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Educational, sociocultural and employment experience of

Chinese international students in the UK

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Title: **Educational, sociocultural and employment experience of Chinese international students in the UK**

Yujie HU

Abstract

The purpose of this research is to explore the challenges and experiences of female Chinese international students in the UK. The thesis depicts evidence generated from 64 semi-structured interviews with 24 female Chinese students undertaking a 1-year taught postgraduate course in a UK Russell group HE institution. Conducted over an 18-month period, the fieldwork comprised repeat interviews that sought to build up the different aspects of experiences and attitudes perceived by female Chinese students and how they coped with challenging experiences as individuals. This study covers motivation for internationalisation in higher education, impressions of the UK, experiences of Chinese students in the UK, and stereotypes of Chinese students.

The results illustrated that female Chinese students had both favourable experiences and difficulties while staying in the UK. The impressions of the UK were generally positive and satisfactory. Most female Chinese students had employment intention in the UK. The experience of studying in the UK influenced the impression of the UK, and also influenced the intention to remain or to work in the UK.

This thesis makes contributions to academic knowledge, to international education practitioners, and to prospective Chinese students considering study in the UK. This research has adopted a longitudinal approach which is a novel aspect from the methodological perspective. Implications of this research can apply to multiple subjects. These include Chinese students, the UK host HE institutions, the UK host cities and the UK as a country.

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Declaration

This thesis is the result of my own work. Material from the published or unpublished work of others which is referred to in the thesis is credited to the author in question in the text. Research ethics issues have been considered and handled appropriately within the Durham University Business School guidelines and procedures.

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List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

CIPD	Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development
EEA	European Economic Area
EU	European Union
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
GMAT	Graduate Management Admission Test
GRE	Graduate Record Examination
HE	Higher education
HEI	Higher education institution
HESA	Higher Education Statistics Agency
HSMP	Highly Skilled Migrant Programme
NBSC	National Bureau of Statistics of China
NSEE	National Statistics England Estimates
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
IGS	International Graduates Scheme
ILO	International Labour Office
IPS	International Passenger Survey
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
ONS	Office of National Statistics
PSW	Post Study Work
SEGS	Science and Engineering Graduate Scheme
TOEFL	Test of English as a Foreign Language
UCAS	Universities and Colleges Admissions Service
UK	United Kingdom
UKBA	UK Border Agency
UKCISA	United Kingdom Council for International Student Affairs (2007-now)
UKCOSA	United Kingdom Council for Overseas Student Affairs
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
US	United States
UUK	Universities UK

For my parents and my loved one

献给父母大人和我的爱人

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This chapter will begin with an introduction to the background of the research topic. After a brief introduction on research motives, this chapter will describe the context for this research, beginning with the internationalisation of higher education (HE) as a global phenomenon, followed by the particular focus of this topic in the UK. After introducing the background, it comes to the research objective and research questions of this thesis. An outline of how to find answers to the research questions will be then illustrated.

1.2 Background to the Research

1.2.1 Research motives

Before I started my PhD life, I spent a year studying a master's programme in the UK. My time as a taught postgraduate international student in the UK inspired me to conduct this research. This includes the reflection of my experiences as an international student and other female Chinese students' experiences I observed and interacted during that year.

I worked in a Chinese restaurant as a part-time waitress. I belonged to the serving team that normally consisted of part-time female and male Chinese students, young local residents, and a small number of randomly mixed serving members from other social minorities. Most of my teammates were female Chinese students, communication with whom triggered my interest in the experiences of female Chinese students in the UK.

Through talking with my female Chinese teammates, I gradually came to assess the challenges they were facing: dissatisfaction with the curriculum, impending adversity in seeking full-time employment, interaction with people, intra-group discrimination, as well as a series of necessary survival techniques resulting from material and cultural differences.

Dissatisfaction with the curriculum was caused by the low number of modules designed for an MA course. Colleagues who were MA in Education students only had four

modules to attend plus a dissertation to write. The number of modules was not expected by my colleagues, particularly relative to the high tuition fee. An MA degree in Education in Tsinghua University, one of the top universities in China, requires students to complete 14 to 16 modules and a dissertation, plus to complete at least one academic paper publication (Institute of Education Tsinghua University, 2015).

Potential challenges in gaining full-time employment were expressed by my Chinese colleagues. Most of my female Chinese colleagues intended to work in the UK after graduation. Male Chinese team members were less keen compared to their female counterparts. One male Chinese colleague told me the possibility of him reaching a senior management role in the UK was extremely low, which was a disincentive to him staying in the UK after graduation. Female Chinese teammates by comparison were not much concerned with high career attainment. The purpose of doing this part-time job for both the male and the female Chinese students was the same: to earn pocket money. The potential challenges in gaining full-time employment in the UK, reported by my Chinese colleagues, were visa restrictions and the language barrier.

Difficulties in interaction with people included limited communication with the local people and the interaction barriers with the long-settled migrants in the Chinese restaurant. My Chinese teammates found it difficult to begin to interact with the local people as they did not know what to say or what to do. Interaction barriers with the long-settled migrants (the manager and the chefs) in the Chinese restaurant were due to language difficulties and "cultural" differences. The manager spoke Cantonese and English; the chefs spoke Cantonese and limited English words relevant to the restaurant business such as chicken, beef, bill and numbers, and limited Mandarin words, mainly to ask out the girls; the part-time Chinese employees spoke Mandarin and English. The barrier between the manager and the Chinese employees was not so much a language one as both sides spoke English, but involved discriminatory behaviour from the manager (see later paragraphs). Communication, particularly beyond work-related topics, between the chefs and the Chinese employees was difficult due to the language barrier. Many times, chefs tried to ask the Chinese waitresses out clubbing but were rejected. The Chinese girls told me clubbing was not a type of entertainment they were interested in. However, if not clubbing, there were few other entertainment options at night time in the UK.

Living difficulties were not much mentioned by my Chinese colleagues, apart from the hilly roads that girls were not used to, particularly those who used to wear high heels before coming to the UK. A few cultural differences were observed by me and my Chinese colleagues. In bars and restaurants in the UK, soft drinks are automatically served with ice without the need to specifically ask for it. This is not the case in China and was a source of teasing for me while working as a waitress.

Inspired by the educational, sociocultural and employment experiences and challenges of my Chinese colleagues, particularly my female Chinese student colleagues, I wished to learn more about their experiences and attitudes when staying in the UK. I specifically focus on the female gender based on the different treatment received and the different attitudes perceived towards male and female Chinese students. The female Chinese students were more vulnerable in the restaurant case. I began this PhD project to learn about educational, sociocultural and employment experiences and attitudes towards the UK from female Chinese students, and I wanted to see how their experiences and attitudes changed throughout their stay in the UK.

1.2.2 Internationalisation of Higher Education Globally

For more than half a century, the number of international students who travel out of their country of citizenship to study has been increasing rapidly. The number of international students in tertiary education grew to over 4.5 million by 2012 (OECD, 2014) and this number is predicted to increase to 7.2 million by 2025 (Boehm *et al.*, 2002: 3; University UK, 2012). Figure 1 shows the trend of international student population in the past decade, worldwide, and in Europe, in North America and in Oceania. This figure suggests a trend of growing international student mobility in the three regions and worldwide as a whole, indicating a continuous flow of international students from lesser to more developed regions.

Figure 1. Evolution in the number of students enrolled outside their country of citizenship, by region of destination (2000 to 2012).
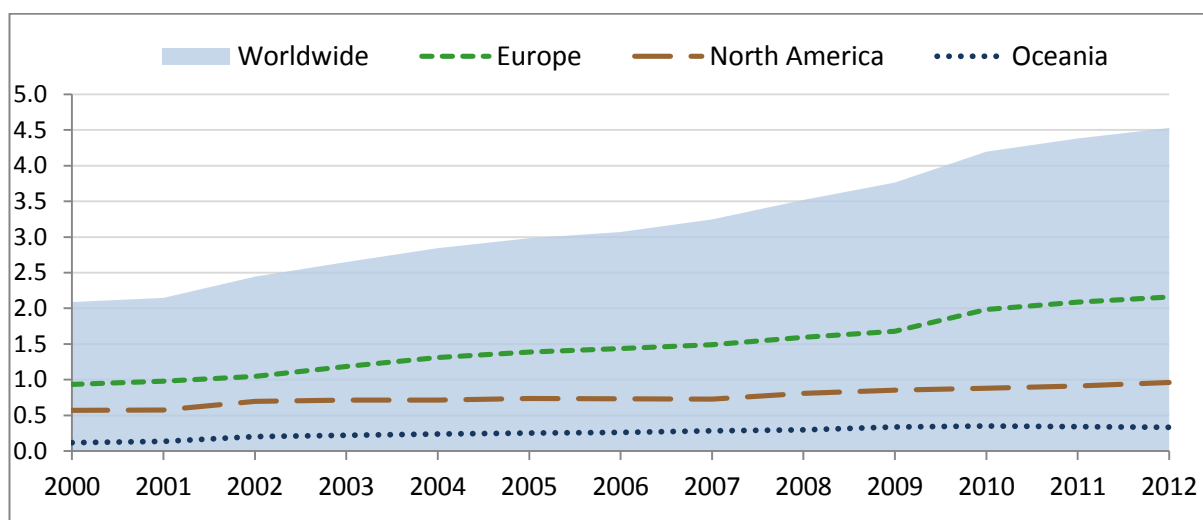
Source: OECD (2014). Table C4.6. (www.oecd.org/edu/eag.htm).

According to the OECD (2014), countries that have the highest proportion of international students out of their total number of students in HE are Australia, Austria, Luxembourg, New Zealand, Switzerland and the UK. In the international education market, countries that attract international students to study most are the US, UK, Germany, France, Australia and Canada (see Figure 2).

From Figure 2 we can observe a decline in the market share in the US in the past decade (2000-2012). Conversely, the market share in UK, Australia and Canada has risen, among which the UK has increased the most. Notably, these three countries use English in most of the educational instruction in tertiary education, a language which is widely spoken and read in the world. The OECD (2014) report, then, suggests the language of instruction is an important factor in students' choice of a country in which to study. Other main factors identified by the OECD (2014) are quality of programmes, tuition fees and immigration policy. Aside from the main factors, other factors that affect international students' decisions in choosing a country for study include:

> the academic reputation of particular institutions or programmes; the flexibility of programmes in counting time spent abroad towards degree requirements; recognition of foreign degrees; the limitations of tertiary education in the home country; restrictive university admission policies at home; geographical, trade or historical links between countries; future job

opportunities; cultural aspirations; and government policies to facilitate the transfer of credits between home and host institutions. (OECD, 2014: 349)

Detailed discussion on the factors affecting students' choice of a country of study will follow in the next chapter.

Figure 2. Trends in international education market shares (2000, 2012).
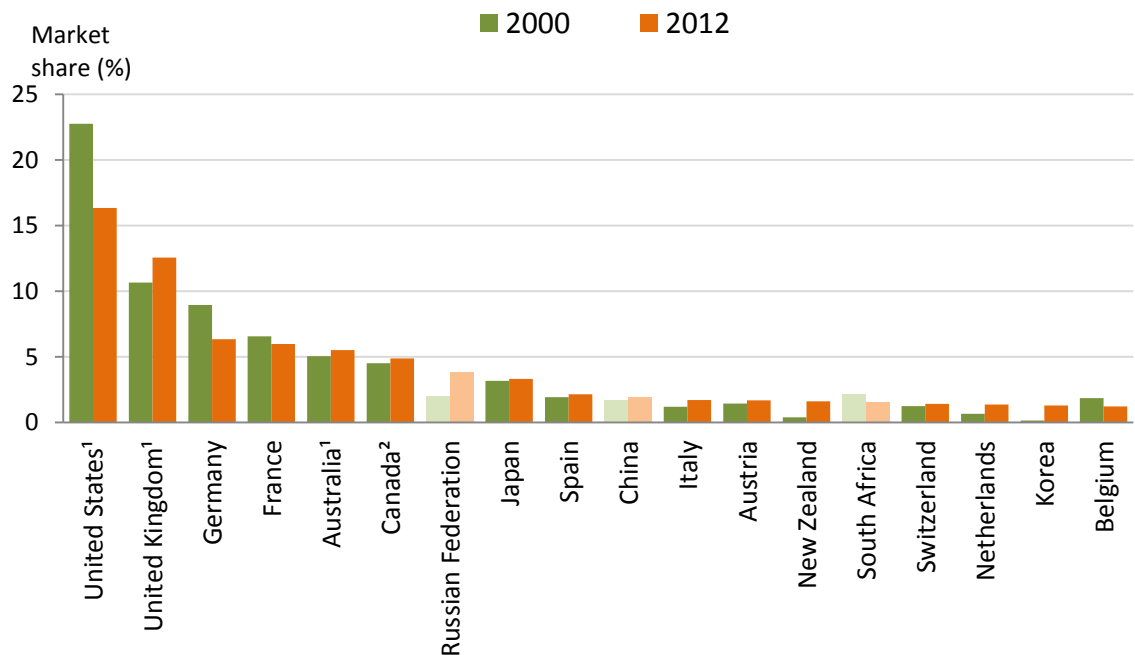
1. Data relate to international students defined on the basis of their country of residence. For the UK, data for 2012 is based on citizenship.
2. Year of reference 2011 instead of 2012.
Countries are ranked in descending order of 2012 market shares.

Source: OECD (2014). Table C4.7. (www.oecd.org/edu/eag.htm).

Among international students, those from Asia make up more than half (53%) of the total, of which students from China (21.6%), India (5.8%) and Korea (4.2%) make up the majority (OECD, 2014). As China is the largest country of origin in terms of international students, where Chinese students choose to study is of concern to the international education market. Based on data from the OECD (2014), in 2012, 28% of Chinese mobile students had chosen to study in the US, followed by 13% in Japan, 11% in Australia and 11% in the UK. From these percentage figures we learn that the UK is not the top option as an overseas study destination, having equal popularity to Australia, and half as popular as the US, for Chinese students.

In terms of the qualification levels of study, master's level qualifications have grown most significantly among all qualifications in the UK for international students. Statistically, taught masters qualifications undertaken by non-EEA students have doubled in number since 2002-2003, and this number is predicted to continually increase (Universities UK, 2012). At the level of postgraduate study, Chinese students are the most globally mobile ethnic group (UKCISA, 2012). In the case of gender, female Chinese postgraduate students are more globally mobile than their male counterparts (HESA, 2011; UNESCO, 2012). According to UCAS (2011), 53% of Chinese candidates applying for postgraduate level in the UK in the subject of Business and Administrative Studies were female.

1.2.3 Internationalisation of Higher Education in the UK

The number of Chinese students pursuing a postgraduate degree in the UK, along with other East Asian students, has been growing in the last decade, based on data provided by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (2002). This suggests that Chinese students have contributed to more than half of the increase in international students (Durkin, 2004).

Figure 3. Top five non-EU countries for student enrolments on the UK HE courses by country of domicile 2009/10 to 2013/14.
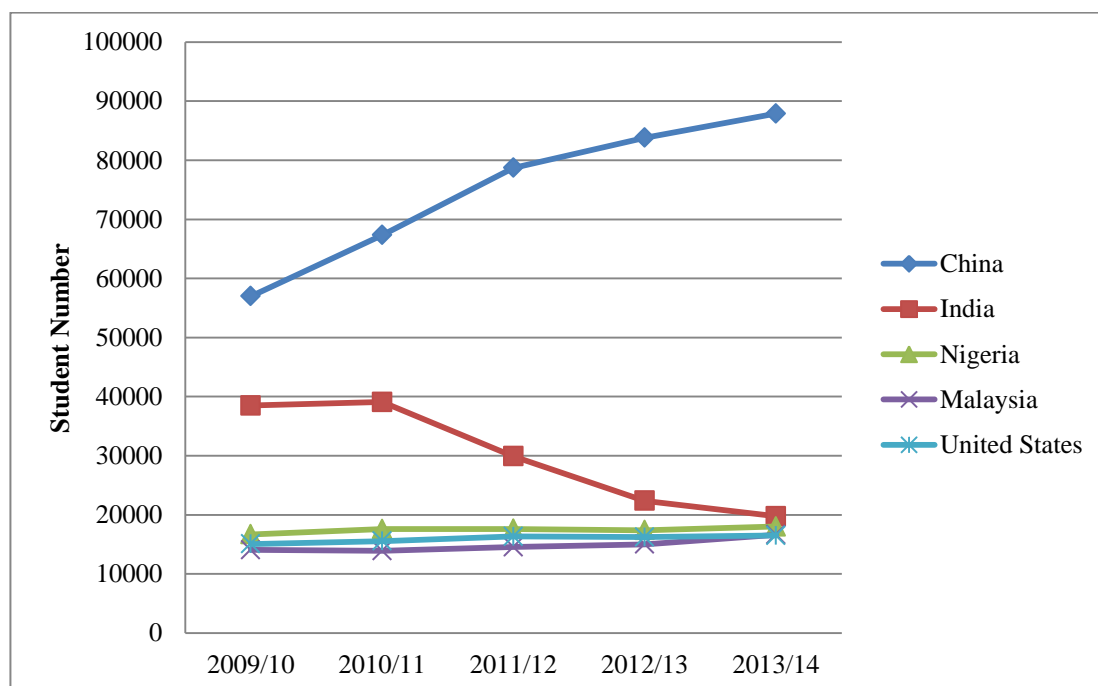
Source: The author, based on Higher Education Statistics Agency (2014)

From the above figure, we can see a continuous growth in student numbers from China. Among the top five non-EU countries for student enrolments on HE courses, Nigeria, Malaysia and the US were almost steady in their popularity growth for students, whilst students from India dropped dramatically after 2010/11. In contrast, these years observed a surge in the number of Chinese students entering UK HE institutions. Indeed, since 2011/12 the number of Chinese students has grown to more than one-quarter of the total of international students in the UK (HESA, 2014).

In relation to the levels of study, according to the below table, the taught higher degree had the highest percentage of ethnic minorities in 2015/16. The full-time taught higher degree was the highest among all modes of study for international students (HESA, 2017).

Table 1. Percentage of first year UK domiciled ethnic minority HE students by level of study and mode of study 2015/16.

	Ethnic minority
Higher degree (research)	
Full-time	16.2%
Part-time	17.4%
Total higher degree (research)	16.5%
Higher degree (taught)	
Full-time	28.2%
Part-time	18.6%
Total higher degree (taught)	23.6%
Other postgraduate	
Full-time	16.4%
Part-time	18.7%
Total other postgraduate	17.8%
First degree	
Full-time	25.9%
Part-time	13.4%
Total first degree	24.7%
Other undergraduate	
Full-time	21.3%
Part-time	14.6%
Total other undergraduate	16.0%
All levels	
Full-time	25.1%
Part-time	16.0%
Total all levels	22.3%

Table 2. HE students by mode of study, sex and domicile 2015/16.

	Asia	Non-European Union subtotal	Total	Percentage by sex
Full-time				
Female	98215	149500	**962105**	55.3%
Male	82460	135580	**778055**	44.7%
Total full-time	**180695**	**285120**	1740540	
Percentage by domicile	10.4%	16.4%		
Part-time				
Female	5380	12045	**326570**	60.5%
Male	5585	13400	**213615**	39.5%
Total part-time	**10965**	**25455**	540285	
Percentage by domicile	2.0%	4.7%		
All students				
Female	103595	161545	**1288680**	56.5%
Male	88045	148985	**991670**	43.5%
Total all students	**191660**	**310575**	2280830	
Percentage by domicile	8.4%	13.6%		

1.2.4 Impact of internationalisation

One possible impact of internationalisation of higher education is the enhancement of employability for international students. Higher education institutions aim to maximise students' ability to benefit from their university experience, reach their academic expectations and enhance their employability upon graduation.

