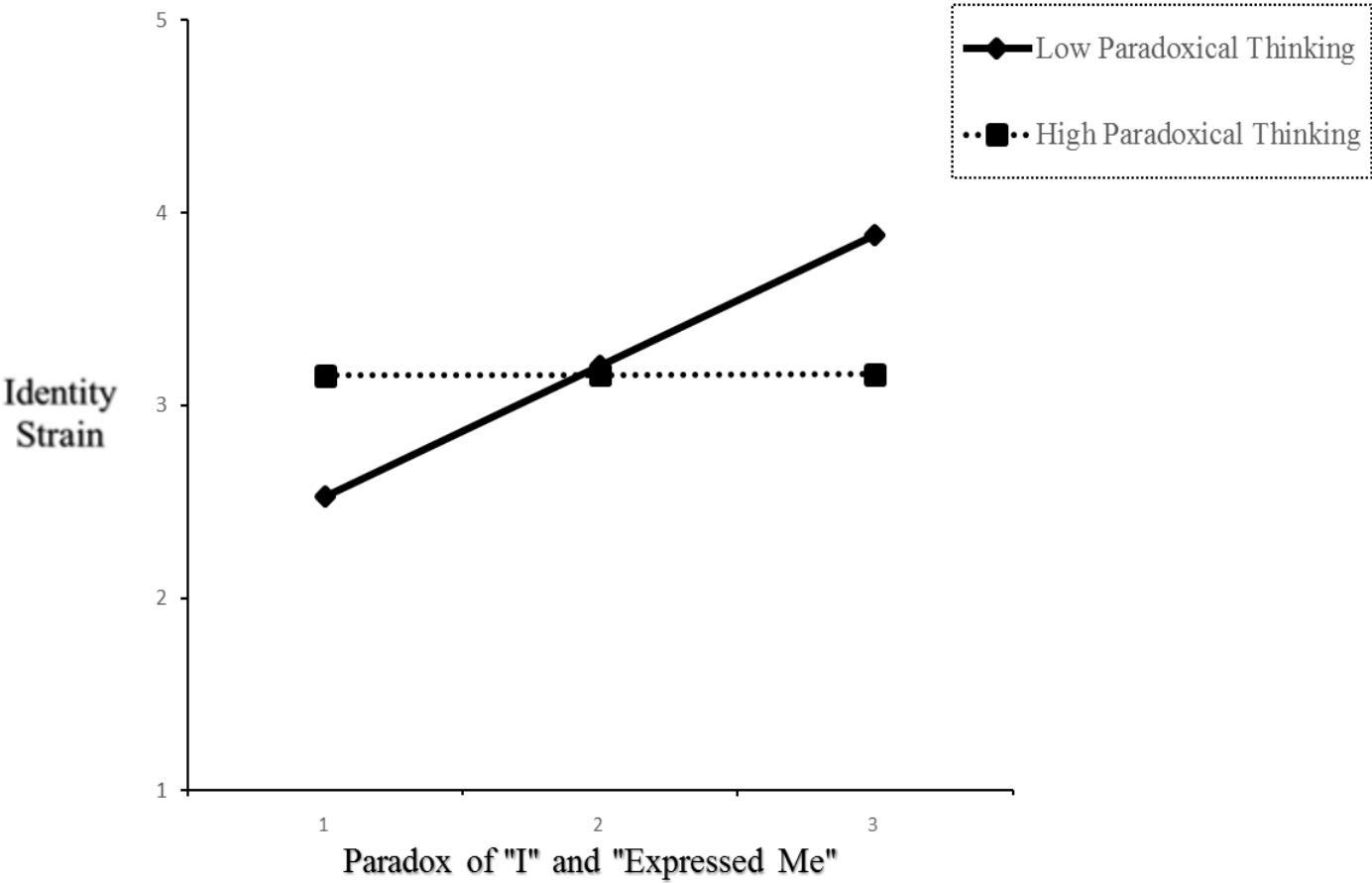


Figure 3a Paradoxical Thinking as a Moderator of the Relationship between Paradox of "I" and "Me" and Thriving