As mentioned earlier, the mobility flow of international education has been steadily growing in the past decade; at the same time, the flow of those returning to their countries of origin for further career development after upgrading their professional qualification from the host countries is also continuously growing (Engardio, 1994; Pan, 2010; Zikopoulos, 1991). In the case of China, the number of foreign-trained Chinese graduates returning to China has been growing rapidly, from fewer than 10,000 in 2000 to 134,800 in 2010 and 353,500 in 2013 (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2014). From Figure 4, we can observe not only a growing trend of both the out-flow and in-flow of Chinese postgraduate students, but also a trend of a smaller gap between the two lines, particularly in the three recent years, indicating a new fashion of returning to China after their overseas studies.

Figure 4. Number of Chinese postgraduate students studying abroad and returned.
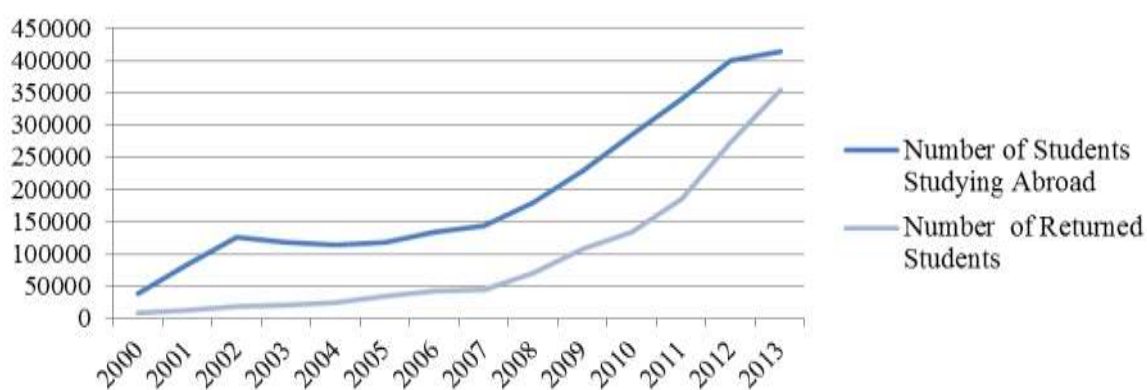
Source: The Author, based on National Bureau of Statistics of China (2014)

International mobility is considered as beneficial for HE. As Robertson writes, international mobility enables "active social and political agents, negotiating, interpreting, and contesting their social worlds by mobilising and materialising the knowledge through which that social world is constituted" (2010: 644).

Internationalisation of HE is regarded as beneficial for the host institution in terms of enhancing the quality of teaching and research, strengthening institutional capacity, generating revenue, contributing to knowledge production and to student personal prestige (Green, 2012). In a diverse cultural community, as Cortazzi and Jin write, "everybody learns" (1997: 89).

The internationalisation of HE benefits the host country in multiple ways. The benefits to the host country include building mutual understanding, contributing to the knowledge pool of the host country, increasing revenue, and fostering economic capacity building for the host country (Iannelli and Huang, 2014). Mutual understanding can be built through European exchange programmes such as the Erasmus programme. Contribution to the knowledge pool of the host country can be achieved by supporting skilled migrants through scholarship programmes. Revenue gains for universities are accessed primarily by high tuition fee charges to international students. For example, a survey study suggests Chinese international students in the academic year 2003/04 contributed approximately £300 million with regard to tuition fees to UK institutions (Nania & Green, 2004). Revenue generation from living expenditures is beneficial to the local economy. For example, in the academic year 2003/04, Chinese international students contributed £475 million to the UK economy in terms of living cost (Nania & Green, 2004). As Green (2012) mentioned in her ten drivers for internationalisation of HE, benefits are felt by the local economy and workforce. Economic capacity building for the host country can be enhanced by the enlargement of the well-educated workforce pool.

In 2011-2012, the tuition fees after scholarships contributed by international students in the UK were £3.9 billion and the living expenses were £6.3 billion (UK Government, 2013). The estimated annual value of internationalising the UK HE industry to the UK economy was from £7.9 billion (Universities UK, 2012) to £14.1 billion (Conlon *et al.*, 2011). This economic contribution is expected to reach £16.9 billion (Universities UK, 2012) to £26.6 billion (Conlon *et al.*, 2011) in 2025. These figures indicate the importance of this industry for the UK, who are currently the second largest recruiter in the international education market (OECD, 2014; Universities UK, 2012). The high

tuition fees charged have made the UK HE sector reliant on international student recruitment (Bolsmann & Miller, 2008; Halliday, 2002; Bamber, 2014).

According to a report entitled *International Students and the UK immigration Debate* by Universities UK in 2014, students are viewed as the most popular migrants by the UK public, with 59% agreeing that the number of international students should not be cut by Government (Universities UK, 2014). *The Guardian* (2014) estimated the reason behind this support was partly owing to the economic contribution by the international students.

Sherlock (1995) claims the contribution of East Asian postgraduates to the UK includes income increase and cultural diversity enrichment for UK universities. In order to maintain or to enlarge the international education market, HE institutions in the host country need to ensure their students' satisfaction and academic accomplishment (Chandler, 1989). This market has taken a long time to gain its high reputation for quality education, and, as Barker (1990) argues, may take a longer time to regain if lost.

1.2.5 International students

International students are highly mobile, which is an important part of the internationalisation of higher education. This increase in student movement also plays a role in the highly skilled migration system as converting to long-term or permanent migration visas from student visas becomes more popular. By the mid 1990s, there were over 1.5 million tertiary level students studying abroad (UNESCO, 1999), a number which continues to rise. A *TransAtlantic Workshop on High Skilled Migration* (May 1999, Washington DC) concluded that foreign student programmes in the US, Australia and other Anglo-Saxon countries are underpinned by a strong economic self-interest (Christian, 1999). Along with bringing much-needed income into universities and colleges, students also provide a student labour pool, a skilled, domestically qualified labour supply and "more easily assimilated immigrants" (Christian, 1999: 917). In the US, Canada, UK and Australia in particular, many students remain in their destination and are viewed by these countries as an economic asset. For example, the US Government accepts Canadian professionals, with no prerequisites on wage and with no limits to numbers. As a result, approximately 42% of 1994-1995 Canadian graduate nurses stayed in the US (Christian, 1999).

International students are one type of migrant in the UK visa system, although some voices disagree with this classification. This assertion is supported by the United Nation's definition of a 'long-term' migrant, as it writes, "a person who moves to a country other than that of his or her usual residence for a period of at least a year, so that the country of destination effectively becomes his or her new country of usual residence" (UN, 1998: 18). Based on this definition, international students who study in the UK for more than 12 months may be classified as long-term migrants. Mavroudi and Warren state that classifying students as migrants "has proved problematic" (2013: 7). In 2011 the Home Affairs Committee of the House of Commons reported that the Committee was "not persuaded that students are in fact migrants" (House of Commons, 2011a: 40, cited in Mavroudi and Warren, 2013: 7), only if the student had sought settlement or had stayed an excessively long time in the host country. Since students are counted in migration statistics, this has an impact on the statistical analysis on net migration to the UK. The figure of net migration to the UK was pledged to be reduced in the 2010 election manifesto by the Conservative Party (Conservative Party, 2010). Nevertheless the UK government disagreed with such a statement and reasserted that its definition regarding students follows UN guidance (House of Commons, 2011c). Therefore this thesis regards international students as migrants.

Research on the experiences of international students in the UK mainly focuses on motivations and expectations, adjustment problems, and international student learning. There is much literature on the experiences of international students in the US than that of in the UK, maybe because the US is the most popular host country for overseas students. Research on the experiences of international students in the America mainly focuses on cultural difference, academic problems, financial difficulties, and lack of services.

Cultural difference for international students appears to be the most discussed problem by academics. For example, adjustment problems and coping strategies for international students are affected by their cultural backgrounds. As Gibson (1991) argues, it is difficult to adjust to the host culture especially when the cultural contrast between the home country and the host country is great. International students tend to have sojourners' feelings towards the language they speak. As claimed by Owens (2003)

international students feel more comfortable to speak their native language and are reluctant to assimilate to the host culture because they think they would never become native regardless of how long they stayed in the host country. Elements that help international students adapt to the host culture, identified by Kung (2007), are relationships with others and the capability to engage in transformative learning.

Problem with the academic work is another challenge that international students face. Such academic problems include language and communication difficulties, a culturally distinct learning environment, technology-based difficulties, lack of acculturation, and different student expectations (Armstrong, 2001; Smith, 2001). Possible reasons for the academic problems lie in communication and relationship differences, lack of certain types of assistance, attitudes that international students possess (Eland, 2001), unfamiliarity with the host educational system and limited English language proficiency (Womujuni, 2007). Nonetheless, factors that lead to a positive academic experience have been identified by Eland (2001), which include good relationships, campus programs and services, and their own behaviours and perspectives. Possible solutions for the academic problems are that faculty members should take into account the unique needs of international students (Eland, 2001), and faculty members need more access to alternative instructional strategies and more encouragement in their teaching practice (Smith, 2001).

Financial difficulty for international students has also been widely raised in the literature (see for example Joo, 2002; Lu, 2001; Wong, 1991) on international students, although the discussion on how and why the financial difficulty has influenced the international students is generally under discussed.

Certain services are reported as either not being provided or for which there is insufficient information given to international students. The non-provided service includes lack of a mentoring programme for international students, while there is insufficient information provided on such things as induction and health services (Womujuni, 2007). Generally as Joo (2002) claims that international students lack awareness of existing services. Instead, international students turn to family and friends for support (Klieger, 2005). A possible reason for this as argued by Lu (2001) is the lack of staff and limited motivation to serve the needs of international students.

1.3 Research objective and research questions

The research objective is to explore the challenges and experiences of Chinese women in the UK. It includes the aim of exploring educational adjustment, sociocultural adaptation and employment intention and proactivity of female Chinese international students in the UK. To be specific, there are three research questions to help understand the research objectives:

How do the **general impressions** of the UK perceived by female Chinese students change before, during, and after their taught postgraduate course?

What are the main **experiences** and **challenges** faced by female Chinese masters students in the UK?

How do their **employment intentions** in the UK change throughout their 1-year studies?

In order to answer these research questions, this research conducted three waves of semi-structured interviews over 18 months to collect longitudinal in-depth data from 24 Chinese students who joined a 1-year taught masters programme in a UK-based Russell Group institution. Using a longitudinal methodology is a novel aspect of this research as there is minimal research in management conducted using a qualitative longitudinal approach.

1.4 Research Structure

This study consists of six chapters: Chapter One (Introduction) has depicted the research background and research questions. Chapter Two (Literature Review) first reveals the literature on internationalisation of higher education (HE) and international highly skilled immigration; it then discusses the UK visa system in relation to international highly skilled immigration, followed by an exploration of one specific migrant group: Chinese migrants. Chapter Three (Further Literature Review) focuses further on the review of Chinese students as one of the highly skilled migrant groups in the UK. Chapter Four (Methodology) presents the research philosophy and the design of the interview, including the reasons why particular questions were set and the rationale for the coding techniques utilised. Chapter Five (Findings and Analysis) addresses the data findings and discussions on female Chinese students by qualitative analysis of themes, including motivation to come to the UK, educational, sociocultural and

employment experiences and difficulties when staying in the UK, and perceived barriers that prevent some of the interviewees from gaining employment in the UK. Chapter Six (Case Study Discussion) demonstrates two individual case studies for a detailed insight into the longitudinal changes in perceptions and experiences of the respondents. Chapter Seven (Conclusion) reviews the main findings of this longitudinal qualitative research and provides limitations and recommendations for further investigation.

1.5 Summary

This chapter has introduced the background of the research topic. It then dealt with how my experience of working in a Chinese restaurant motivated and inspired me to undertake this research, and particularly my reasons for choosing female Chinese students as the subject of this research. This chapter has also reviewed the internationalisation in HE and its development worldwide, followed by the internationalisation of HE in the realm of the UK. The impact of internationalisation of higher education was then explored. The research objective and the research questions were illustrated. Finally, the outline of the thesis was given to allow the reader to observe the overall structure.

Chapter Two: Literature Review on Perceptions and Experiences of International Student

This literature review will consist of four parts, with different focuses in each part. This chapter will describe the rich context for this research, beginning with the motivation for internationalisation, followed by the impressions of the UK. It then moves to introduce the experiences of international students, with a particular focus on Chinese students. Detailed discussions will then be carried out on stereotypes on ethnicity and on gender.

2.1 Motivation for internationalisation in higher education

Several studies have been carried out evaluating Western students who study abroad on their academic performance (e.g. Rienties *et al.* 2012; Tempelaar *et al.* 2006). According to Tempelaar *et al.* (2006), Western international students have higher study motivation and a better attitude to learning, therefore understand more of the demands of HE than students in the host country. One reason, suggested by Russell *et al.* (2010), is that Western international students are generally one or two years older than domestic students and the choice to study overseas is a conscious one.

Guth and Gill (2008) stress the importance of international mobility within HE and assert such mobility is motivated by socioeconomic drivers and labour market characteristics in exporting and host countries. After studying the mobility of doctoral candidates in sciences from Eastern European countries to the West, Guth and Gill (2008) suggest that the internationalisation drivers from the host institution include science expenditure (e.g. equipment and infrastructure in the workplace), number of positions, reputation, capital and networking contacts. Kenway and Fahey (2011) add the emotion factor that influences one specific international education mobility on academic mobility. The emotion factor involves global, national and personal scales. According to Kenway and Fahey (2011), the global-scale emotions driving academic mobility include contagious competitive feelings, conciliatory feelings and contradictory feelings; the national-scale emotions include feeling ambivalent, feeling anxious and feeling self-important; and the personal-scale emotions include feelings of lack and loss, feeling indignant and feeling an instrumental sentimentality. Based on the above two researches, Mavroudi and Warren argue the drivers as "academic, economic

and immigration policy factors" by adding the impact of immigration policy (2013: 12). In order to highlight the impact of immigration policy on decision-making processes of international HE mobility, Mavroudi and Warren have reviewed a series of scholarly works on immigration policy in host countries (Universities UK, 2007; Hazen & Alberts, 2006; Tremblay, 2005; Birrell & Perry, 2009; Cantwell, 2011) and the impact of immigration policy on home countries (Gribble, 2008; Hugo, 2005). A detailed discussion on immigration policy will be presented in Section 2.3.4.2. Ten drivers for internationalisation were introduced by Green (2012), of which only three drivers are directly related to students.

To prepare students for 'global citizenship' (which can be defined in many ways).

To prepare students for the global workforce.

To enhance the quality of teaching and research.

To strengthen institutional capacity.

To enhance prestige and visibility.

To generate revenue.

To contribute to local or regional economic development.

To contribute to knowledge production on global issues.

To solve global problems.

To increase international understanding and promote peace.

Source: Green (2012: 1)

As can be found from the above list, education internationalisation provides a wide range of benefits, from solving global issues to enhancing personal capabilities. These aspirations may drive the flows of internationalisation in HE.

2.1.1 Push-Pull combination

Mazzarol and Soutar (2002) have identified the pattern of international student flows as a combination of push-pull factors. Pull factors take effect in the host country to make the country attractive for international students to come, and push factors operate in the source country to "initiate a student's decision to undertake international study" (Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002: 82).

2.1.1.1 [Push] Motivations from the country of origin

The motivations and purposes of female international students in the UK, argue Goldsmith and Shawcross (1985), are different depending on the economic status of their countries of origin. They argue that female international students from wealthy countries stress "cultural reasons", while those from less wealthy countries are primarily driven by "academic reasons" (Goldsmith & Shawcross, 1985: 16-17). Cultural reasons refer to experiencing a new culture and the key terms here are "experience", "travel" and "liking the UK", whilst academic reasons refer to the quality of British education and courses offered in the UK which are unavailable in the country of origin (Goldsmith & Shawcross, 1985: 16-17). Based on these two categories, literature comparing Chinese and Japanese female students in the US (Matsui, 1991) and then in the UK (Habu, 2000) suggests Chinese students are principally motivated by academic concerns such as contributing to the country of origin through knowledge acquisition during international education, while their Japanese counterparts are more "relaxed" (Matsui, 1991: 229) and are "post-materialists" who are also not predominantly attracted by practical courses such as business (Habu, 2000: 53). Arguably, these two studies were conducted more than a decade ago, when the economic status in Chinese families was much lower than in recent years. Motivations may change as time and economic conditions change. Notably, some of the findings in this thesis on female Chinese students share similar values with female Japanese students in these two studies.

Policies adopted by the Chinese government play a role in pushing its students to pursue education abroad. The impact of the Reform and Open Doors policy introduced by the Chinese government in 1978 is regarded as a push factor that makes overseas study possible for many Chinese families (Bamber, 2014). The Chinese government adopted a 'capacity-building' policy (Iannelli and Huang, 2014: 807), and it has supported Chinese student mobility as one strategy to improve skills for the Chinese workforce. Such support is particularly focused on areas of science and technology, which are regarded as the essence of the Chinese economy. This has been adopted as a long-term policy strategy.

In 1950 the Chinese government financially sponsored 35 students to study abroad as the first government-funded student group after the People's Republic of China was founded, and did so for the following years (Iannelli & Huang, 2014). In 1981 overseas studies for the first self-funded student groups were allowed (Yuan, 2008). In the 1990s

the Chinese government loosened its restriction on self-funded overseas education policy, stating, "supporting going abroad, encouraging return" (Sun, 2009: 199). After China joined the WTO the growth of the Chinese economy was rapid. With such economic growth and its expanding connection with the global market, a skilled workforce, in particular those with foreign language proficiency, has becoming highly in demand (Iannelli & Huang, 2014). As a result, China is now one of the largest student-exporting countries in the international education market.

Another factor that pushes Chinese students to study abroad is related to the quality of education in China. Altbach (2004) posits that the quality of postgraduate study in China is not as high compared with developed countries. Altbach states that the courses offered in postgraduate education in China are unable to "compete internationally" (Altbach, 2004: 21). This has been reinforced by Bamber's (2014) study, in which respondents reflected on their preconceptions of the UK business schools that offered a higher level of postgraduate education. Bamber's (2014) study also found that postgraduate programmes in China are perceived as having broad rather than in-depth subject knowledge. Bamber (2014) reported his participants found this was "undesirable" (p. 53).

The length of time to complete a HE course in China is longer than in the UK. It is a concern for Chinese students, in particular for female Chinese students. It takes four years for full-time students to complete an undergraduate study in China and two to three years for a master's degree. One participant commented,

> "It is too long. Four years' undergraduate and three years' postgraduate. Too long. Especially for girls." (Bamber, 2014: 54)

The concern behind on the length of time it takes, in particular for girls, is the social stigmatisation of Chinese females. Females spending a long time in education is considered negatively by Chinese society. More details on social stigmatisation in Chinese women can be found in a later section. Social stigmatisation in China pushes Chinese students to find a way to shorten the course length, and the HE in the UK meets such a need.