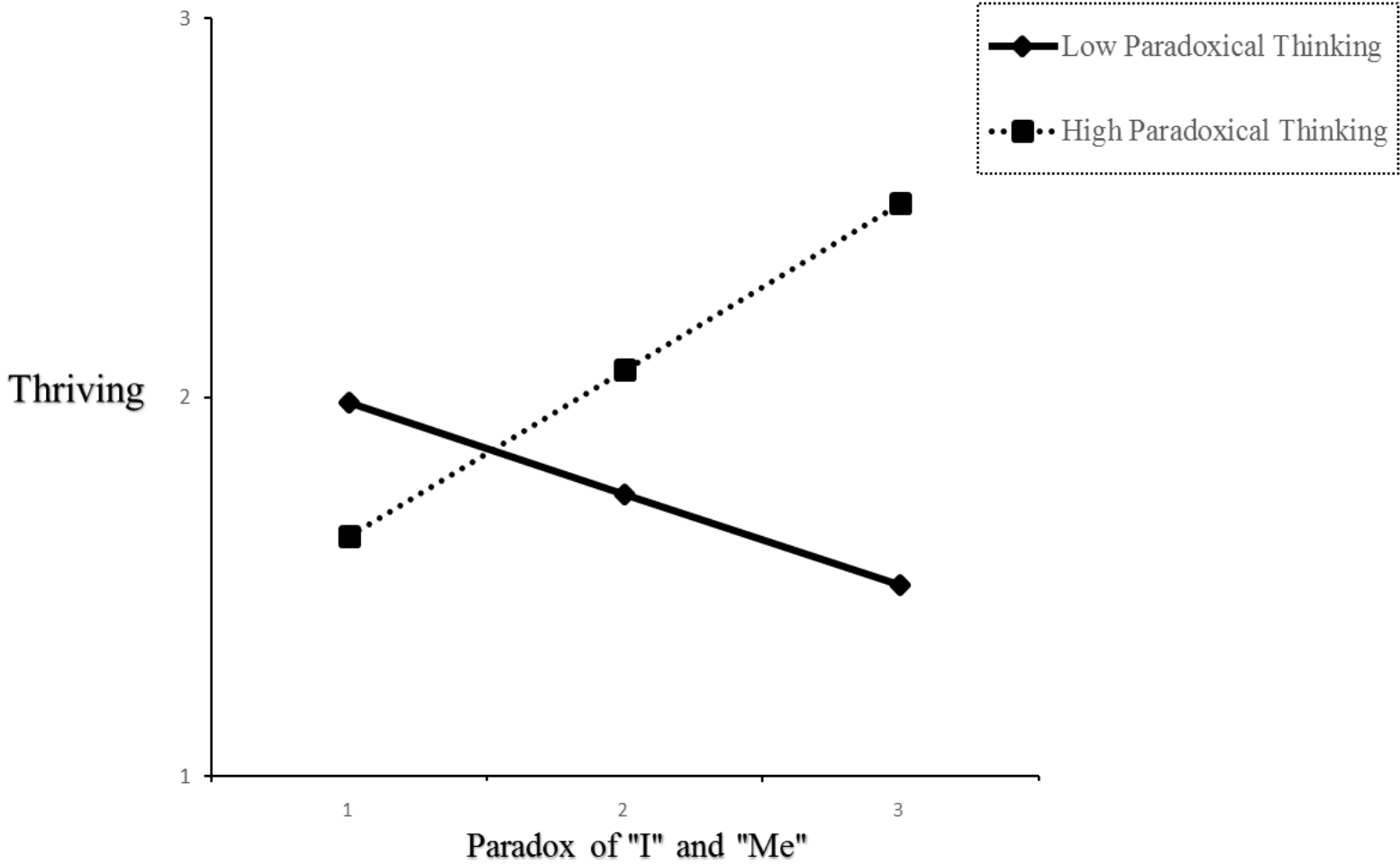


Figure 3b Paradoxical Thinking as a Moderator of the Relationship between Paradox of “I” and “Expressed Me” and Thriving

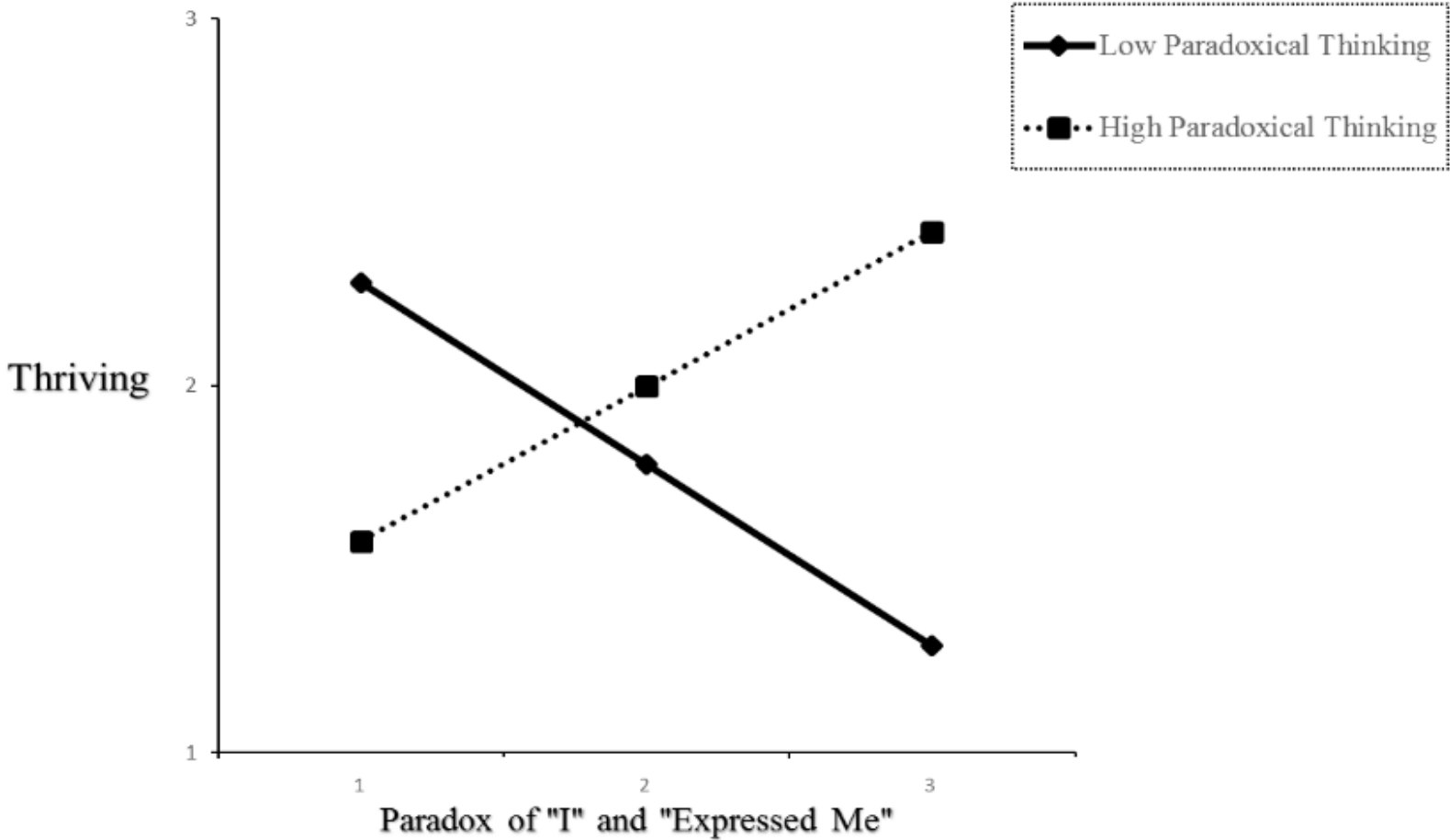


Figure 4a Preference of Consistency and Paradoxical Thinking as Moderators of Relationship