2.1.1.2 [Pull] Values in the UK attracting Chinese students

A study carried out by Bamber (2014) on female Chinese Accounting and Finance masters' students' motivation to study in the UK used both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. He carried out 12 semi-structured interviews (including with eight Chinese women), with a follow-up focus group discussion including six focus groups with between 4 and 7 participants per group (three of whom were exclusively female mainland Chinese students). He then undertook 132 surveys, including 87 from female Chinese students, 13 from male Chinese students and 32 from other areas of Asia. Although Bamber's study has affirmed the US is the first choice destination for Chinese students, two factors deterred the research respondents from going to the US: safety and costs. Parents of female Chinese students are concerned about safety issues, in particular gun safety, and the UK is believed to be safer than the US. Tuition fees and living costs in the UK are considered lower, helped by lower exchange rates. The second choice destination for female Chinese students, reported by Bamber (2014), is Australia. The preference for studying in Australia is due to two factors. The first is that Australia is a more diverse country and more welcoming to Asians than the UK. The second factor is the geographical proximity from Australia to China shortens the travel distance (e.g. Kemp & Madden, 1998; Li & Bray, 2007 [Mainlanders to Hong Kong]; Moogan *et al.*, 1999). The current study suggests the primary motivations for coming to the UK as early and mid-career progression, only 1 year for a master's programme, reasonable exchange rates and the convenience of travelling around the EU. The opportunity to travel in the UK and in Europe has been found as the most important non-academic motivator for Chinese students to choose the UK.

In Bamber's (2014) study, Chinese postgraduate students appreciate the value of the UK education system as a valuable source of interaction and tutorial participation. This benefits the understanding of certain subjects and the development of interpretation skills. Aside from the valuable classroom interaction, UK HE has been highlighted as providing relatively higher levels of "rigorousness, thoroughness and fairness (of assessment)" (Bamber, 2014: 53).

The UK immigration policy acts as a pull factor to attract overseas students. The British Government had loosened the restriction on visa policies for international students and adopted a policy of revenue generation (OECD, 2004). This policy was based on the

realisation of financial gains from large numbers of non-EU student enrolments (Iannelli & Huang, 2014).

2.1.2 Other factors

Aside from the push-pull approach, international student flow is also affected by other factors. Pan (2010) argues that such factors include students' psychocultural perception of overseas study, the relations between the host and the country of origin, the host country's HE policy and the domestic and the global social changes. Based on a mixed methods study on a group of female Chinese taught masters' students in a British business school, Bamber (2014) reveals the primary motivations for the students to continue their education in Britain include competitive advantages gained from the 1-year master's study, favourable currency exchange rates and the opportunities to travel. Competitive advantages derived from the master's programme in the UK include early and middle career gains, the short length of study period and employment in the UK. The early and middle career gains may be reached through academic knowledge acquisition and social and professional network building during overseas study. These career gains reflect one aspect of the personal improvement motivators that drive international students to study abroad (Cubillo *et al.*, 2006). Another personal improvement motivator discovered by Bamber (2014) is language competency improvement through communication among cultures.

Knowledge acquisition is found to be one of motivators but not a primary one (Bamber, 2014). One of the reasons driving Chinese students to study in the UK might be the differences in education, as Paige (1990: 167) asserts the teaching and learning differences between the two countries may attract international students to come to the UK. Studying Chinese students in the US, Matsui (1991) suggests that Chinese students are principally motivated by academic concerns. Chinese students are reported to have a desire to learn the knowledge or technology acquired through international education and then to export this to their home country (Matsui, 1991, 1995); however Bamber (2014) claims his study group did not speak of this desire at all.

In terms of gender, female Chinese students are claimed to be "extremely" influenced by their parents in their educational choices (Bamber, 2014: 54). Bamber (2014) writes,

There are clearly extant gender-based tensions which intuitively must filter through to the workplace. Not unexpectedly, parents of girls were extremely influential in their educational choices and often it was their insistence that drove the decision to continue their studies and to do so abroad. Many alluded to their parents sending them to the UK for reasons related to reputation, resources, safety or opportunities. (Bamber, 2014: 54)

This quote shows the potential influence from parents on female Chinese students' education decisions.

Nevertheless, Chandler (1989) suggests that the decision of an international study destination has "little connection to any philosophical ideology of development" (p. 3) but mostly is mostly due to what is personally perceived as important. Saubert (2014) further supports Chandler (1989), claiming a focus on personally related factors, but not academic factors, by international students when choosing a destination country for overseas study.

Both extrinsic and intrinsic drivers make the decision to study in the UK a complex one. Having made such a choice, Chinese students may have various expectations and real experiences of staying in the UK.

2.2 Impressions of the UK
2.2.1 Impressions the EU

There are few studies, particularly qualitative academic research, on Chinese students' general impressions of the UK. There are a small number of studies on Chinese people's attitudes towards the EU and EU citizens. This research views Chinese people as a whole, without the separation of students, and it also views the EU and EU citizens as a whole without reference to the differences among European countries and their citizens.

There is one study on the attitudes towards the EU and EU citizens from Chinese people in China. This piece of empirical work was carried out by the China Policy Institute at the School of Contemporary Chinese Studies at the University of Nottingham, in a public survey titled 'Chinese views of the EU'. Based on 2,410 questionnaire respondents from residents across six cities in China, this project tried to answer two questions, impressions of the EU and impressions of EU citizens, respectively (Dekker & Van der Noll, 2011 & 2013; Van der Noll & Dekker, 2014). According to Dekker

and Van der Noll (2011), the majority of respondents (85%) had a positive to very positive impression of the EU, with fairly low percentages for negative to very negative attitudes (6%) and for intermediate positions (9%). In terms of perceptions towards EU citizens, they found that half of the respondents viewed EU people as trustworthy, while 20% of respondents doubted the trustworthiness of European citizens, with the last 30% maintaining the middle position or not giving any position. Besides trustworthiness, they also discovered that perceptions related to peacefulness were mainly positive, while two out of ten respondents believed EU citizens to be aggressive and the remaining 30% held a middle position or did not know their position.

Figure 5. Chinese citizens' perceptions of EU citizens
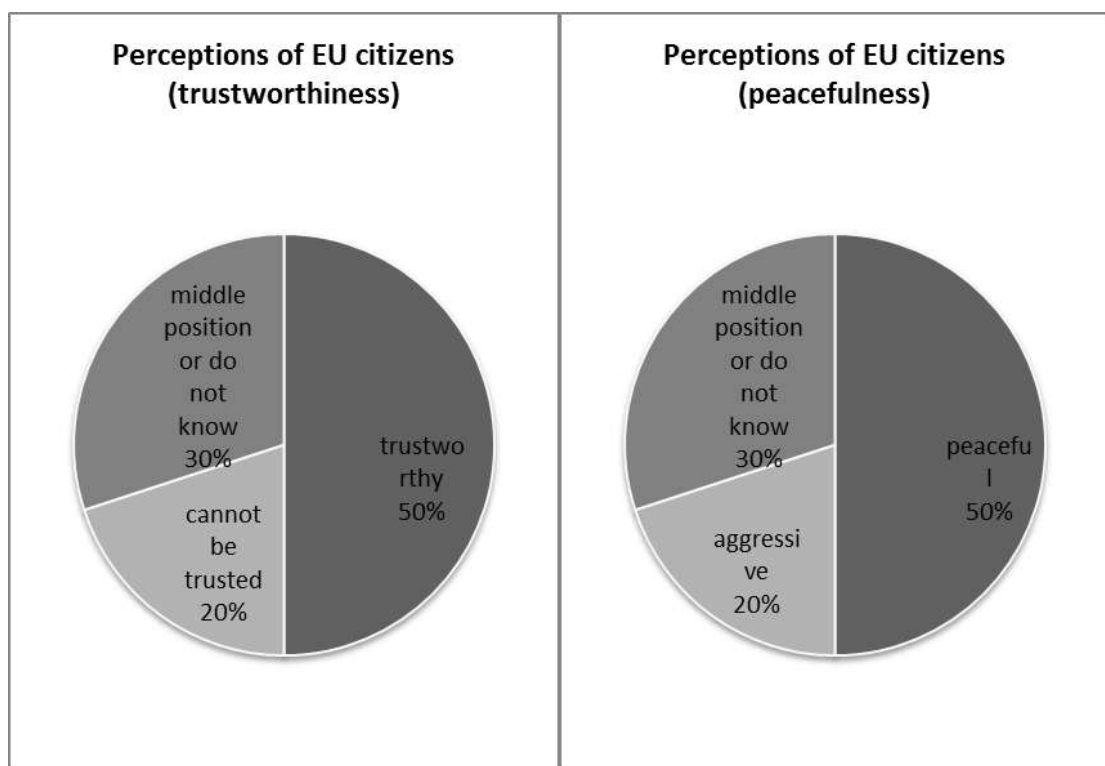
Source: The author, based on statistics from Dekker & Van der Noll (2011)

The source of such impressions of the EU and EU citizens, as found by Dekker and Van der Noll (2011), mainly come from television, followed by newspapers and the Internet. Few respondents mentioned other sources such as from books, teachers, friends and colleagues.

A new study by Bamber (2014) on female Chinese students in a UK business school has reported mid to high levels of satisfaction with their experience in the UK. The key contributors to this satisfaction were classroom interaction and the improvement in

interpretation skills (critical thinking). This may indicate a positive general impression of studying in the UK, although Bamber's (2014) study also notes a number of concerns such as excessively high tuition fees, cohort population dominated by Chinese students, lecture content dominated by theories over practice, difficult regional dialects, insufficient classroom participation in large lectures, and insufficient understanding in how to translate critical thinking to assessment.

2.2.2 Impact of external attitudes towards foreign countries

Researchers have illustrated that external attitudes towards a foreign country impact on certain behaviours, desires, intentions and preferences (e.g. Brewer *et al.* 2004; Dekker *et al.* 2007; Hurwitz & Peffley 1990; van der Noll & Dekker 2014). Brewer *et al.* (2004) have discussed trust and attitudes towards global affairs and Hurwitz and Peffley (1990) have studied how external attitudes towards the Soviet Union has influenced foreign policy. Dekker *et al.* (2007) argue that attitude to foreign countries has an effect on behaviour and behavioural desire, in the context of Germany in particular. Van der Noll and Dekker (2014) propose the Chinese public's attitude to the EU impacts on its foreign policy and political cooperation.

One purpose of this study is to examine the challenges and favourable experiences of female Chinese students in Britain and to explore the degree to which their impressions of the UK influence their employment intentions.

2.3 Experiences of Chinese students in the UK

One article in the *Independent* reported that in the UK there were more Chinese students than from the whole of the EU (*Independent,* 2015). Since there are such a large number of Chinese students in the UK, it may be worthwhile to learn what the experience of studying in the UK is like for this large social group.

As stated, there has been a large growth in the number of Chinese students in the UK. In the particular HE institution where data for this research were collected, the student satisfaction rate ranked fairly high in the UK. The institution rated in the top 25 universities in terms of overall satisfaction in the National Student Survey 2015 (*Times Higher Education*, 2015) and ranked in the top 15 universities in terms of student satisfaction in 2016 (*Complete University Guide*, 2016). The quality of student life

ranked within the top three in 2013 and in 2016 (*Telegraph*, 2016). According to the *Telegraph*, students at this university reported having access to inexpensive shops, bars and other amenities. However, the National Student Survey is targeted at final year undergraduate students and not the postgraduate students which this research focuses on. The percentage of Chinese students taking part in these rankings on student satisfaction is unknown.

Research into Chinese students' experiences has highlighted differences with, for example, their UK counterparts. For example, a qualitative in-depth study of nine postgraduate students from China enrolled on a 1-year taught masters programme, conducted by Turner (2006), reveals some of the academic obstacles. One academic obstacle identified is the combination of the subject knowledge with the language challenge. The subject knowledge is well received and digested, in particular when using a second language. Turner wrote,

> For most, their emphasis on achieving this through attempts to explicitly acquire knowledge-based techniques or methods for improved learning – especially when struggling with both the subject and English-language challenges of assessments – was also consistent with the tangible propositional assumptions which had underpinned their previous education. (Turner, 2006: 39)

Turner (2006) also points out obstacles in communication exchange and in cultural interfaces with lecturers. For example, some Chinese students feel their lecturers are unfriendly and do not care about the international students; this has made them unwilling to ask questions, owing to the lack of sufficient communication.

The experiences of Chinese students will be discussed in three dimensions, namely educational, cultural and social, and employment perspectives. The educational perspective focuses on the study experiences, including academic adaptation and obstacles experienced when studying in UK HEIs. The cultural and social perspective focuses on the living experiences, including acculturation and obstacles Chinese students may encounter when staying in the UK. The employment perspective focuses on employment intention and employment proactivity in the UK. The three perspectives will be discussed in detail in the following sections.

2.3.1 Expectation of experience in the UK by Chinese students

Prior to their study in the UK, respondents in Bamber's 2014 study expected that business postgraduate study in the UK would provide a higher level of education than Chinese universities. Upon application to British institutions, many applicants thought studying in the UK "would provide access to the UK job market" (Bamber, 2014: 54). Few female Chinese students had an intention to remain and work abroad after graduating from a UK university, because they thought "the prospect of doing so was just an illusion" (Bamber, 2014: 54). The attitude was influenced by stories which passed among groups of unsuccessful job candidates being unfairly treated, by the restrictive UK visa regulations, and by "an inherent cultural bias towards local people" (Bamber, 2014: 54).

Improving English language skills was another expectation when students first applied for overseas study. Chinese students found it difficult to improve English-language skills without full integration into the culture of the host country (e.g. Bamber, 2014; Tian & Lowe, 2009).

Cultural gains from travelling in the UK and Europe are expected by Chinese international students. Chinese students in Bamber's (2014) study reported that they wanted to take advantage of the Schengen visa to travel in Europe. It was regarded as "the last opportunity" for some female Chinese students to travel "freely outside of China and without the constraints that a family inevitably brings" (Bamber, 2014: 55). Thus, Bamber states, Chinese students want to make the most of their overseas experience. However, cultural gains from remaining in local areas are almost negligible. One reason for the limited cultural gain, claimed by Bamber (2014), is that Chinese students mix exclusively with their co-nationals and minimise their interactions with UK residents.

After evaluating the expectations of overseas studying in the UK, the actual experiences of Chinese students in the UK will be examined in detail. Three broad categories of experience will be discussed in the following section, including educational experience, cultural and social experience and employment proactivity.

2.3.2 Educational experience

Although the population of Chinese international students is prodigious in the UK, the academic performance is not as overwhelming. One report from the *Guardian* stated that Chinese students in the UK had poor academic results (*Guardian*, 2014). The report stated that Chinese students at undergraduate level in the UK achieved fewer first-class honours than those from other countries; the article claimed the reasons behind the inferior academic performance were unclear. One possible reason stated by a female Chinese student at the University of Bath, reported in the *Guardian*, was "It's not about what you know, it's really about working with other people, especially British people." (*Guardian*, 2014). Taking this quote into account, the Chinese students in the UK on the one hand adapt to the educational system to some extent, and on the other hand meet obstacles that affect their academic performance. The following two subsections will discuss educational adaptation and educational obstacles.

2.3.2.1 Educational adaptation

A notable educational adaptation experience for Chinese international students is dealing with Western academic norms. Among western academic norms, critical thinking in writing and debate is often encountered by Chinese international students. Taking a cultural approach and employing the grounded theory and case study methods, Durkin (2008a, b) explored East Asian masters students' perceptions of their overseas learning journeys. She suggests that the majority of East Asian postgraduate students reject thorough acculturation to Western academic norms such as critical thinking. As discovered by Durkin (2008a, b), a so-called "Middle Way" has been adopted by those students in that they synergise their traditional East Asian cultural academic values with Western norms of argumentation, which has become a new challenge in international education for British lecturers. This "Middle Way" approach combines both "conciliatory dialogue" and "wrestling debate" (Durkin, 2008a: 46).

By introducing the Middle Way model of educational adaptation, this research would hope to find out the possible impact of this model on Chinese students' adaptation. Teamwork relationships are particularly questioned in this research to explore how female Chinese students find the teamworking experience during their study in the UK.

Figure 6. The 'Middle Way' of academic values in critical argumentation

Conciliatory Dialogue	Middle Way	Wrestling Debate
Belief orientation	Agnostic empathy with alternative views	Doubt orientation
Accommodation of all views	Constructive criticism	Polarized critique
Exposition of fact	Dialogue	Debate
Maintaining harmony valued above 'search for truth'	Inoffensive, empathetic seeking for truth	Aggressive search for truth
Inference / high context	Sensitive explicitness	Explicitness / low context
No explicit disagreement	Indirect, sincere challenge	Direct disagreement
Guardedness, self-criticism, focus on listening	'Mindful' expression	Free self-expression
Harmony before Confrontation	Conciliatory reasoning, informal logic	'Battlefield' mentality
Teamwork: Relationship orientation, hierarchical, harmony	*Teamwork:* Relationship maintenance, sensitive evaluation of others' ideas, avoidance of offence	*Teamwork:* Brainstorming/ interruptions Critical debate of all ideas Task oriented

Source: Durkin (2008a, 2008b)

As we can see from the above figure, elements from both Western and Eastern academic norms are valued by postgraduate international students originally from East Asia. East Asian education is more of "conciliatory dialogue", whilst Western academic norms place more value on "wrestling debate" (Durkin, 2008a: 46). Although rooted in constructive dialogue which avoids offence and maintains empathy while listening to others' views (Thayer-Bacon, 1993), the Middle Way also allows challenge, mostly

indirect. The term empathy, as defined by Thayer-Bacon (1993), refers to valuing others in a sensitive, sympathetic way by listening to others' viewpoint carefully until their position is fully understood before making any judgement and criticising. As such challenges are indirect, the focus of doing so is to seek mutual understanding and to bring the viewpoints together rather than to separate (Durkin, 2008a). As a result, East Asian postgraduate students are found to be very careful or mindful (Ting-Toomey, 1999) in their language use and sensitive about expressing explicitly. This Middle Way approach, as Durkin (2008a) claims, is gentler than critical argumentation, with its priority being maintaining relationships by protecting the dignity of all participants.

Evidence from Durkin's (2008a) study suggests that most East Asian postgraduate students reject full acculturation in terms of critical thinking and debate. These students tend to choose the Middle Way for the educational acculturation stage. The reason for such a preference is due to a negative perception of the Western academic sphere, which they think is "too insensitive" and "unnecessarily offensive" (Durkin, 2008a: 46). A similar argument made by Tannen (1996) is that the scale in Western debate is "off balance, with conflict and opposition over-weighted" (p. 6).

It is worth mentioning the importance of an academic support system for enabling Chinese international students to adopt a proper learning strategy in the UK HE sector. Such an academic support system provides Chinese international students with extra resources to help them cope with any problems when studying in the UK; Jou and Fukada (1995) identify a positive connection between a good academic support system and Chinese students' adaptation.

2.3.2.2 Educational obstacles

Aside from the fast-growing size of the Chinese student population, this group also brings challenges for course lecturers and British classmates (Durkin, 2004). Similarly, as stated by Chalmers and Volet (1997) and Zhou (2006), academic adaptation is not necessarily only one way, requiring effort from both the sojourning students and lecturers in the host country. It is important, therefore, to study the experiences, particularly challenges and difficulties, of international students while studying in UK HE institutions, not only to improve university life satisfaction for international students but it may also make course lecturing easier for lecturers and strengthen group work

cooperation with local classmates. One of the research aims, therefore, lies in the exploration of living, studying and employment application experiences of Chinese postgraduate students in the UK. This thesis provides a voice for the Chinese students in the UK regarding their experiences of living, academic and employment proactivity challenges.

As stated, one of the reasons driving Chinese students to study in the UK may be the differences in teaching and learning between the two countries (Paige, 1990). Early research carried out by Hoff (1979) argues such differences may result in an education shock, either positive or negative.

Factors that influence Chinese students' adaptation to a new environment are varied in the literature. As articulated by Jin (1992), and Jin and Cortazzi (1996), the speed of such adaptation depends on the motivation for the overseas study, any similar previous educational experience, the English-language competence of the individual and the effective support provided by the institution.

Wu and Hammond (2011) hold that challenges faced by international students include academic achievement, language proficiency and social participation. The relevant coping strategies are sufficient preparation and social participation with other overseas students; hence they are experiencing an international student culture more than assimilation with the local culture.