between Paradox of "I" & "Me" and Thriving

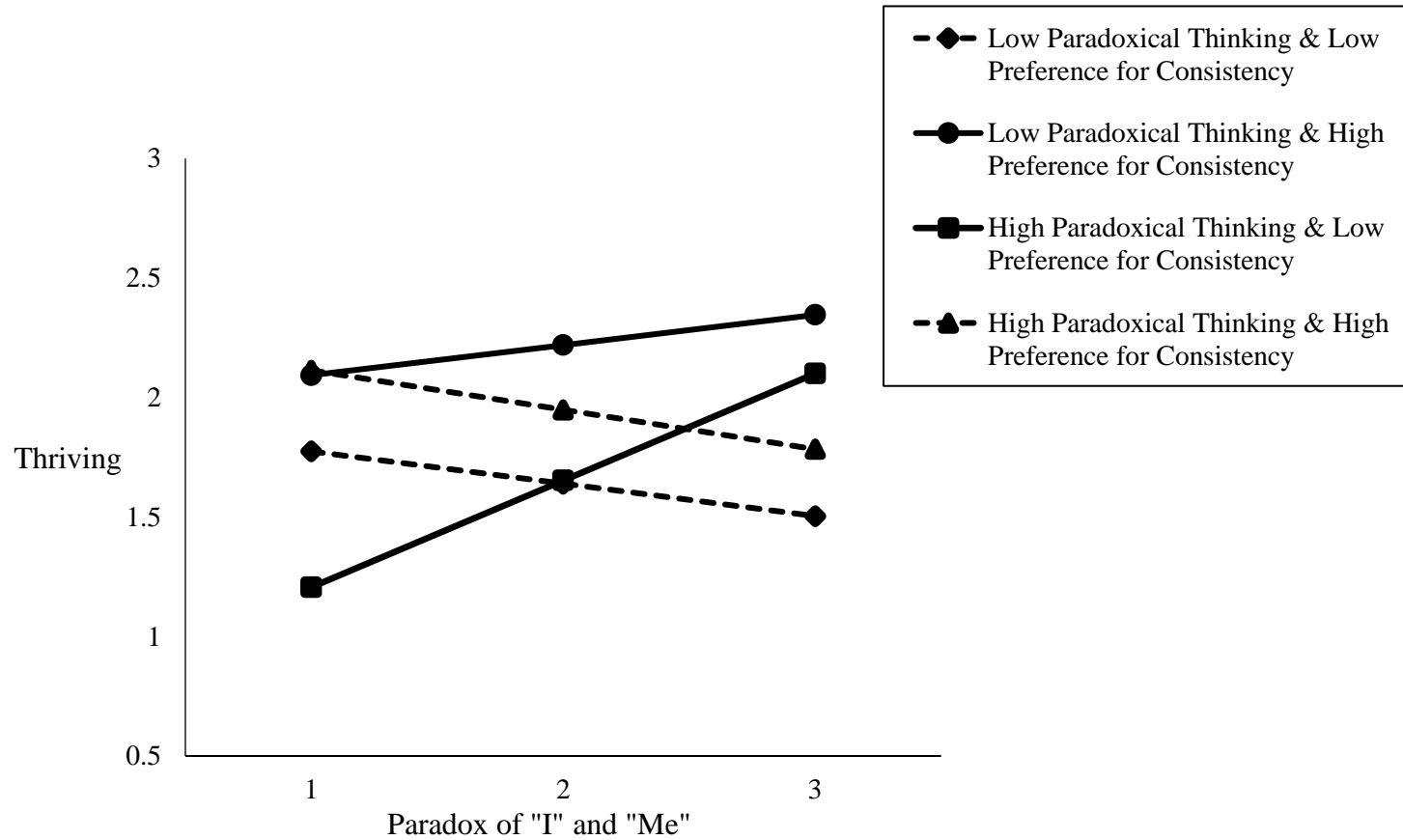
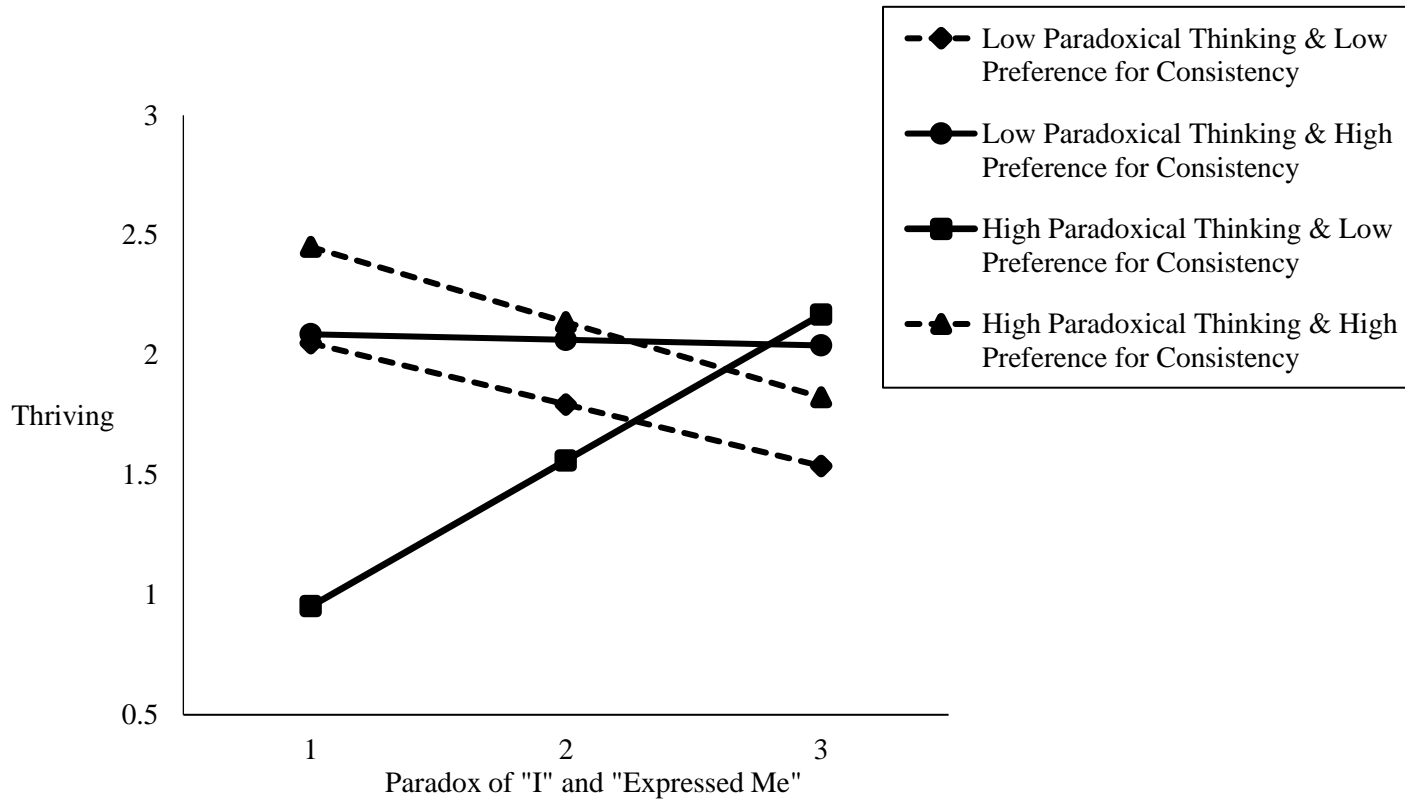


Figure 4b Preference of Consistency and Paradoxical Thinking as Moderators of Relationship between Paradox of “I” & “Expressed Me” and Thriving



Longzhu DONG

EDUCATION

- 2011 ~ May 2017 Ph.D. in Management and Organization Science
University of Wisconsin Milwaukee, Milwaukee, Wisconsin
Major Area: Organizational Behavior Minor Area: International Business
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- 2007 ~ 2008 M.S. in Corporate Governance and Directorship
Hong Kong Baptist University, Hong Kong
- 2005 ~ 2007 M.S. in Human Resource Management
Nankai University, Tianjin, China
- 1999 ~ 2003 B.A. in Human Resource Management
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TEACHING/WORKING EXPERIENCE

- 2017 ~ Now **Assistant Professor**
University of Wisconsin Eau Claire, Eau Claire, Wisconsin
- Courses: International Business, Global Leadership
- 2014 ~ 2017 **Instructor**
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- Graduate level (**co-teach** with Dr. Margaret Shaffer)
 - Managing and Negotiating Across Cultures (**Best Instructor Award**)
 - Undergraduate level
 - International Business (**Gold Star Teaching Award**)
 - Organizations (**Outstanding Graduate Student Teaching Award**)
- 2008 ~ 2011 **Instructor & Assistant to Associate Dean**
United International College, Zhuhai, China
- Courses: Introduction to Business, Business Ethics, Human Resource Management.
- 2008 ~ 2011 **Instructor**
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- Courses: International Business, Strategic Management and English.
- 2006 ~ 2007 **Assistant to Dean of HR Department**
Tianjin People's Broadcasting Station, Tianjin, China
- Revised position description & position evaluation for Studio's 9 departments
 - Built "Compensation System & Performance Evaluation System"
- 2003 ~ 2005 **Assistant to Dean of the Employment Service Center**
BEIDAHUANG Group, Heilongjiang, China
- Provided employment and training information for qualified handicapped people

RESEARCH PROJECTS AND PUBLICATIONS

- ***Under review papers***

Peng, Lin, & Dong, *The Role of Mentoring in Protégés' Subjective Well-Being*, Paper under review (second round) at *Journal of Career Development*

- ***Conference Symposium, Proceedings and Presentation***

Li, Zhang, Wan, Dong, Cerne (2017). "*Help Giving and Creativity: How to Achieve a Win-win Situation?*" Paper presented at Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology, Orlando.

Shaffer, M., Lazarova, Dimitrova, Ren, Zhang, Tung, Dong, Masud, Hao & Chen (2016). *Coming Home: Diasporic Repatriates' Reentry and Reintegration*. Symposium to be presented at Academy of Management at Anaheim, California

Dong, L. (2016). *Sea turtles on land: Chinese returnees' returning experiences through a paradox lens*. Paper to be presented at Symposium at Academy of Management at Anaheim, California

Dong, L. & Shaffer M. (2016). *The Effects of Emotional Intelligence on Conflict - Mediating Role of Social Behaviors*, Paper to be presented at Academy of Management at Anaheim, California.

Dong, L. & Ren, H (2016). *Conflicts between Expatriates and Host Country Nationals*. Paper presented at Academy of International Business at New Orleans, Louisiana.

Dong, L., Shaffer, M., Luk, D., & Liu, X. (2014, January). *A Moderated Mediation Model of Emotional Labor and the Work Family Interface*. In Academy of Management Proceedings (Vol. 2014, No. 1, p. 16796).

Dong, L. & Shaffer, M. (2013, January). *Repatriate Career Advancement: A Social Exchange Perspective*. In Academy of Management Proceedings (Vol. 2013, No. 1, p. 16964).

Dong, L. & Ren, H. (2013). *Examine Expatriate Effectiveness from a conflict perspective*. Paper presented at International Association for Conflict Management, Tacoma, Washington.

- ***Ongoing international research projects***

Does West "Balance" with East? In Search of an Eastern Model of Work-Family Balance, Project supported by the Natural Science Foundation of Guangdong Province

College Graduates Career Clarity and Proactive Career Behaviors, Project supported by the Natural Science Foundation of Guangdong Province

Co-authored with Dr. Taras, Dr. Fitzsimmons, and Dr. Dan Caprar. *The role of Multicultural Individuals in Global Virtual Teams*.

Co-authored with Dr. Taras *Expectations Versus Observations Congruence in Global Virtual Teams: Implications for Selection and Training*.

Co-authored with Dr. Taras. *Email, Skype, or Facebook: The Effects of the Communication Tool Choices on Team Dynamics and Performance in GVTs*.

HONORS AND AWARDS

2017	Outstanding Graduate Student Teaching Award
2016	Strategic Human Resource Management Research Grant
2016	Gold Star Teaching Award at University of Wisconsin in Milwaukee
2015	Best Instructor of “X-Culture Global Collaboration Project”
2013	IACM - Dispute Resolution Research Center (DRRC) Scholar Award
2012 ~ 2016	Lubar School of Business Travel Scholarship
2012 ~ 2015	Sheldon B. Lubar Summer Scholarship
2014	Sheldon B. Lubar Doctoral Scholarship
2011	Sheldon B. Lubar Fellowship

SERVICE

2015 ~ Present	Reviewer for Journal of Global Mobility
2016 ~ Present	Reviewer for Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology
2012 ~ Present	Reviewer for Academy of International Business
2012 ~ Present	Reviewer for Academy of Management
2012 ~ Present	Officer of the Organizations and Strategic Management Academic Student Research Club