The timescale for Chinese postgraduate students' adaptation is about 1 year due to the length of the 1-year masters course, and the first term is regarded as essential in determining whether one will successfully be awarded a masters degree (Durkin, 2004). In this sense, these international students have to adapt to the UK environment rapidly and shorten the length of adjustment.

Compared with other cultures, East Asian cultures have the greatest contrast with Western culture, thus East Asian students may encounter the greatest challenges in adapting to British culture (see Bond 1991, 1996; Hofstede 1980, 2002; Triandis 1982, 1995).

Language is one of the main academic obstacles for Chinese students. Reviewed in Chen (1999) and Mori (2000), language obstacles arise in understanding lectures, assignment writing, oral assessment and classroom interaction (Smith & Khawaja, 2011). According to Durkin (2004), language challenges for Chinese students in the UK include the difference in scripts and writing styles. The Chinese scripts are not Romanic, compared to the English language. The writing style differences between English and Chinese lie in the differences of the discourse pattern (Durkin, 2004).

A number of academics have found relationships between language proficiency and academic performance (e.g. Poyrazli & Kavanaugh, 2006; Poyrazli *et al.*, 2001; Stoynoff, 1997; Zhang & Brunton, 2007). Another research from the perspective of the department staff also suggests that language proficiency of international students could affect their academic performance (Trice, 2003). Trice (2003) examined 27 department staff including academic professors, departmental chairs and deans, who regarded English-language proficiency as the main challenge for students during their overseas education.

As Hofstede (1986) writes, "The burden of adaptation in cross-cultural learning situations should be primarily on the teachers" (Abstract), which indicates the main responsibility for international students' cultural adaptation lies in the effort from lecturers.

The Chinese way of self-study is based on reciting and memorising. As described by Jin and Cortazzi (2006) in their study on the Chinese way of learning,

> A visible aspect of self-study can be seen on many university campuses in the early mornings when near a bench, a patch of grass or flower bed, learners stand upright or sit very straight, alone or spaced about a metre from others similarly engaged, and repeat aloud sentences and texts (in English or in Chinese, often in loud voices), while holding a book straight in front at chest level. (p.11)

They state the Chinese way of self-study is formed by repeated memorising practices, in which the information comes first and understanding comes second through times of such reflective practices (also see Watkins & Biggs, 2001). Chinese students find this way of repeating reading aloud helps to improve speaking and enhance memory when they concentrate. This way of independent learning practice is passed on generation by

generation, and is considered as a "Confucian Heritage of Learning" (Jin & Cortazzi, 2006: 12).

In contrast with self-study, classroom participation and interaction are reported as an academic difficulty faced by Chinese students. Upton (1989) comments that most Chinese students are "completely handicapped in classes" (p. 25), while classroom interaction is the main instrument of learning in the British education system. Lecturers often perceive the difficulty of classroom participation as an outcome of insufficient English-language proficiency (Todd, 1997). This point is also supported by Pan *et al.* (2008), who claim that host-language competency has an impact on both the academic performance of international students and the social and cultural understanding towards the host society.

Compared with their British counterparts, postgraduate Chinese students in the UK are said to be less knowledgeable in essay writing, reading (note taking and skim reading) and methodology (e.g. Cortazzi & Jin, 2001; Jin & Cortazzi, 1996), and they hold different perceptions of teacher-student relations and the awareness of correct referencing and avoiding plagiarism (Block & Chi, 1995; Robinson, 1992; Torkelson, 1992). In Chinese traditional learning practice citing for theories is not always required, and there is an emphasis on theory description rather than analysis or synthesis (Durkin 2004). This group of Chinese students in the UK may also have different expectations in relation to feedback and guidance they receive from lecturers (Casanave, 1995; Leki, 1995; Prior, 1991).

Another academic difficulty, raised by Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars (2000), Scollon and Scollon (1995) and Terrell and Brown (2000), may be the understanding of the norms of British academia, in which logic and reasoning are much influenced by Socrates and Aristotle, with whom Chinese students are not familiar. Socratic or Aristotelian rhetoric is linear and logical, moving from a general to a specific perspective, with the consideration of all possible alternative answers and solutions. As Kuhn (1991) argues, Western culture regards this type of thought as the best and the only type of correct thinking, and the Socratic/Aristotelian argument has shaped Western higher education. Due to the different cultural outlooks, people in different cultures think differently. Some cultures being unfamiliar with the notion of critical thinking may result in the incapacity to involve critical thinking in education (Kaplan,

1966). Such cognitive and capability differences in critical thinking among cultures can cause international students to be surface thinkers and to value more highly information reproduction than evaluation.

Traditionally, British HE values the norm of deductive critical argument. Based on studies by Jin and Cortazzi (1995; 1996) and Samuelowicz (1987), they hold that Western lecturers have not been influenced by other cultures' academic writing. However, the literature suggests that, acknowledging all cultures are different, the absence of critical debate is a solely cultural issue rather than cognitive (see Fox, 1994; Street, 1994; Tannen, 1998).

In terms of class style, Chinese students are used to having lectures rather than the seminar or tutorial styles (Ryan, 2000) and open classroom interaction and argumentation is rarely seen in China (Durkin, 2004). The education in China focuses on teachers passing knowledge to students in class, while British universities place more emphasis on students, with a two-way interaction (Cortazzi & Jin, 2001; Ryan, 2000). Turner (2006) summarises Chinese teaching and learning as "formal, disciplined, teacher-centred and didactic" (p. 30, also see Chen, 1999; Cortazzi & Jin, 2001; Cleverly, 1991; Leung 1991; Reed 1988; Turner & Acker, 2001).

Indeed, ten academic difficulties are ascertained by Tanaka, who studied Japanese students in 2002, including "understanding lectures; taking lecture notes; making oral presentations; asking questions during class periods; participating in class/group discussions; critically analyzing reading materials; reading with comprehension; keeping up with reading assignments; preparing for writing papers; and writing academic papers" (p. v, cited in Durkin, 2004: 11).

Nonetheless, postgraduate Chinese students in Britain are not in an inferior position in all aspects. Argued by Durkin (2004), they are good at memorisation, disciplined study and concentration, qualities which are under-recognised by lecturers in the UK. As suggested by Spencer-Oatey and Xiong (2006) and Wu and Hammond (2011), international students, including Chinese students, can achieve a satisfactory level of academic performance despite having varied challenges and problems.

In attempting to solve the difficulties for international students in their academic performance, a common misperception held by lecturers is that the reason for such academic difficulty is English-language incompetence (Samuelowicz, 1987; Todd, 1997). Samuelowicz (1987) and Todd (1997) suggest the true reason lies in the difficulty of adapting to new cultural expectations and norms. Such difficulties include critical thinking and linear argumentation skills. To master a foreign language alone is considered a challenge to Chinese international students (Henze & Zhu, 2012; Holmes, 2004; Zhong, 1996). Previous research suggests that much energy has been wasted spending time on grammatical and surface editing instead of devoting time to the quality of the argument and the coherence of the structure (Shaw, 1996). A later study carried out by Cheng in 2000 re-stresses the importance of appreciating English-language competency to achieve academic success. An awareness and understanding of cultural differences by lecturers and students would benefit a healthier cultural diversity environment (Cortazzi & Jin, 1997; Fox, 1994; Tannen, 1998; Todd, 1997).

Having acknowledged the cultural differences in academic norms, Kreber (1998) suggests that critical evaluation skills can be taught. Angelova and Riazantseva (1999) and Becker (1986) have pointed out that practice is the only way to develop critical thinking skills.

Suggestions arising from Chinese students in the UK, as noted by Bamber (2014), include providing clearer language guidance, narrowing the gap of expectation for assessment requirements, enhancing classroom interaction, downsizing class sizes, lowering fees and recruiting more students from other geographical places than China to balance the diversity in academic programmes in the UK.

2.3.3 Cultural and social experience

2.3.3.1. Cultural and social adaptation
In order to better understand the topic of cultural and social adaptation of Chinese students in the UK, I will first critically review the cultural and social adaptation of international students and then move to Chinese international students in particular.

The acculturation experience of international students may influence their subjective well-being, as argued by Du and Wei (2015), including impact on life satisfaction,

positive effect and negative effect. One strategy for acculturation suggested by Du and Wei (2015) is through social connectedness, both in the mainstream social culture and in the ethnic community.

When entering a new culture, some international students may drop their social connections from the previous culture. This may come with the challenges of building up a new social connection for international students (Sandhu, 1994). To acculturate into the new culture, some Chinese international students may get involved in the mainstream culture of the host country, which involvement may establish their sense of belonging to the host society. Gradually, the increase in the close interaction with individuals in mainstream society may contribute to social adjustment and such adjustment may lead to better subjective well-being (e.g. Wang & Mallinckrodt, 2006; Du & Wei, 2015).

Aside from the active interaction with local nationals, many international students maintain a durable connection with their original culture in two ways. One way is to make long-distance social connections with family, friends and other networks in China, and another way is to contact other international students from the same cultural background (e.g. Ye, 2006). Maintaining social connection with other Chinese international students is regarded as a strong social phenomenon, as Chinese culture traditionally values collectivism (Triandis, 1989). Bamber (2014) has also observed this social phenomenon in female Chinese students in the UK. He comments,

> By and large, these women reported that they mixed exclusively with other Chinese students, ate Chinese food, spoke in their mother tongue, celebrated Chinese customs, and so forth. Ironically, it would seem that many of these students made a deliberate choice to minimise interactions with UK residents. (Bamber, 2014: 55)

Bamber (2014) sees this problem as partly due to the inertia of the students and partly due to the low diversity level of the business school where his data was collected. The activities involving their own ethnic community are regarded as enculturation behaviours. Compared with acculturation, which encourages socialising within mainstream culture in a host country, enculturation refers to cultural socialisation within the ethnic culture (e.g. Kim, 2006). By connecting with their co-nationals, Chinese international students have ensured "a softer landing during the early transition phase"

(Bamber, 2014: 55). Interaction with co-nationals helps to lower psychological stress and may improve levels of perception of social and psychological support while sharing stories of life's obstacles and coping strategies in the new culture, thus increasing life satisfaction (e.g. Du & Wei, 2015; Triandis, 1989; Ye, 2006). There is no right or wrong answer for choosing acculturation or enculturation, international students can choose their preferred way of social connection. Acculturation and enculturation, however, can happen simultaneously to a person (Kang, 2006). Nonetheless, when international students intend to acculturate to the home culture, HE institutions in the host country should be made aware of such desire.

The process of acculturation and adaptation consists of several steps. According to Berry (1997), the acculturation process includes the following steps. At the beginning, when entering a new culture, international students encounter immediate acculturation experiences. Subsequently, they appraise these acculturation experiences. In order to deal with such experiences, they try coping strategies such as social connection with the locals or with co-nationals. By doing so, stress may be reduced to a tolerable level; it may also increase if they don't try the coping strategies. This is a small circle of appraisal and immediate effects. This circle will keep going if the students continue to put effort into adaptation. In the long term, international students will either gradually adapt or become more resistant to fitting into the host culture.

2.3.3.2 Cultural and social obstacles

According to Du and Wei (2015), the majority of literature on international students' adaptation focuses on negative psychological impact such as acculturative stress. This indicates the adjustment is a stressful process rather than an inspiring one (Yoon *et al.*, 2008).

For international students, compared with their local counterparts, the process of sociocultural adaption may bring challenges such as language barriers, culture shock, sense of loss when adjusting to a new culture, lack of social support, adjusting to a new educational system and alienation from domestic students (Tas, 2013, cited in Du and Wei, 2015: 301).

Social integration is reported as a key problematic issue for international students in the UK (UKCOSA, 2004). Based on 4,796 valid surveys from overseas students at British higher or further education institutions, the UKCOSA (2004) identifies the difficulty of social integration for overseas students' adjustment.

> The difficulties of ensuring that international students integrate – socially and in classes – with home students is a recurring theme both in our study and in many others, raised by both students and staff. The lack of opportunities to mix with a wider cross-section of British society is also widely noted. … We found that international students were much more closely integrated with co-national and other international students, with 59% counting most of their friendships in one of these categories. Only 32% counted their friends as a mixture of UK and international students, and only 7% were friends mainly with UK students rather than international students. (UKCOSA, 2004: 66-7)

Social integration may not be a problem for overseas students who do not require friendship with other nationals but only with co-nationals. Three layers of friendship patterns for overseas students have been identified by Bochner *et al.* (1997).

Table 3. Friendship functions for international students.

Network	Membership	Typical Function
Primary Monocultural	Co-nationals	Provide close friendship (compatibility of cultural and ethnic values)
Secondary Bicultural	Significant host nationals, such as academics, fellow students, advisors and officials	Help the students succeed at university and adjust to the new culture
Tertiary Multicultural	Other friends & acquaintances	Provide companionship for recreational and non-task-oriented activities

Source: Bochner et al. (1997)

In terms of difficulties for Chinese students, Spencer-Oatey and Xiong (2006) claim that the majority of Chinese students in the UK experience few sociocultural adjustment difficulties. Nevertheless, they also argue that Chinese students experience difficulties in social interactions. Firstly, the Chinese students found problems in their accommodation from a social environment perspective, including loud music noise, shouting by drunk people, the untidiness of the kitchen, and holding interesting conversations beyond simply greeting. Therefore, many Chinese students enjoy sharing

houses with co-nationals. This reduces the opportunities to practice oral English, but at the same time feels comfortable psychologically (Spencer-Oatey & Xiong , 2006).

The second difficulty is the challenge of coping with the independent lifestyle. For example, reading emails can take a large amount of time, particularly for a second-language speaker to judge which emails are more important than others. They may simply have to read all of the content before they can judge, in particular for correspondence coming from banks, which may make them anxious. Another challenge is coping with part-time work. Chinese students who undertake part-time work worry whether their employers are truly satisfied, which makes them "feel tense" (Spencer-Oatey and Xiong 2006: 11).

Spencer-Oatey and Xiong (2006) have found that the difficulties of social interaction are correlated with psychological stress. Indeed, the reasons they have considered for social interaction difficulty with British people are lack of confidence and differences in values and lifestyles which are regarded as hard to accept. Therefore, the interactions with locals are relatively superficial. For interactions with other overseas students, Chinese students feel better able to communicate with them than holding conversations with native speakers. One reason is that the level of English is probably similar among overseas students. In comparison, native speakers' English is too good and they can be impatient listening to poor English. Therefore, Chinese students feel less pressure when speaking with other overseas students. Interactions with other Chinese nationals have taken place more frequently compared with interactions with the British and with other international students. Chinese co-nationals can provide both emotional support and practical help. Nonetheless, many Chinese students admit they would choose university where fewer Chinese students attend if given a choice, because living with too many Chinese is not like living abroad (Spencer-Oatey & Xiong, 2006).

There are five main acculturative stressors that apply to international students, encompassing language, educational stressors, sociocultural stressors, discrimination and practical stressors (Smith & Khawaja, 2011). Language stressors operate from both academic and sociocultural perspectives for students using a foreign language (Chen, 1999). From the sociocultural perspective, language barriers impede the experience of making friends and interaction with local people (Chen, 1999; Mori, 2000). Reasons behind this are a) self-esteem grows with one's English-language competency (Barratt

& Huba, 1994); b) English-language proficiency is regarded as a predictor of adjustment for international students (Poyrazli *et al.*, 2002; Zhang and Goodson, 2011). Similarly, research shows that lower levels of English-language capability for international students are a predictor of their acculturative stress and/or depression (Dao *et al.*, 2007; Duru & Poyrazli, 2007; Poyrazli *et al.*, 2004; Poyrazli *et al.*, 2008; Yeh & Inose, 2003). Educational stressors are present not only in international students but in all university students. For international students, educational stressors are exacerbated by second-language anxiety and adapting to a new environment.

Sociocultural stressors arise in a new environment after leaving familiar social networks of family and friends. For example, in Townsend and Poh's (2008) qualitative study, all ten participants claimed experiencing difficulties socialising with locals. Two-thirds of the 200 Australian international student participants in a study reported experiencing loneliness and/or feeling isolated in the host culture, particularly at the beginning of their stay (Sawir *et al.*, 2008). Similarly, studies from Parr and Bradley (1991) and Rajapaksa and Dundes (2002) reported perceptions of loneliness and homesickness. Research suggests the sociocultural adaptation ability of international students may be influenced by factors of personality, trait anxiety and extroversion (Brisset *et al.*, 2010; Wang & Mallinckrodt, 2006; Ying & Han, 2006); less social support than domestic students (Hechanova-Alampay *et al.*, 2002; Khawaja & Dempsey, 2008); language barriers, cultural norms and the nature of friendship in the host culture (Smith & Khawaja, 2011). For Asian international students' cultural adaptation, the Asian culture of collectivism is particularly explored as a comparison to the Western culture of assertiveness, individualism and self-sufficiency (Mori, 2000; Yeh & Inose, 2003).

Discrimination has been regarded as an acculturative stressor in much academic research (such as Atri *et al.*, 2007; Jung *et al.*, 2007; O'Loughlin, 2010; O'Malley, 2010; Poyrazli and Grahame, 2007; Poyrazli & Lopez, 2007; Wei *et al.*, 2007). Specifically, studies report significant perceived discrimination claimed by Asian, African, Latin American, Indian, and Middle Eastern international students (Hanassab, 2006; Lee & Rice, 2007; Poyrazli & Lopez, 2007). In interviews with 24 international students in the US, forms of discrimination claimed are objects thrown in physical attacks, direct verbal insults, emotional attitudes of inferiority and discriminatory feelings in gaining employment (Lee & Rice, 2007). A detailed discussion on discrimination can be found in a later section. Practical stressors for international students include financial

problems (Li & Kaye, 1998; Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007; Roberts *et al.*, 1999), work restrictions and high tuition fees (Chen, 1999; Mori, 2000), accommodation and transportation (Bradley, 2000; Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007).

2.3.4 Employment obstacles

Chinese students in the UK may experience various challenges and difficulties. Bamber (2014) states the challenges and concerns involve economic, future employment preparation and the visa issues. The economic challenge lies in the high tuition fees and living costs in the UK compared with China. In terms of future employment preparation, Chinese international students prepare their future employment according to the expectations from Chinese employers towards international graduates. UK visa policies have been much restricted in the past years, which has had an impact on international student mobility (see immigration policy sector).

Kirton (2015) states in a CIPD news item that the benefits of work diversity are ignored by recruiters in the UK. This item states that a CIPD study disclosed unconscious bias in that managers keep hiring 'mini-mes' even after being aware that this behaviour has significant drawbacks. Gifford, a research adviser from the CIPD says, "We all hear about unconscious bias in things like recruitment, but the fact is we're not just biased – we're super biased." Quick judgements on whether the candidates will fit the office culture are easy to make by managers who have a number of job interviews on their list. Gifford explains that such quick judgements are made due to a mental propensity to make their life easier. However, less information about the candidates may be gleaned under this quick judgement. In terms of gender, this report shows men are favoured by both male and female managers. Name is another factor that influences managers' selection decisions; 'White-sounding' names are more likely to be granted a position than non-White names, even in identical CVs.

A CIPD research report (CIPD, 2015) on diversity in employment presents factors that affect organisations in attracting the most suitable applicants for employment, while acknowledging the difficulty in verifying who the best candidate might be. The factors include how organisations use outreach methods, how managers make use of existing sets of connections and how employers frame a job post. The first two factors influence who sees themselves in the application pool and the last factor can lead to an unbalanced distribution of candidates. This report states clearly that when an employee

is identified as being within a minority or disadvantaged group, this may detract from the perception by the employers of their performance in the appraisal process. In terms of advice for improvement, the report highlights the negative outcomes that bias may lead to, and that awareness of such should feature throughout the recruitment and selection process. In the final decision for selection use of multiple sources is encouraged. Aside from the job interview itself, another source for assessment can be colleagues who are not involved in any assessment in relation to the candidate. This helps balance the power of decision-making rather than an overemphasis on only personal interaction.

2.3.4.1 Discrimination in employment

Discrimination in employment has been defined as "any distinction, exclusion or preference made on the basis of race, colour, sex, religion, political opinion, national extraction or social origin, which has the effect of nullifying or impairing equality of opportunity or treatment in employment or occupation" (ILO No. 111, 1958). The arbitrary and complex nature of discrimination makes the evaluation of difference between social groups difficult. As Tomei (2003) argues, the notion of difference can be seen as intrinsic or innate to a certain individual and a particular group by referring to a comparator. Additionally, Ben Israel (1998) emphasises the difficult of setting up a standard or normal person or group, regarded as the comparator. Disadvantaged members or groups are then treated differently due to their difference. From this perspective, Tomei (2003) further comments that differences are created via a relationship which differentiates one individual from the norm or standard, or two individuals are simply different through comparison. In the case of Chinese women in the UK, any unequal treatment in employment may lead to a detrimental outcome due to discrimination.

Furthermore, Pang's (1996) identification of a bimodal occupational distribution has revealed an implied way of experiencing discrimination. As she reports, most Chinese in Britain are either in the catering industry or the professions. Those Chinese migrants who stated that they had not experienced discrimination maybe did so because they thought the labour markets outside of catering and the professions may be more discriminatory, based on their knowledge of other Chinese migrants' experiences.

Therefore, they did not enter other occupations or other challenges out of their own comfort zone because they were avoiding the possibility of experiencing discrimination.

In the context of employment, discrimination can occur in a number of ways. As articulated by Tomei (2003), the difference in treatment may lead to limitations or prevent access to opportunities and benefits which are accessible to other social members or groups. Such benefits comprise access to employment, free choice of occupation, and opportunities for vocational training. Furthermore, while discrimination can occur against those already in employment, it can also affect those seeking employment (Pang, 1996; Tomei, 2003). Specifically, Pang (1996) illustrates two main ways of discrimination against the Chinese at work: entrance into an organisation and progression through the organisation. Discrimination in recruitment and selection can be found in the application form, which may exceed the requirement for language competence. Standardised tests which are culturally specific and therefore in favour of White candidates and alien to Chinese applicants may also be discriminatory.

Although not related to Chinese applicants, in relation to the application process Noon (1992, cited in Hoque & Noon, 1998) conducted covert research into the UK's top 100 corporations. The research found that candidates' names influenced the job application results. The research involved sending two very similar application letters with substantively similar backgrounds, qualifications and working experience, but only different in name, one with an identifiably White name and the other with an intuitively Asian name. In addition, Hoque and Noon (1998) repeated the experiment and found where companies had equal opportunity statements it made no difference to the treatment of the two applicants, however, companies mentioning ethnic minorities were more likely to discriminate against the applicant who had an ethnic minority name. It is worth noting that the Asian name used in this covert research was not Chinese, therefore such experience of Chinese applicants has not yet been researched. Such research did, however, indicate that a candidate's name can be a factor in their likelihood of being shortlisted. It is not inconceivable that this could be an experience which Chinese applicants could face.

In addition, discrimination can also occur after gaining employment, for example, where career progression is limited or even prevented, especially to managerial positions. For example, as asserted by Pang (1996), White employers may be prepared to recruit

Chinese employees as subordinates, but may not be willing to promote Chinese workers into positions of supervisory responsibility over White employees.

According to Iredale (2005), discrimination is usually not easy to prove, particularly for gender discrimination or gender bias. The measurement for discrimination in America and Canada is to show "statistical discrimination" by identifying a "pattern of uneven … treatment and then identifying the practices or policies responsible" (Tahmindjis, 1995, p. 108).

Nevertheless, it can be argued that equality at work does not mean 'treat everyone the same', such that a manager should treat the Chinese and non-Chinese staff exactly the same. Healy *et al.* (2010) argue that equality could be achieved by recognising individual distinctive needs. They further suggest the need to recognise the difference between people, due to the exchange of labour and information between nations on the grounds of globalisation, which highlights ethnic and cultural differences.

Race and gender inequality in employment have of course received substantial attention from academics during the past two decades (Roscigno, *et al.*, 2007). Such research has examined a number of issues including the relation between such inequality and human capital deficits such as income and wage deficits (e.g. Marini & Fan, 1997; Tomaskovic-Devey, 1993; Cotter *et al.*, 1999; Tomaskovic-Devey & Skaggs, 2002); discrimination in promotion and authority (Smith, 2002; Wilson *et al.*, 1999; McBrier & Wilson, 2004; Wilson, 1997); and employment disparities (Wilson *et al.*, 1995; Cohn & Fossett, 1995). Other research has concerned the relation between sectoral differences within the labour market with persistent disparities (e.g. Huffman, 2004; Cohen, 1998). For instance, Kaufman (2002) argues that occupational sex segregation has put African-Americans into race-typed, low-skilled jobs with poor working conditions (also see Kaufman, 1986; Padavic & Reskin, 2002; England, 1992). Additionally, according to Tomaskovic-Devey (1993), race and gender inequality leads to the outcome that minorities and women end up in jobs involving fewer educational requirements and that provide less employment training.

Although there are some studies on race and gender as two factors which individually influence discrimination, it is substantially important to research these two overlapped factors together rather than separately. Studying the two dimensions does not involve

simply adding one to another but is more complicated (Healy *et al.*, 2010). As Crenshaw (1991) has argued, intersectionality is

> the intersection of racism and sexism factors into Black women's lives in ways that cannot be captured wholly by looking at the race or gender dimensions of those experiences separately … While the primary intersections that I explore here are between race and gender, the concept can and should be expanded by factoring in issues such as class, sexual orientation, age, and color. (pp. 1244-1245).

As articulated by Bagilhole (2010), the need for intersecting various grounds of inequality has been stressed for policy planning and diversity development. She further reveals the complex nature of intersectionality that leads to sophisticated reconstituted analysis rather than just adding one extra layer, particularly when experiencing disadvantages and oppressions (also see Anthias & Yuval-Davis, 1993). As Begum (1994) comments, "Potentially the list [of oppressions] is endless, but simply counting the different types of oppression will not tell us anything. Notions of 'double disadvantage' or 'triple jeopardy' do nothing to facilitate understanding of multiple and simultaneous oppression" (p. 17). The nature of intersectional discrimination has been described as changeable, hazy and ambiguous, where a matter of perception can be involved (Tomei, 2003). She further adds that most social groups are different both in their way of experiencing disadvantages and regarding individuals' requirements and needs, which is connected to the complex nature of intersectional grounds of discrimination.

Aside from the theoretical discussion on intersectionality, this subject also involves empirical research. For example, Chow's (2011) work on Miss China Europe views intersectionality in terms of a person's appearance and the language they speak. As Chow articulates, intersectionality possesses sensory dimensions which can manifest as both visual and audio issues. As asserted by Chow (2011), the seeing and the hearing judgement shape the view of being genuinely Chinese. In an examination of the Miss China Europe beauty competition (held in the Netherlands), candidates who look less Chinese or cannot speak Chinese are not qualified to enter the competition. Both the Chinese appearance and use of the Chinese language shape an identity of being Chinese. Chow (2011) comes to the conclusion that Chinese adoptees, who share less cultural background with other Chinese, are eligible to join the Miss China event by virtue of how they look. These comments reflect Shih's (2007) assertion that identity

representation is predominantly visual. Visual identity, in a broader sense, is the way we view ourselves and how others view us. She argues that identities are established heavily through visual characteristics, not only for collective identities but also for individual identities. In terms of hearing and language, Chow (2011) claims that Chinese are identified through speaking the Chinese language. Contestants who are unable to speak the Chinese language while having a Chinese physical appearance are doubted in their audio identities. They are marginalised as being less Chinese, as they do not meet the cultural expectations, perhaps connecting to the feelings of the Chinese Diaspora of being unequal.

In terms of how intersectional analysis has been conducted, intersectionality allows us to understand how both gender and racial factors influence the outcome of being a woman of colour. In the case of Miss China Europe, Chow (2011) asked interviewees questions about being a woman and being Chinese such as the attitude towards family and behaviour at parties. For example, Chinese women are more submissive to family and enjoy a supportive maternal relationship. Compared with Dutch women, who are more easy going and 'uninhibited' at parties, Chinese women are more aware of the boundaries. One contestant stated, "Going out with friends is nice. But I just drink a bit and chat a bit" (Chow, 2011: 422). Furthermore, Chow (2011) also associates the position with their Dutch surroundings (or nationality) and modern Western womanhood. For Dutch Chinese, the position of Dutchness disempowers the position of Chineseness. For example, one contestant admitted that she always dreamt of taking part in Miss Holland at least once. However, there was only one respondent who held this position, as most of them claimed that they were invisible and marginalised in a White society. They also articulated that their attitudes towards beauty were different to the way the Dutch appreciated beauty. The winner of Miss China Europe 2006 commented, "What I learn from my friends – they are not Chinese – they say that they find Chinese in general less attractive … If you look at a Western beauty, she has long legs, big eyes, dyed or blond hair, and, you know, beautiful round shapes on her body. That's what they like." (Chow, 2011: 423). Gender and race therefore both need to be intersectionally understood to understand the perceptions of the Miss China Europe contestants.

In terms of those who experience or perceive discrimination, an important secondary issue relates to how they cope with such experience or perception. A number of coping

strategies have been identified, mainly including approach coping strategies and avoidance coping mechanisms (Lionel & Scott, 2003). Approach coping strategies refer to actions and emotions which are proactively involved in and thought through, and positively relate to a greater sense of self-efficacy and with less distress. In comparison, the use of avoidance coping strategies is to avoid stressors, and they are positively related to a lower sense of self-efficacy and greater distress (Moos, 2002). As noted by Yoo and Lee (2005), approach-type coping strategies (such as cognitive restructuring and social support seeking) are moderators of the perceived racial discrimination. Nonetheless, the coping strategies utilised in reaction to discrimination may lead to divergent outcomes on mental health, due to the ambiguous, unpredictable, and uncontrollable nature of discriminatory acts (Outlaw, 1993; Harrell, 2000). Moreover, elements such as the type of racial socialisation engaged in and level of racial consciousness may be connected to the impacts of inequality distress (Harrell, 2000). In addition, Pang's (1996) bimodal distribution of the occupational structure also provides an illustration of a strategy within the avoidance coping mechanism. According to Pang (1996), most diasporic Chinese either stay in the catering industry or alternatively pursue professional jobs rather than working in the wider labour market such as the semi-skilled manual sector. By doing this, they eliminate the possibility of encountering discrimination, as they claim that in the wider labour market they are more likely to experience discrimination and other barriers such as trust and xenophobia problems.

2.3.4.2 The UK Visa System

There are a small number of studies on the UK visa system from an academic perspective. Much of the discussion on the UK visa system is in the press.

In the previous section on international migration, the impact of immigration policy was stressed briefly. There is a selection of literature from different countries on the impact of immigration policy on international education mobility. Universities UK (2007) state that difficulties for potential international students in the UK are caused by the UK's immigration policy; it has been the same for the US since the restrictions on immigration visas due to the terrorist attacks on 11 September 2011 (Hazen & Alberts, 2006). This led to a decline in numbers of international students for a period of time immediately after the restriction on visa policy, although it later recovered (Open Doors, 2010). Immigration policies that encourage international students to stay after

graduation are attractive for a highly skilled migration flow (Tremblay, 2005). This has been further proven in a study carried out in Australia by Birrell and Perry (2009). However, Cantwell (2011) disagrees that immigration policy affects highly skilled migration mobility. He argues that immigration policy in the US has not impacted on HE institutions in the US recruiting post-doctoral researchers. However, he has only discussed one particular type of highly skilled migration in one particular country rather than the whole picture of the highly skilled market.

2.3.4.2.1 Immigration policy history in the UK

The pre-war period

The UK was traditionally an emigration country. According to a study by the Institute for the Study of Labor, from 1870 to 1913 net emigration of British citizens totalled 131,000 – 3.4 per thousand per annum – of the population of the UK. The total net loss was 5.6 million, and in the absence of this net movement the population in 1911 would have been an estimated 16% higher than it actually was. However, migration was and is a two-way process. In the late 19th century the ingress of British citizens averaged about half of the outward movement, according to figures on (3rd class) passenger movements between UK ports and destinations outside Europe. While some of these visitors would have been short term, the vast majority were emigrants, and travelled in emigrant ships' steerage compartments (Hatton & Wheatley Price, 1999). Within Great Britain, census enumerations revealed the Irish to be the largest group of immigrants by far. There was, however, also a small net inflow of non-British citizens; from the 1880s this number increased with an influx of significant numbers of eastern European Jews. Very few immigrants came from countries outside Europe (Hatton & Wheatley Price, 1999).

The post-war period

International migration regained momentum in the post-war period. The *International Passenger Survey* (IPS), which is a survey of sea and air arrivals and departures, is a valuable source of post-war statistics. The IPS data indicates that from 1946 to 1993 total emigration was 9.5 million, with immigration standing at 7.6 million. 1.9 million, the net emigration balance, represents c. 40,000 people per year. Net emigration was highest up to the mid 1960s. Demonstrated by Hatton and Wheatley Price (1999), from

1979, the first year of net immigration, the net outward flow of some years was balanced by other years' net inward flow. They further claim this balance change was primarily due to a decline in the net outflow of British citizens rather than a rise in the net inflow of foreign nationals. These foreign nationals came from former colonies and Commonwealth countries. Net immigration from these countries declined to an extent from the mid 1980s, which saw modest but growing net immigration from Europe, both within and outside the EU.

After World War II, groups of migrants from Soviet-controlled areas, in particular Poles and Ukrainians, settled in the UK. The British Government recruited these groups of people as European Volunteer Workers for the purpose of supply labour to support economic recovery following the end of the war (Kay & Miles, 1998).

Migrants from Commonwealth countries used to have free entry to the UK. However, with the passing of the Commonwealth Immigrants Act in 1968, for the first time, people from Commonwealth countries were required to hold a 'substantial connection with the United Kingdom,' meaning migrants with connections by birth or ancestry to a British national could obtain UK nationality (Lords Hansard, 1968). In 1972, the Immigration Act was passed, which allows only people with work permits or people having parents or grandparents born in the UK to enter the country. This Act abolished the different requirements between Commonwealth applicants and non-Commonwealth applicants. Therefore this Act has effectively stemmed Commonwealth immigration to the UK (Avtar, 1996).

Since the last decade of the 20th century, like most Western countries the UK has adopted a policy which tries to attract skilled migrants to the country, to the UK's economic benefit (Spencer, 2003). This principle continues to guide the UK's immigration regulations. In 2008 the UK Labour government began to implement a points-based system and a five-tier category policy to control the level of migrants entering the UK (Home Office, 2008). Before using the five-tier visa policy, the UK immigration visa involved more than 80 various categories. This change was made as the Labour government admitted the previous system was less transparent, and was inefficient and subjective (Flynn, 2005). This points-based system, in which points are usually awarded for conditions such as language ability, educational qualifications and amount of money in the bank, is commonly seen in many other Western countries such

as Canada and Australia (Bach, 2010; Doomernik *et al.*, 2009; House of Commons, 2009).

2.3.4.2.2 Abolished immigration visa policies in the past decade

The following four visa policies in the UK were used and were abolished in the past decade. International students were once able to take advantage of these four visa policies to find employment in the UK after they graduated. The purpose in the current research of introducing these visa policies is to review what visa policies international students in the past decade were given to help them find employment in the UK, which may contributed to an increased number of international students coming to the UK. The policies (Science and Engineering Graduates Scheme, International Graduates Scheme, and Post Study Work Permit) will be summarised and introduced briefly, and then the last policy (Post Study Work Permit) will be presented in detail as this policy was abolished while this research was being conducted.

Table 4. Abolished immigration visa policies in the past decade.

Visa Policy Name	Name Abbreviation	Policy Time Duration	Permitted Length to Stay	Target Applicants	Source of Information
Science and Engineering Graduates Scheme	SEGS	October 2004 – 1 May 2007	12 months after graduation	Graduates with a UK degree in certain subject areas to work in the UK *	ukvisas.gov.uk, 2006; workpermit.com, 2007
International Graduates Scheme	IGS	1 May 2007 – 30 June 2008	12 months after graduation	Non-EEA nationals who successfully complete a relevant UK degree or postgraduate qualification to work or set up a business in the UK	workpermit.com, 2007
Post Study Work Permit	PSW	30 June 2008 – 5 April 2012	2 years after graduation	International students graduated from a UK university to work or to seek employment	gov.uk, 2013; visabureau.com, 2014

* On 1 May 2006, SEGS was expanded to include all postgraduate courses in any subject area that started after that date (UK Government, 2006).

As can be seen from Table 4, the later policies replaced the previous ones. The range of the target applicants expanded from science and engineering graduates to all subject graduates. Permitted length of stay was extended from 1 year to 2 years.

The Tier 1 Post Study Work (PSW) visa was a permit for international students graduated from a UK university to work or to seek employment for 2 years after finishing their studies in the UK. Once issued with a Tier 1 PSW visa, international graduates were free to seek any type of employment, either full-time, part-time or even

volunteering work, without a certificate of sponsorship. A benefit to holding this visa was to gain UK employment experience before moving back to their own countries for further employment (visabureau.com, 2014). Alternatively, after 2 years of this Tier 1 PSW leave, international graduates could switch to a more stable route for a work visa with a certificate of sponsorship from a UK licensed sponsor. This PSW visa therefore played a role as a bridge between a new graduate and a highly skilled employee or a skilled employee.

This Tier 1 PSW permit aimed to retain the high level of labour contributed by international students who obtained a degree in a UK HE institution (gov.uk, 2013). This work permit attracted international students to the UK as a choice for their tertiary education, which contributed to the local economy and educational diversity for the host country. This work visa proved to be a popular path for international employees to enter the UK labour market, as applicants were not required to have a job offer (Mavroudi and Warren, 2013).

Since a number of visa policies which were favourable for international graduates have been abolished, the following section will provide a detailed discussion on currently available work permits.

2.3.4.2.3 Current visa policy in the UK

According to the UK Government (2014), there are three tiers of work visa in the UK; namely, Tier 1, Tier 2 and Tier 5.

Figure 7. Current employment visas in the UK
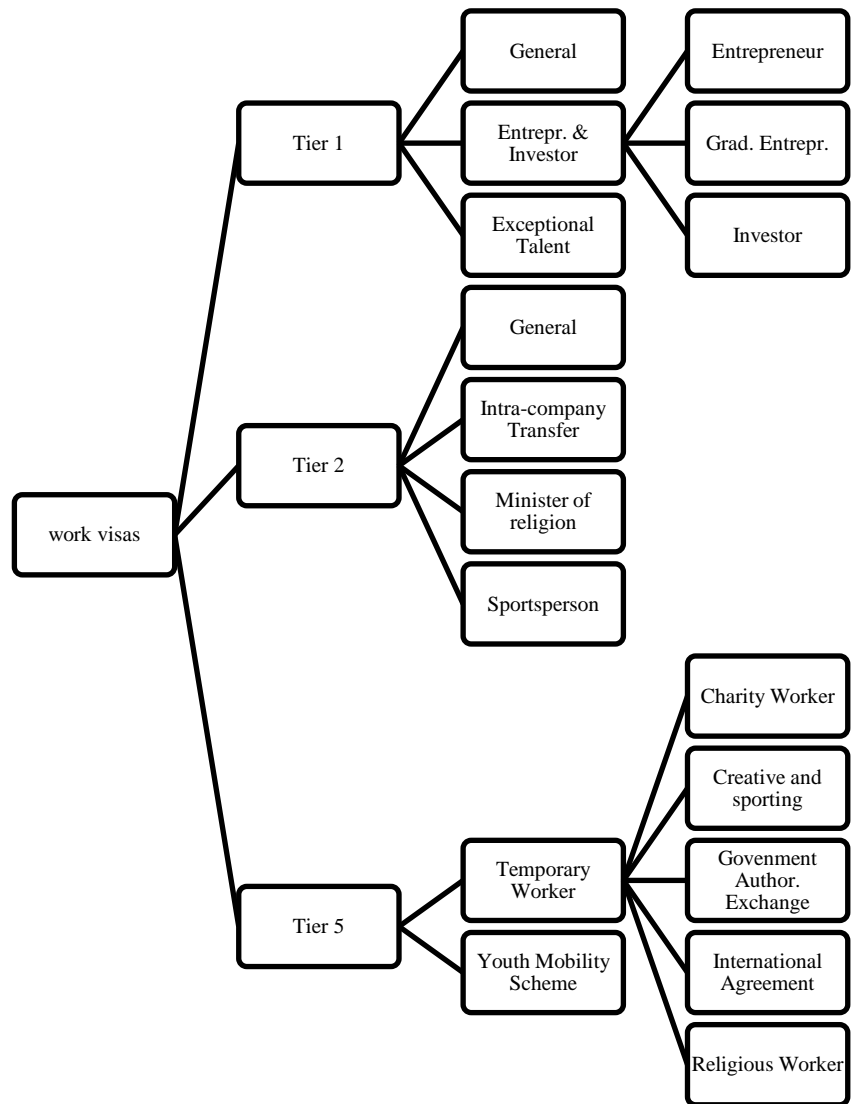
Source: The author, information summarised from UK Government (2014)

Tier 1 visas are mainly for wealthy applicants, and include the Entrepreneur visa, Investor visa and Graduate Entrepreneur visa. The Entrepreneur visa requires applicants to run a business in the UK and hold more than £50,000 in investment funds; the Investor visa is for people who would like to invest £2,000,000 or more in the UK. The Graduate Entrepreneur visa requires applicants to have an outstanding business idea that they can put into practice in the UK. Another work visa in Tier 1 is the Exceptional Talent visa, which is given to leaders or potential leaders in the arts or sciences; it is not easy to qualify for ordinary students, particularly for Chinese students, who are more likely studying business-related courses. The only visa in Tier 1 that did not require a

large amount of money was Tier 1 General, but this visa did not allow a switch from a student visa and even then was closed for visa extension on 5 April 2015.

Tier 2 visas include the General visa, Intra-company Transfer visa, Minister of Religion visa and Sportsperson visa. Among these four visas in Tier 2, the latter three are not easy to qualified for. The Intra-company Transfer visa requires applicants to have a job in a multinational enterprise from their home country. This organisation must offer the applicant a role to work in a UK branch, and the applicants need to earn either more than £24,500 as short-term staff or more than £41,000 as long-term staff. For the Minister of Religion visa, only a small percentage of Chinese are Christians (Wenzel-Teuber, 2012; Pew Research Center, 2012), hence working as a Minister of Religion is not applicable for most Chinese graduates. For the Sportsperson visa, one is required to be "an elite sportsperson or qualified coach recognised by your sport's governing body as internationally established at the highest level" (UK Government, 2014). Therefore, the Tier 2 General visa is the only accessible visa for most Chinese graduates in the UK.

Tier 5 work visas include Temporary Work visas and the Youth Mobility Scheme visa. The Temporary Work visas consist of the Charity Work visa, Creative and Sporting visa, Government Authorised Exchange visa, International Agreement visa and Religious Worker visa. The Charity Work visa is for people who want to take up unpaid voluntary work for a charity; however is difficult to feed oneself without earning basic survival money. The Creative and sporting visa requires applicants to be internationally renowned in the sports or creative industry. The Government Authorised Exchange visa requires applicants to be in the UK to do "training, an Overseas Government Language Programme, research or a fellowship through an approved government authorised exchange scheme" for a short time (UK Government, 2014). The International Agreement visa requires applicants to work "for an overseas government or international organisation" or to work "as a private servant in a diplomatic household or in the household of an employee of an international organisation" (UK Government, 2014). The Religious Worker visa is not a 'fit' for most Chinese students, as previously stated. For the Youth Mobility Scheme visa, people from mainland China are simply not eligible.

In summation, for Chinese students who intend to work in the UK, the most accessible work permit would be the Tier 2 General visa, as all other work visas require applicants

either to be internationally renowned or to be wealthy. Even for this Tier 2 General visa, there are several requirements applicants need to meet. Applicants must have all of the following:

A skilled job offer in the UK

Certificate of sponsorship reference number from a licensed sponsor

An 'appropriate' salary (£20,500+)

Meet the English-language requirement

£945 in savings

2.3.4.2.4 Immigration Policy Impact

Since the British coalition government announced the limits on migration in April 2011, a new research domain on the impact of such immigration policy has emerged. This paper discusses the influence of recent British government policy changes on non-EEA postgraduate students at universities in the UK.

In 2011 the UK coalition government announced plans to reduce the number of student visas by between 70 and 80 thousand, an over 25% reduction (House of Commons, 2011b). Immediately the *Guardian* published an article stating that the international student numbers would fall unless the UK government relaxes the visa policy (Read, 2012). Read (2012) suggests the UK government should follow the US and Australia in terms of relaxing the visa restrictions after learning the lesson that their previous stricter visa rules caused a drop in international intake. Later media has continuously reported that the restriction on visa policies has led to a 'significant' drop in international students entering the UK to study (Richardson, 2013; Woolcock, 2013; The Huffington Post, 2014).

A study carried out in the UK by Mavroudi and Warren (2013) on the impact of British immigration policy on students and academic staff suggests that difficulties experienced by students during the visa application process have led to the formation of a negative impression of the UK Border Agency. This study also points out that international students disagree with the UK government's policy of controlling migration by focusing on the restriction of highly skilled immigrants, and only on non-EEA nationals, since the UK government cannot control mobility within the EU. Mavroudi and Warren find

that the non-EEA students perceive the UK's immigration policy "to be unfair as, although understanding the need for border control in general, they believed their presence had a positive impact on UK HE and on the economy" (2013: 34).

As the Tier 1 (PSW) visa closed in April 2012, it is difficult for the "desirable" migrants to be employed in the UK (Mavroudi & Warren: 6) It is not only the cancellation of the Tier 1 (PSW) visa but also the removal of Tier 1 (General) for highly skilled migrants that makes it even harder for international graduates to look for employment in the UK. They have to apply for jobs under the Tier 2 work visa based on the points system with a proper certificate of sponsorship, or invest in a UK business if they possess large amounts of money. Unlike Tier 1 (General), which gives 5-year permits for highly skilled employment, this Tier 2 work visa provides a permit for a maximum of 2 years, even for professional jobs. Not only has it a shorten permit, the Tier 2 work visa also has caps imposed. Additionally, as Mavroudi and Warren argue, the cancellation of Tier 1 (General) has raised concerns about the definition of 'skill', as applicants who were eligible to apply through Tier 1 as 'highly skilled' now have to apply through Tier 2 as 'skilled', unless they are of 'high value' financially (2013: 35). Although the host government are free to define the scale of 'skill' based on their local labour market demands (Hawthorne, 2008), the removal of the 'highly skilled' category may cause the non-EEA highly skilled migrants to hesitate to choose the UK to study, live and work (Mavroudi & Warren, 2013).

In real-life experience, as reported in Times Higher Education (2014), UK visa policy has made non-EU scholars struggle living or working in the UK. An academic from Canada, who had done his PhD, who worked as a teaching fellow in the University of Leicester, who received an offer of lectureship in Brighton University and who also has a British wife said, "The UKBA wants me out" (p. 1). A change of visa policy so strongly affected him that he ended up moving back to Canada, while his British wife remained in the UK to complete her PhD degree. The change of visa policy that affected him is that when hiring foreigners, the organisation is obliged to re-advertise the position, as "any hiring of a non-European Union worker requires a minimum length of time advertised and a minimum number of EU candidates interviewed." This was in spite of the fact that he had already been offered the lectureship job before the visa rule changes. Fortunately, 6 weeks after this new change of the visa policy, he was still the preferred candidate. As the new academic year was coming, he began to work with staff

in the university to get prepared, while applying for a "long and expensive work visa". He completed and paid for the visa application, and he booked an appointment for biometric data collection, which must be collected from outside the UK. The night before his flight to Canada for the biometric data collection, he received an email from Brighton notifying him that due to the UKBA rules he was not ineligible to be granted a work visa. The UKBA rule says he could not apply for a work visa within 12 months of having his previous work visa. He summarises: "I hadn't been unemployed long enough to be employed." Although he says people around him told him they could not believe the UKBA had such rules to prevent him from continuing working in British HE, which he had dreamed of for a long time, he also held that this problem was very predictable based on the implied message sent by the UK policy makers. He commented,

> I have been feeling the increasing weight of the UKBA on my back since I first began hearing – almost as soon as I arrived – that international students were to be subject to additional monitoring. ...Britons deserve to know that their universities are being undermined, their students sold short, and people's lives disrupted by a combination of an immigration crackdown and a neoliberal management agenda that flies in the face of freedom and academic integrity.

Since it is hard for highly skilled migrants, including HE students, to obtain a visa to enter the UK and such visa policies keep changing, a message of being unwelcome has been delivered by the UK government. This may implicate the future mobility of international students; however UK HE enjoys a high reputation in education itself, which still plays a strong role in attracting non-EEA students. Although the inflow of international students to the UK is still powerful, scholars suggest the UK HE sector should treat international students 'responsibly and with respect' (Madge *et al.*, 2009, cited in Mavroudi & Warren, 2013: 35).

As HE institutions in the UK are involved in the international education market, UK policy makers need to pay greater attention to the various challenges created by visa policies faced by international students. Alternatively, those desirable students could choose other countries with less restricted visa policies to pursue a postgraduate degree. In Mavroudi and Warren's study, an International Student Recruitment Officer in the Midlands of England comments that Australia has been "openly telling prospective students that UK immigration policy is becoming more restrictive and that they should, instead, elect to study in their institutions" (2013: 36).

2.4 Stereotypes of Chinese students

An article from the *Guardian* (Gil, 2014) claimed that the voices of international students in the UK are rarely heard, although 13% of all students studying in UK HE were from outside the UK in 2012/13. As stated in this *Guardian* article, international students are portrayed as an assortment of stereotypes by the media; their first-hand experiences remain an enigma.

2.4.1 Stereotypical views toward the Chinese in general

Stereotyping is a "category-based cognitive response" (Fiske, 1993: 623) or perception of another person or to a particular social group (Fiske, 1998). It describes people's beliefs or cognitions as formulaic, in contrast with attribute-by-attribute individual perceptions of a group or its members (Fiske & Neuberg, 1990).

Racial stereotyping against Chinese and other Asian people in the UK is mainly due to cultural and religious differences and the level of economy. Negative views towards Chinese migrants were mainly held before the Second World War and included the threat of China to British global dominance, Chinese opium dens, and marriages with the White (May 1978; Waller 1985; Cayford 1991; Kohn 1992; Diamond 2006). The image of the threat came from the expanding Chinese population and the publication of a crime fiction novel named *The Mystery of Dr Fu-Manchu* (Rohmer, 1913). In addition, according to Coomber (1999), images of Chinese opium dens were portrayed as dangerous and mysterious places, and smoking opium was associated with sexual assault under the effect of opium and "depraved Chinese men" (p.17). The Chinese, particularly those in East End London, were then depicted as dangerous and untrustworthy.

In more recent literature, stereotypes of Chinese migrants became more positive. For example, many claim that the Chinese prefer to maintain a low profile in British society (e.g. Pang, 1996; Bozionelos, 2010). Indeed, a number of studies have focused on the Chinese as model migrants (e.g. Home Affairs Committee, 1985; Auerbach, 2009; Tu, 1994; Louie, 2004; Nyiri & Saveliev, 2002; Ma & Cartier, 2003; Shih, 2007; Benton & Pieke, 1998). A study on Miss China Europe reported a Miss China labelling herself as having qualities "like modesty, always being friendly, smiling, and not wearing clothes that expose your body too much" (Chow, 2011: 420). Such labels have influenced her

way of behaving. She said, "I was conscious that I was a Chinese woman when I was on stage … I wanted to show what I have learned at home" (Chow, 2011: 420).

The discipline of the model migrant, or the discourse of the model minority, comes from the description of the Dutch Chinese by Chow (2011). He describes how the diasporic Chinese are perceived as "well-behaved citizens" (p. 415).
According to Scheffer (2000), public discourses usually omit the Chinese, and scant media attention has been paid to them. Furthermore, as announced by the Dutch national daily newspaper *De Telegraaf*, the Chinese are called Ideal Migrant[s], saying, "They don't complain, they don't cause trouble, and they work hard" (Roosendaal, 2004: T13). To broaden the scale of the model migrant, the stereotypes of certain groups influence how others treat them, for example discriminating against those who are usually silent or are not active in claiming their rights. Therefore, whether managers treat Chinese employees unequally due to perceiving them as certain stereotypes is an interesting implication of such discussions. The significance of such research helps us understand Chinese students. For example, the experiences of Chinese migrants in general could be linked to how others view Chinese international students.

2.4.2 Stereotypes on ethnicity

As stated, there has been a large growth in the number of Chinese students in the UK. Research into the experiences of these students has highlighted differences to, for example, their UK counterparts. Research draws on evidence of what are generally thought of as the characteristics of a 'model' Chinese university student and those of a 'model' British student, and these are shown in the following table (Table 5).

Table 5. Comparisons of Chinese and British student archetypes.

The 'model' Chinese student	The 'model' British student
Young, unmarried, full-time student	Any age, studying through many patterns
Works hard to achieve results – the harder working, the better the student	Combines hard work and trained/natural ability
Passive-receptive learner, listens to the teacher and studies privately	Active learner, asks lots of questions and participates vocally in class
Learns mainly by reading and processing knowledge	Learns by combining a range of learning skills – an active, problem-solving-based learner
Responds to teacher direction obediently and adopts both structures and substance of the study according to teacher direction	Meets the teacher's suggestions with independent mind and imagination, studies in trained but personalised style
Combines intellectual capability and 'good' moral behaviour – a good citizen	Intellectual and moral behaviour not an inevitable combination – the development of individual ethics
Highly competitive with others in cohort, strives to be the 'best'	May strive to 'do one's best' against the standard
Does not question accepted norms and ideas in the classroom	Takes a critical stance on knowledge and learning
Learns within defined disciplinary rules and boundaries	Contextualises learning and relates it to other aspects of life in a holistic manner

Source: Turner (2006)

According to Turner's (2006) study, there are some general perceptions of Chinese students. For example, learning for students in China tends to be structured and teacher centred, whilst the British system tends to be more student focused and discovery based. The interviewees also stated that they have experienced high levels of emotional isolation and loneliness, which affected their academic confidence. In addition, Chinese students are seen to lack "creativity", "interactive methods" and "intellectual rigour", and the British system is also seen as less hierarchical than that of China (Philo, 2007). Additionally, the proportion of Chinese in Britain possessing HE qualifications is more than that of White British (Chan, 1999), and the Chinese are more likely to stay in a traditional university (Shiner & Modood, 1992).

Although most studies support the view that Chinese students are passive learners, a study on a group of full-time postgraduate Chinese students in an MSc Marketing Management programme and MSc Business Management programme conducted by Liu (2008) has argued some opposing perspectives on Chinese learners. Liu tested whether

the methods of formal lecture, group discussion, group presentation, brainstorming, case analysis, academic reading, handouts, role play and video are perceived effective in learning by Chinese students. The data shows that all methods are effective to some extent. Accordingly, Liu concluded that Chinese students are no longer passive learners but active learners. However, her result is not convincing because she has only tested the degree of perceived effectiveness of a teaching method instead of evaluating the participation rate but has mixed up the two different concepts.

Volet and Renshaw (1996) regard Chinese students as diligent learners who try hard to fulfil the expectations of parents and teachers. They also criticise Chinese students for not maintaining a critical view towards knowledge received in class and not volunteering in classroom interactions.

Table 6. Frequency of traits listed by American students to describe Chinese international students.

Trait	Frequency
Smart	67
Quiet	26
Good at Math and Science	24
Shy	24
Studious	22
Incompetent in English	21
Friendly	19
Nice	19
Intelligent	16
Always with other Chinese	16
Hardworking	15
Polite	15
Loud	14
Socially awkward	14
Only friends with other Chinese	11
Loner	10
Funny	9
Intrusive on personal space	9
Strange	9
Cliquey/exclusive	8
Never speaks English	8
Not assimilated	8
Kind	7
Efficient	7
Different	7
Oblivious	7
Annoying	6
Conceited	6
Fashionable	6
Not social	6
Rude	6

Source: Ruble and Zhang (2013)

Passive learner is a stereotype used to describe Chinese students. Chinese students learning in Western educational settings are described as

> passive: at times displaying a marked reluctance to speak and express their opinions in class; respectful of and expecting structure and hierarchy in the classroom environment; heavily reliant on rote memorization; lacking creative and critical thinking skills: teacher-centred, accepting, largely unquestioningly, the knowledge and authority of the teacher. (Cross & Hitchcock, 2007).

The passiveness can be shown through a heavy reliance on memorisation. The dependence on large amounts of memorisation can be associated with surface learning, and Chinese students are considered to be surface learners (Mathias *et al.*, 2013). However, Chinese students claim memorisation is built on understanding.

> A student commented that although she sometimes had to learn by memorising, for social science subjects, she needed to understand the material before she could remember it. In History, for example, she learned by making connections between a few historic events or understanding their impacts. (Mathias et al., 2013)

Five characteristics of Chinese learners identified by Nakarama (citied in Redding, 1990) are:

Emphasis on perception of the concrete

Non-development of abstract thought

Emphasis on particulars not universals

Practicality as central focus

Concern for reconciliation, harmony and balance

Learners with the above five characteristics tend to be hardworking and would enjoy the teaching pattern of teachers feeding the students with knowledge and students remembering the fed knowledge (Bond, 1987). As also asserted by Friere (1972), the Chinese learning style is didactic and passive, in that learning is a one-way process from the teacher to the student. Newell (1999) adds a tendency that students are used to seeking definitive answers from the teacher. Turner (2006) discusses that the written examinations in China are filled mostly with formal assessments and assessments are

always individual. This indicates a lack of group work atmosphere and a less creative and diversified form and procedure of marking and assessment.

The relationship between the teacher and the student in China is highly hierarchical in class and much closer outside the classroom (Biggs & Watkins, 2001). The notion of a hierarchical relationship in education comes from Confucianism (Turner, 2006), which directs that Chinese students are supposed to obey teachers' directions.

Stereotypes such as those held by British regarding Chinese students can lead to certain problems. As found by Operio and Fiske (2003), stereotyping of international students may discourage intercultural communication and limit the depth of cultural adaptation. Stereotyping can also lead to discrimination when studying abroad. Literature has studied such discrimination caused by stereotyping international students, Asian students in particular, when pursuing their study in the US (e.g. Bonazzo & Wong, 2007; Poyrazli & Lopez, 2007). Such discrimination, as argued by Jung *et al.* (2007), can negatively impact international students' ability to adapt and has an adverse effect on psychology, which gives rise to depression. Although there are commonly met difficulties in the process of adaptation for international students, including language barriers, difficulties in understanding new cultural norms and feelings of homesickness, the experience of adaptation "can vary greatly among cultural groups (Yoon & Portman, 2004, cited in Ruble & Zhang, 2013: 203).

2.4.3 Stereotypes on Gender

Intersectionality, articulated by Crenshaw (1991) in her path-breaking work, involves the interaction of multiple grounds of inequality. Intersectionality means that a woman of colour may encounter discrimination due for example to both her colour and gender. Gender is one dimension of intersectional perspectives in this study, whereas ethnicity is the other dimension of intersectionality.

The existing literature on female Chinese students focuses on medical conditions or attitudes. These include studies on eating problems (Davis et al., 1999; Lee and Lee, 2000; Liao et al., 2010), weight control behaviours and attitudes (Sakamaki et al., 2005; Son et al., 2015; Tanenbaum et al., 2016; Tao and Sun, 2015), sexual violence (Wang et al., 2015; Tang, 2002), physical activity participation (Yan and Cardinal, 2013), and intelligence studies on female Chinese gifted students (Chan, 2006; Benbow and Stanley, 1980).

The geographical location of the studies on female Chinese students is primarily in China, in both rural and urban areas of China, followed by in the US. One of few studies is particularly focused on female Chinese students in the UK. Bamber (2014) have studied the motivations and the perceived experiences of female Chinese students in the UK. Studied in an UK business school, Bamber reveals that female Chinese students in that business school have mid to high levels of satisfaction with their experience in the UK. The key contributors to this satisfaction were classroom interaction and the improvement in interpretation skills (critical thinking). This may indicate a positive general impression of studying in the UK, although Bamber's (2014) study also notes a number of concerns such as excessively high tuition fees, cohort population dominated by Chinese students, lecture content dominated by theories over practice, difficult regional dialects, insufficient classroom participation in large lectures, and insufficient understanding in how to translate critical thinking to assessment.

The rise in female education in China has been contributing to the development of gender equality since the Second World War. Based on census and survey data at both national level and regional level, Lavely et al. (1990) summarised how female education changed from 1940s to 1980s. In 1940s the female education in China was 'virtual complete illiteracy' (Lavely et al., 1990: 61). The increase of educational attainment for Chinese women occurred primarily from the 1950s to 1958 and from the 1960s to mid-1970s. The increase in educational degree first occurred in big cities and then in smaller and more rural areas, which was mainly caused by the expansion of primary school education opportunities for Chinese women.

A notion of genderlessness was suggested by Matsui (1995) on female Chinese students in the US in the late 1980s and early 1990s. During the Cultural Revolution period, the belief on 'absolute gender equality' (Matsui, 1995: 363) was popular in China. This has led to a 'strong genderless identity' (Matsui, 1995: 363) for Chinese women at the time and after. Genderlessness here refers to women as independent as men in both earning and sharing housework. Female Chinese informants in Matsui's study view themselves as not submissive, not obedient and more independent than most women in the US who stay inside and depend economically on their husbands after marriage. These Chinese women see economic independence as the interpretation of the emancipation of women. They further assert gender equality by claiming that the maternity leave rights and

workplace child-care facilities are granted to women. Such genderlessness has resulted in these female Chinese students having strong career aspirations.

Matsui (1995) categorises all of the participants of her study as members of the urban intellectual elite and that they possess a strong urban bias. She claims that only two percent of the female workers were engaged in educational sectors in the time period of her study. In contrast, the vast majority of Chinese women then were not urban but agricultural and with low pay and poor workplace facilities. The urban intellectuals view gender discrimination in China as an understandable and necessary process for modernisation when the country gives priority on productive efficiency.

Living in a foreign country cannot easily alert the attitude toward gender role by female Chinese students. In Matsui (1995)'s study, the female Chinese participants are proud of the modernisation development of Chinese women especially on economic independence but are not able to develop a critical stance on their view towards female sexuality. For example, drinking alcohol and smoking is viewed as a male habit. They still follow the old stereotypical view that women are weak in science and physical strength, lacking spatial concept and logical thinking. When Chinese women succeed in workplace, they regard their success as an outcome of hard work and physical exercises which has overcome their femininity.

The educational level usually reveals a negative relation with the marriage age. The below table shows the percentages of an early 20s marriage age for Chinese with different educational levels in both rural and urban areas from early 1950s to early 1980s.

Table 7. Percentage Ever Married at Age 20-24 by Education: China 1952-55 to 1979-82.

	Rural				Urban				Total			
	Ill.	Pri.	Sec.	Tot.	Ill.	Pri.	Sec.	Tot.	Ill.	Pri.	Sec.	Tot.
1952–55	92	83	66	91	89	78	49	78	92	80	52	89
1955–58	92	83	58	90	90	80	50	77	91	82	52	87
1958–61	90	81	51	87	90	79	49	76	90	81	49	84
1961–64	90	83	66	87	89	77	49	66	90	82	55	83
1964–67	89	82	69	96	86	72	42	50	90	80	55	87
1967–70	85	78	56	80	79	64	40	47	85	76	49	75
1970–73	80	75	52	75	65	59	27	37	79	73	38	69
1973–76	70	63	36	62	56	46	16	23	70	61	25	56
1976–79	65	56	28	54	44	36	12	16	64	54	20	47
1979–82	70	60	36	56	38	40	15	18	70	59	28	49

Social gender stigmatisation in China can be found in the literature. Gender equality in China is "seen as more aspiration than reality" (Bamber, 2014: 53). Spending too long in education in China may cause stigmatisation for Chinese women. Respondents in Bamber's (2014) study reported a commonly used "derogatory term" for women who are unmarried and are likely to remain in education for too long a time: *sheng nü* (which translates as 'leftover women'). An news item on *BBC* discussed the label of 'leftover woman' who are unmarried and over 27 years old (Magistad, 2013). The term *sheng nü* began to appear in the media in China in 2007; ever since then the media in China (particularly on the website of the *All-China Women's Federation,* which is a government organisation aiming to defend women's rights), together with women's family and friends, pushes Chinese women to get married before turning into 'leftover' women. The *National Marriage Survey* in 2010 says 90% of men in China think women should get married before 27 and 60% of men think the ideal marriage age for women is between 25 and 27 (Magistad, 2013).

Female postgraduate Chinese students are regarded as having strength of character and this strength is associated with negative societal perceptions, argues Bamber (2014). Respondents in Bamber's study said, "Chinese men are old-fashioned. They do not want these women. If they find out this woman has been in education for so many years … well …" and "Chinese men do not like these strong, educated women" (Bamber, 2014: 53-54).

Women with high intelligence and high educational attainment are more easily overlooked because Chinese men tend to marry women of a lower age and lower educational attainment than themselves. A 28-year-old single Chinese woman commented,

> There is an opinion that A-quality guys will find B-quality women, B-quality guys will find C-quality women, and C-quality men will find D-quality women. The people left are A-quality women and D-quality men. (Magistad, 2013)

A-quality refers to a high level of intelligence and education. This single Chinese woman believes herself to be an A-quality woman and enjoys her well-paid work and having a number of friends in her life. However, parents of such 'leftover' daughters

feel ashamed and push them to get married. Some Chinese parents set up blind dates for their daughters and some even "threatened to disown her if she wasn't married before the end of the year" (Magistad, 2013). Although not believing in blind dates, one Chinese woman says she has gone on blind dates because her parents want her to (Magistad, 2013). An item of news from the *Independent* comments, "Family pressure can have a real effect on the strong will of educated Chinese women" (Pratten, 2013: n.p.). Parental influence on Chinese women is also strong in educational choice (see 2.1.1).

Bamber's (2014) research suggests Chinese women who stay in education for too long, such as with postgraduate education, would struggle to find good husbands. This finding reflects what is said in the *BBC* news:

> These girls hope to further their education in order to increase their competitiveness. The tragedy is, they don't realise that as women age, they are worth less and less. So by the time they get their MA or PhD, they are already old – like yellowed pearls. (Magistad, 2013)

A neat solution to the social stigmatisation of female's age, Chinese women try to study overseas to shorten the time length for getting a degree (Bamber, 2014).

A book introduced in the *Guardian* reviewed the 'leftover women' treatment as a gender inequality issue in China (Lovell, 2014). Lovell writes, 'leftover women' may have received higher education and have thriving careers "but in the eyes of much of the state-controlled media they are essentially worthless without husbands and children" (Lovell, 2014: n.p.).

2.5 Concluding Remarks

This chapter has reviewed topics relating to international students. One group of international students, Chinese students, were the focus. Motivations for students' international mobility were reviewed by taking account of push and pull factors. Attitudes and experiences of Chinese students in the UK were then discussed from various perspectives. These perspectives included the expectations of experiences in the UK, educational, sociocultural and employment experiences, stereotypical attitudes towards Chinese students and real or perceived discrimination. These theoretical

reviews have provided rich background knowledge of the research topic, and the next chapter will provide rationale for the methodological choice and will present how this research was conducted.

Chapter Three: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter will first discuss the ontological and epistemological perspective of this research, and then will focus on the reasons why semi-structured longitudinal interviews were selected as the most appropriate research method to answer the research questions. Next, it will focus on providing a detailed outline of the research design, including the research setting and data-collection method, followed by how data analysis was conducted.

3.2 Nature of my research

The main research focus was to explore the challenges and experiences of Chinese women in the UK. It included the aims of exploring the educational adjustment, sociocultural adaptation and employment intention and proactivity of female Chinese international students in the UK. The research question of this study explored the following three aspects.

What are the main **experiences** and **challenges** faced by female Chinese master's students in the UK?

How do the **general impressions** of the UK perceived by female Chinese students change before, during, and after their taught postgraduate course?

How do their **employment intentions** in the UK change throughout their 1-year studies?

In order to answer the above three research questions, this research conducted three rounds of semi-structured interviews over c. 18 months to collect longitudinal in-depth data from 24 Chinese students who had joined a 1-year taught postgraduate programme in a UK Higher Education (HE) institution. Employing a longitudinal methodology was a novel aspect of this study as there is minimal research in management conducted using a qualitative longitudinal approach. This chapter will first illustrate the theoretical foundations of this research, including ontology, epistemology, methodology and method. The research process will then be demonstrated and challenges for conducting the research will also be articulated. Finally, the coding method and the data analysis process will be discussed.

3.3 Theoretical lens

Although there are numerous published papers in qualitative research demonstrating methods of data collection and data analysis, frequently beliefs about the nature of knowledge to contextualise the study are under discussed (e.g. Carduff, 2013). One reason for the under discussion of the theoretical beliefs, as asserted by Carter and Little (2007), may be due to the limits on word count. This section provides the reader with a context for the chosen research methodology to situate the research findings and to ground its logic.

The structure to frame this section has followed Crotty's (1998) four elements in building a research proposal in his book *The Foundations of Social Research*. The four elements include epistemology, theoretical perspective, methodology and methods. These four items inform one another, as shown below.

According to Crotty (1998), the meanings of these four elements can be depicted as follows:

Epistemology: the theory of knowledge embedded in the theoretical perspective and thereby in the methodology.

Theoretical perspective: the philosophical stance informing the methodology and thus providing a context for the process and grounding its logic and criteria.

Methodology: the strategy, plan of action, process or design lying behind the choice and use of particular methods and linking the choice and use of methods to the desired outcomes.

Methods: the techniques or procedures used to gather and analyse data related to some research question or hypothesis. (p.3)

Sarantakos (2013) asserts three theoretical foundations for social research, namely ontology, epistemology and methodology. This thesis summarises Sarantakos's (2013) theoretical 'branches' of social research in Figure 8 below.

Figure 8. Summary of theoretical branches of social research, based on Sarantakos (2013: 28-29).

	Social research			
Ontology	realist		constructionist	
Epistemology	empiricist		interpretivist	
Methodology	quantitative		qualitative	
Paradigm	positivist	symbolic interactionism	phenomenology	feminism
Design	fixed		flexible / fixed	
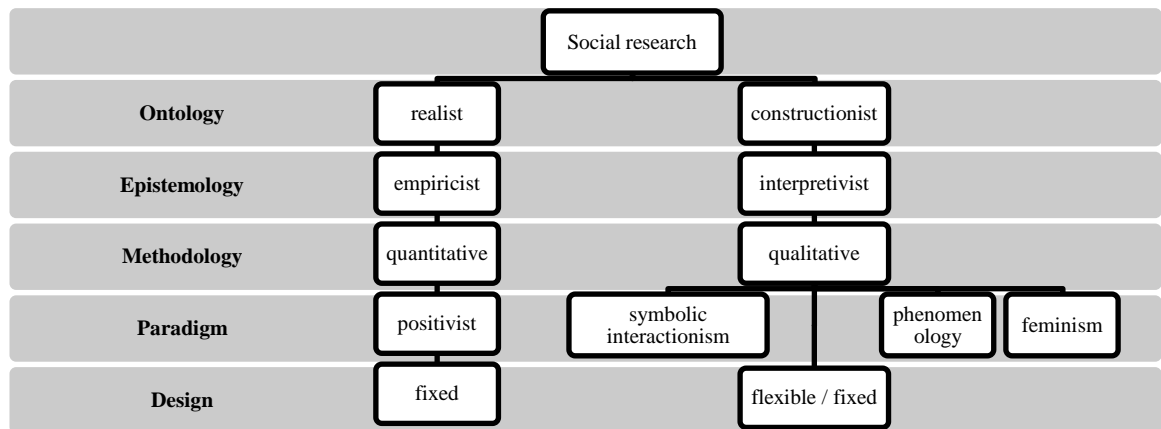
Sarantakos (2013) constructs these theoretical foundations in a hierarchical order. The relationship between them is deterministic. Ontology structures the logic of epistemology, epistemology constitutes the nature of methodology, and methodology sets the appropriate types of designs, instruments and methods for the research. Sarantakos (2013) views ontology as having two types, stating, "There are two ontologies, the realist and the constructionist ontology" (p. 28). The realist ontology leads to an empiricist epistemology and a quantitative methodology, with a positivist paradigm and a fixed research design, while the constructionist ontology involves an interpretivist epistemology and a qualitative methodology, with varied paradigms such as symbolic interactionism and a more flexible research design.

Figure 9. Summary of Philosophical and Methodological Elements of This Research.

Ontology What does research focus on?	✓ **Constructionist**
Epistemology What kind of knowledge is research looking for?	✓ **Constructionist**
Theoretical perspective How do we know what we know?	✓ **Interpretism**
Methodology How do we gain knowledge about the world?	✓ **Qualitative**
Methods / Designs How is research constructed and conducted?	✓ **Interviews /** **Semi-structured**
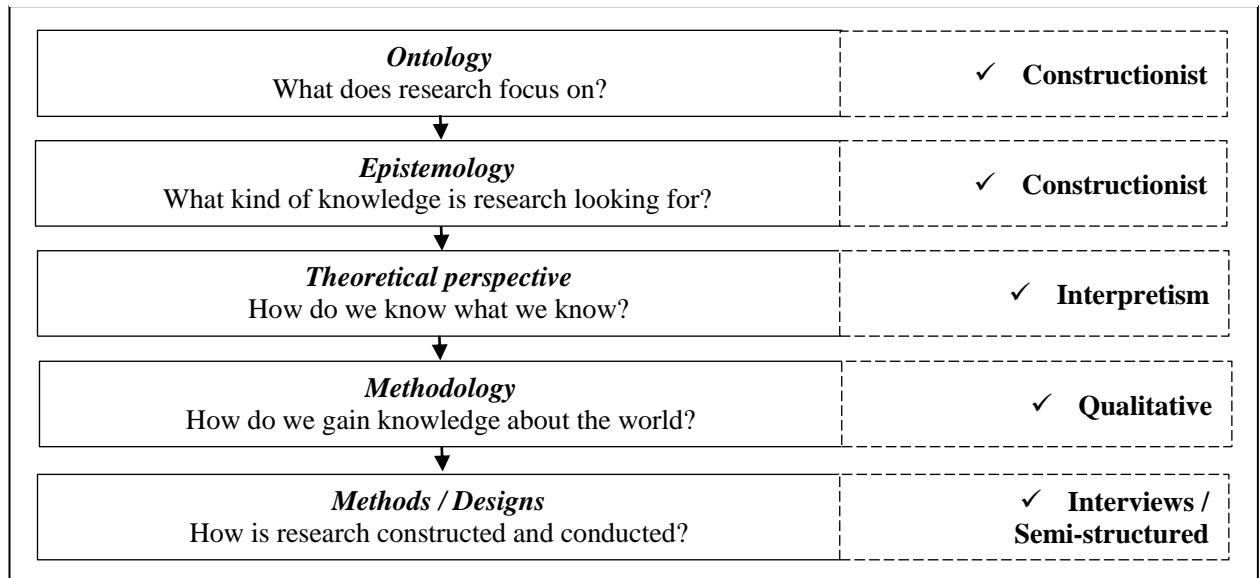
This thesis merged Sarantakos's (2013) theoretical foundations of social research with the model by Crotty (1998) to frame the research. The philosophical and methodological framework of the research can be seen from Figure 9.

Both the generic features and the rationales of choices of these four elements in this particular study will be discussed using the top-down approach as shown in Figure 9. Before doing so, I would like to first address the ontological perspective of this research.

3.3.1 Ontology

Ontology is the basis of a study. It is the study of being (Crotty, 1998). Sarantakos (2014) defines ontology as "the science of being; deals with the nature of reality" (p.474). On the basis that epistemology is indissolubly linked with ontology, however, less attention has been paid to the ontological perspectives (Crotty, 1998; Carduff, 2013).

The most commonly studied ontological perspectives are realism and relativism (Crotty, 1998), whereas Sarantakos (2013) regards realism and constructionism as the two ontologies in social research. These schools of ontological perspectives broadly shape the foundations of qualitative and quantitative methodologies.

Reasons for not taking a quantitative approach in this thesis lie in its nature. Quantitative methodology comes from a realist ontology which believes objective truth can be sought through scientific investigation and forms a solid ground for quantitative research. Objective knowledge on probability and likelihood can be found with research procedures like hypothesis generation, positivist data collection such as questionnaires and statistical processing (e.g. Sarantakos, 2013). Following data collection and subsequent data analysis procedures, a hypothesis will either be supported or rejected. Nevertheless, quantitative research is criticised for not sufficiently accounting for political and institutional practices (Beck and Bonß, 1989). Beck and Bonß write, "Science no longer produces 'absolute truths', which can uncritically be adopted. It furnishes limited offers for interpretation, which reach further than everyday theories but can be used in practice comparatively flexibly" (1989: 31). One consequence proclaimed by Weber (1919) is that the task of discovering objectivist knowledge is disenchanting. Bonß and Hartmann (1985) explain that this disenchantment with the sciences comes from the research methods and findings, missing political and everyday contexts. Carduff (2013) summarises that the ideals of objectivity of sciences are insufficient in considering social, cultural and political contexts where knowledge embedded can be understood (Cox, 2003; Carr & Higginson, 2001; Westerman *et al*.,

2008). Such social and cultural contexts were intended to be explored in my research, along with the aim of seeking out employment intentions and subjective impressions of the UK. Perceived barriers to and challenges of finding employment in the UK were also sought in this research. These have shaped this research to rest on a constructionist and relativist paradigm.

3.3.2 Epistemology

Epistemology is concerned with "the nature of knowledge, its possibility, scope and general basis" (Hamlyn, 1995: 242) and it embodies philosophical grounding of "what it means to know" (Crotty, 1998: 10). A more recently published book by Flick (2014) defines epistemology as "theories of knowledge and perception in science" (p. 536). Sarantakos (2013) defines it as "the science of science; deals with the nature of knowledge; studies grounds and modes of knowledge acquisition" (p. 470).

Crotty (1998) summarises the dominant schools of thought in three broad categories, namely objectivism, constructionism and subjectivism. The philosophical journey of my research did not get on the train to objectivism nor subjectivism but took a seat in constructionism.

Linked with the realist ontology, objectivism is an epistemological notion that believes meaning or knowledge exists in objects "independently of any consciousness" (Crotty, 1998: 10). Sarantakos (2013) asserts the realist ontology entails an empiricist epistemology. He points out five features of objectivism:

Reality and truth exist objectively and can be discovered and adequately measured. Reality is 'out there', has an identity of its own, and exists apart from our awareness. Reality is single, solid and uniform: it generates the same meanings for all actors. Reality is 'found' by the researcher and brought to awareness and to social light. Observance of objective detachment and value neutrality is desirable. (Sarantokos, 2013: 31)

In my research, the knowledge I tried to seek out (a) was not adequately measurable (e.g. for perceptions and feelings); (b) was not 'out there' but had to be explored and re-examined by me; (c) was not isolated but had multifaceted levels of contexts; (d) was discovered rather than invented; (e) may not retain the same value if participants change

as this was an individual-based study. Accordingly, my research did not stand on the objectivist perspective.

As human beings live in society, no object shall be described as sufficiently isolated from "the conscious being experiencing it, nor can any experience be adequately described in isolation from its object (Crotty, 1998: 45). Subjectivism, at the other extreme of the epistemic spectrum, is concerned with the meanings of an object solely as described by the participants. Subjectivists fail to reflect the contexts in which individual participants live and study, shaping their experiences and attitudes (Carduff, 2013).

My research was mainly built upon the views of the participants but also had social bases and contexts from the external world. As stated by Crotty (1998), constructionism is the epistemology which qualitative researchers are likely to invoke. Crotty (1998) defines constructionism as the view that "all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context" (p.42). Constructionism is regarded as "an interplay between subject and object" (Crotty, 1998: 9), where meaning is constructed out of the object. It is neither like objectivism, where meaning is objective truth and exists intrinsically without the necessity of any consciousness, nor like subjectivism, where meaning is "created out of nothing" (Crotty, 1998: 9).

In the current research, the meanings and knowledge generated are not universal objective truths which can be applied to any individual, and are not subjectively solely independent from the real world contexts in which individuals live their lives. Hence, a constructionist epistemology stands out, while objectivism and subjectivism were rejected. The theoretical paradigm which fits the constructionist epistemology will be discussed in the following section.

3.3.3 Theoretical perspective

Theoretical perspective refers to the "philosophical stance lying behind a methodology" (Crotty, 1998: 66). It gives context for the research process and a foundation for its logic and criteria (Crotty, 1998).

Constructionist epistemology entails various theoretical perspectives which inform the methodology of the research accordingly (Crotty, 1998). A qualitative longitudinal approach is regarded as a theoretical perspective in the constructionist stand and it indicates the knowledge is generated over time (Neale *et al*., 2003), implying an interpretation and re-interpretation process for knowledge production (Carduff, 2013). This interpretation and re-interpretation process on texts and language can be well illustrated in hermeneutics.

Flick (2014) defines hermeneutics as "the study of interpretations of texts in the humanities" (p. 538) and Sarantakos (2014) defines it as "a school of thought interested in studying and interpreting texts and other manifestations of cultures (p. 471). The aim of hermeneutic interpretation is to achieve valid interpretations on the meaning of texts (Flick, 2014). This meaning can be multifaceted and diversified. Hermeneutic approaches focus on analysing statements in an interaction on multiple levels to discover "what the backgrounds of a statement are" (Flick, 2014: 42). Flick (2014) also regards previous knowledge of the subject matter on the part of the interpreter of the target text as a prerequisite when conducting hermeneutic studies.

Interpretivism, in contrast with positivism, attempts to explain meanings in social reality. Schwandt (1994) defines interpretivism as a paradigm that searches for culturally derived interpretations of the social life. He puts it as: "Interpretivism was conceived in reaction to the effort to develop a natural science of the social. Its foil was largely logical empiricist methodology and the bid to apply that framework to human inquiry" (p. 125). Blaikie (1993) describes the link between interpretivism and process. He writes that interpretivism "entails an ontology in which social reality is regarded as the product of processes by which social actors together negotiate the meanings of actions and situations" (p. 96). Connections can be found between hermeneutics and interpretivism within constructionist social science research. Interpretivism emerged in the threefold light of hermeneutics, symbolic interaction and phenomenology in history (Crotty, 1998). Crotty (1998) states,

> Notwithstanding the critique immanent in some hermeneutics and central to the traditional phenomenological movement, interpretivism is overwhelmingly oriented towards an uncritical exploration of cultural meaning. (p.60)

Interpretivism may give a suitable stance in this constructionist research, as this research endeavoured to explore the experiences and attitudes and to seek out the background and meanings for these experiences and perceptions.

3.3.4 Methodology

This section will provide explanations for the use of a longitudinal, and particularly qualitative longitudinal, research approach. The rationale behind choosing certain research methodologies relies on the nature of the research question; Morgan and Smircich (1980) state that the appropriateness of a chosen approach "derives from the nature of the social phenomena" (p. 491).

The exploratory nature of this study favours the use of an inductive methodology. Exploratory research aims to "establish the most basic criteria of the research topic" (Sarantakos, 2013: 10). It is mostly undertaken in circumstances where there is inadequate existing information on the research topic; the lack of sufficient theories makes the operationalisation of the question difficult. Reasons for carrying out exploratory research include feasibility, familiarisation, new ideas, formulation of hypotheses and operationalisation, summarised by Sarantakos (2013) after the studies by Becker (1989) and Puris (1995):

Feasibility. Exploration will show whether a study of the issue in question is warranted, worthwhile and feasible.
Familiarisation. Exploration will familiarise the researcher with the social context of the research topic, with details about relationships, values, standards and factors related to it, and with methods.
New ideas. An exploratory study may help to generate ideas, views and opinions about the research object, which are useful when constructing the research design.
Formulation of hypotheses. Exploration will show whether variables can be related to each other, and if so in what way, direction and degree.
Operationalisation. Exploration can help to operationalise concepts, by explaining their structure and by identifying indicators. (Sarantakos, 2013)

My research aimed to explore the academic, sociocultural and employment experiences of female Chinese students in the UK. Familiarisation with the social context of the research was achieved through exploring details from the interviewees. In exploring

new ideas it was clearly observed during the longitudinal interviews that a large amount of data on views and attitudes were generated. Qualitative interviews were used to grant rich deep data on real and perceived experiences of female Chinese students. In this research, data on impressions of and attitudes towards the UK were explored, as this topic is under studied. Qualitative data on feelings on racial and general discrimination and the perceived barriers to gaining employment for female Chinese were well generated.

Research on Chinese international student experience has been carried out using both qualitative methods (e.g. Huang, 2013; Mavroudi and Warren, 2013), quantitative methods (e.g. Du and Wei, 2015; Zhang and Brunton, 2007) and mixed methods (e.g. Bamber, 2014; Zhou and Todman, 2009). For this research a qualitative approach was appropriate because the focus was on how female Chinese students view themselves as minorities living abroad and in particular how they perceive educational, sociocultural and employment practices. This required that rich data from in-depth research was collected, and detailed information on the factors that could affect the results of the findings had to be sought.

When conducting constructivist research, the focus is on the collective generation of meaning, along with consideration of individual mindsets or beliefs (Schwandt, 1994). Although a qualitative approach does not provide a high level of generalisability via statistical aggregation, it offers the researcher an opportunity to explore lived experiences and to explain reasons behind a social phenomenon (Silverman, 2013).

Thompson (1996) states, "in-depth analysis of the life stories expressed by a relatively small number of participants" (p. 392) gathers sufficient qualitative data. Therefore, this research recruited a relatively small group of 24 participants to obtain in-depth data; nonetheless three waves of interviews were conducted, which compensated for the small group with longitudinal data.

Negative perceptions and unpleasant experiences such as discrimination, as asserted by Makkonen (2002), are sometimes hard to detect as the nature of such perceptions shows subtle and complex characteristics. Many scholars suggest treating all individuals the same in order to avoid discrimination; however, others hold that the central dilemma

can be addressed through treating people according to individuals' distinctive needs by recognising the differences (Healy *et al*., 2010).

Additionally, Makkonen (2002) articulates that the qualitative analytical approach is very useful in discovering new forms of subtle and complex topics which are so far under researched. As commented by McCall (2005), a qualitative approach helps to "identify a new and invisible group and proceed to uncover the differences and complexities of experience embodied in that location" (p. 1782). Furthermore, according to Sheppard (2001), the qualitative approach helps to explore the challenges and limitations of the human rights protection issue. Since a small number of participants reported their experience of discrimination, either ethnic or gender or mixed, their discrimination raised my concern. From more recent research conducted by Bagilhole (2010), a qualitative approach is ideal to reveal the sophisticated nature of individuals' experience, in particular for identifying a previously rather invisible group.

In this sense, a qualitative approach is effective in gathering descriptive data in a detailed way (Bryman, 2006). Although qualitative methods are criticised for not collecting data from a large number of informants and the sample not being as representative as the quantitative approach (Saunders *et al*., 2007), nonetheless, it is articulated by Bryman and Bell (2007) that the qualitative approach is more freely accessible to present the respondents' ideas and experiences.

The subject of this research was female Chinese taught postgraduate students in the UK, a social group of which I was a member. Not only have I experienced the 1-year postgraduate study life in the UK as a female Chinese international student, but I have also had continuous contact with other members of this study group for over 6 years. This also allowed the research to have previous knowledge of the various potential experiences the interviewees may have.

3.3.5 Methods
Due to the nature of this research, the interview was deemed a suitable research approach. This research tried to explore the educational and cultural adaptation of female Chinese students in the UK as well as to determine perceived factors that influence their employment intentions in the UK.

Interviews with rich interactions were adopted in interpretive hermeneutics research in data collection. The range of data used in hermeneutic studies has now been extended from interview data to documents, images and art (Flick, 2014). While originally objective in nature, hermeneutics as a domain of research has developed out of this "objective" (Flick, 2014: 457) zone and now focuses on the social construction of knowledge. Guided by this spirit, naturally occurring data or non-standardised data rather than explicit data are preferred.

From a philosophical view on the distinction between natural reality and social reality, a generalising method is employed for natural sciences research, while an individualising method is employed for human and social sciences research (Rickert, n.d., cited in Crotty, 1998). Conducting sociocultural research focuses on the unique development of individuals, whereas natural sciences research focuses on general law establishment. This fits with the unit of analysis of this study, which focused on the individual and the development emanating from this.

Interviews are the "most widely employed method in qualitative research" (Bryman & Bell 2007: 472). Bryman and Bell (2007) further contend that the purpose of interviews is for the interviewer to "elicit from the interviewee or respondent … all manner of information: interviewees' own behaviour or that of others, attitudes, norms, beliefs and values" (p. 209). Although the interview method is quite time consuming, including the process of interviewing, transcribing after the interview, and analysis, it was the best option for conducting this research. There are a number of recommendations for qualitative interviewing as the following quotation suggests:

> Unlike a survey, a qualitative interview is an interaction between an interviewer and a respondent in which the interviewer has a general plan of inquiry, including the topics to be covered, but not a set of questions that must be asked with particular words and in a particular order. At the same time, the qualitative interviewer must be fully familiar with the questions to be asked. This allows the interview to proceed smoothly and naturally. (Babbie, 2007: 306)

In this particular research, using interviews allowed me to probe the interview questions when interviewees seemed not to understand them. Interviewees held the right to question any unclear point made by the interviewer. When the language for empirical data collection is not the first language for participants, the interview method provides

chances for the interviewees to ask the interviewer for clarification. For the interviewer, the chance is given to double check the answers and to enquire about the context behind an answer from the interviewees on the spot. For example, during an interview, the interviewee JY finished her answer to one question by saying, "That's it." For the purpose of clarification, I summarised her answer and expressed my summary to her. By listening to the summary, she seemed to re-evaluate, and she added a new perspective to the answer. Using an interview gave her the opportunity to reassess her answer through hearing her answer spoken aloud by her and summarised by me.

In terms of group interviews or one-to-one interviews, the latter was chosen for this particular research. Although group discussion could generate rich data, with high time efficiency, not choosing the group interview was due to a variety of difficulties that group interviews would raise; for example, it is possible that group members may not trust each other, and some members may over-talk or enjoy a dominant position, especially in a group whose members have different status.

In terms of semi-structured interviews, these are more suitable for interviewers whose focus is quite clear and for multiple themes. According to Bryman and Bell (2007), semi-structured interviews usually involve the use of interview guides and question lists on certain topics; the questions on the list might not all be asked by interviewers, allowing them to adjust and clarify their questions or be selective depending on the uncertainty of interviewees' answers.

Face-to-face interviews were used in this research for data collection. This method helped ensure rich data were collected on the research topic and care was taken to make sure the conversations did not stray far from the research topic. Explanation was provided if required by interviewees. This research considered the cultural difficulties international students may have involving interviews conducted in their second language. The face-to-face method allowed the interviewer to observe facial expressions and body language that interviewees conveyed, and helped interviewees tease out the word or phrase they wanted to express but had forgotten. All words or phrases prompted by the interviewer were relayed to interviewees to ensure the interviewees were happy with the information. These issues cannot be easily addressed through a survey. Therefore proper and precise data were collected and a better understanding of the interviewees' perceptions was developed.

3.4 Nature of Longitudinal Research

This section will first introduce briefly the longitudinal research approach, and then will discuss quantitative and qualitative longitudinal methods in detail and explain why a qualitative longitudinal approach was adopted in this study.

The longitudinal research method is a mechanism that is used in both quantitative and qualitative studies. The origin of contemporary longitudinal qualitative research can be traced to the Chicago School of Sociology (e.g. Bulmer, 1984; Musolf, 2003). Menard (2002) defines the longitudinal approach as collecting data on an item for two or more time periods, to analyse the same or comparable question across time periods and to compare data across periods of time. Saldaña points out there can be qualitative "increase, decrease, constancy, idiosyncrasy and the like within and among participants in social settings" just as there is statistical "increase, decrease, constancy, idiosyncrasy and the like" in qualitative data (2008: 297). Hermanowicz states that longitudinal qualitative interviews are "conducted with the same people over a time period sufficient to allow for the collection of data on specified conditions of change" (2013: 190).

The principal aim of longitudinal qualitative research, as articulated by Hermanowicz (2013), is to reveal process, assess causality and validate micro-macro connection. As an innovative approach, longitudinal qualitative research allows researchers to address developmental change at various levels from individual to group, institutional and societal (Ruspini, 1999). Farrall (2006) also describes qualitative longitudinal research as a study to investigate changes through time. It makes it possible to reveal how change is developed and to identify the variety of causes behind the change, at both individual level and group level (Pettigrew, 1990; Holland *et al*., 2006).

An example of a recent journal article using the qualitative longitudinal method was examined by this research to learn how to detect longitudinal change and the reasons behind it. This recent study tried to find out how entrepreneurial intentions changed over a period of time among a group of entrepreneurial management students of a 2014 class cohort in the Rizal Technological University (Magsino & Opulencia, 2015). They collected qualitative data twice from the essays the students wrote over two academic terms. All 215 students who enrolled in a module of Project Study 1 (Business Plan) and whose subject of study was Entrepreneurial Management were engaged in the study.

The first wave of data in the study by Magsino and Opulencia (2015) was collected on the first month of the first term in the 2012/13 academic year. Students were required to write an essay on their business plans after graduation. The second wave of data was collected in the second term for the same group of students who were enrolled in Project Study 2 (Business Plan Implementation). Students were then asked to participate in profit-making projects in groups of five, based on the business plans they wrote in the first term. As a passing requirement for this module, students were asked to submit individual evaluations of their performance in their business project and also to write an essay to answer three questions. The questions were: "Do you intend to put up your own business immediately after graduation?" "Do you have other plans? If yes, what are these?" and "What problems did you encounter in undertaking your business project?" By doing this, the responses for Magsino and Opulencia's (2005) study were sorted, structured and categorised, although it could be argued that their participants were not given rights to freely leave the study at all.

After the two sets of essay data collection, they also conducted a group interview with three parents of the participants to solicit their perceptions of the students' entrepreneurial intentions. Arguably, in terms of the methodology, this one-off interview with only three parents did not contribute to the longitudinal perspective of their study, but as a small amount of supplementary data instead. Nevertheless, Magsino and Opulencia (2015) managed to collect the full sample of a research site, and this was obviously an advantage of their study. Having collected the longitudinal essay data, they categorised the data into eight themes and then reduced the themes into three categories. By doing so, they observed the changes in students' post-graduation plans and the contexts under which these changes occurred.

A longitudinal approach is traditionally used in medical studies, which allows researchers to keep a daily record of patients on certain symptoms. These longitudinal tracks help researchers interpret a trend of development in a disease. Most previous studies on international students' sociocultural adjustment used one-off cross-sectional designs and rarely analysed the process for such adjustment (e.g. Du & Wei, 2015; Zhang & Goodson, 2011). A useful approach to reveal a process would be using a qualitative longitudinal design. The longitudinal method in sociological and

psychological fields develops as it offers insight into "the enactment of ontological complicity and the formation of habitus over time" (McLeod, 2003: 203).

Quantitative methods are commonly employed in longitudinal studies (e.g. Hermanowicz, 2013). In a recent handbook by Menard (2008) on longitudinal research, only one out of 38 chapters is on the qualitative approach, with the rest of the chapters dealing with the quantitative approach (Hermanowicz, 2013). For example, Tay *et al.* (2006) applied a longitudinal study of 285 surveys in a business school in Singapore to test the connection between personality, biographical characteristics and job interview success. Two sets of surveys were carried out in their research, with a time gap of 5 months. The reason for undertaking the survey twice was due to the nature of the study, where they intended to examine the difference between perception and real experience. To do so, the first round of surveys were sent out before the participants had actually done their job interviews and the second round of surveys were filled after the job interviews. Similar logic was used in Nathan *et al.*'s (1991) study, in which they also undertook two sets of questionnaires – one before a certain activity and the other after – to check any differences between the two rounds.

With epistemological and methodological diversity across disciplinary fields, the definitions of qualitative longitudinal methodology are varied (Holland *et al.*, 2006). Although varied, common features of such a research method are change, process, time and duration (e.g. Corden and Millar, 2007; Holland *et al.*, 2006; Lewis, 2007; Pettigrew, 1990; Saldaña, 2003).

A revealing paper on the longitudinal field of research published in *Organization Science* by Pettigrew (1990) asserts the importance of change in analysing longitudinal data. He approaches the notion of change from a contextualist view, where contexts for change are emphasised in the following four rationales. He argues,

> The key points to emphasize in analysing change in a contextualist mode are firstly the importance of embeddedness, studying change in the context of interconnected levels of analysis. Secondly, the importance of temporal interconnectedness, locating change in past, present, and future time. Thirdly, the need to explore context and action, how context is a product of action and vice versa; and finally the central assumption about causation in this kind of holistic analysis, causation of change is neither linear nor

singular – the search for a simple and singular grand theory of change is unlikely to bear fruit (Pettigrew, 1990:269).

When seeking explanations for change, it is essential to be aware that the characteristics of change are multifaceted. Awareness of the holistic and multi-layered nature of change is of necessity to deal with change with longitudinal data. Pettigrew (1990) reminds longitudinal researchers to look for "continuity and change, patterns and idiosyncrasies, the actions of individuals and groups, the role of contexts and structures, and processes of structuring" (p. 269). He suggests researchers explore the diversity and the mixture of causes under change and discover the contexts where the mixture takes place over the longitudinal period.

In contrast with mixed method studies and follow-up studies, Holland *et al*. (2006) define the qualitative longitudinal method as planned and prospective. Saldaña (2003) states that the purpose of qualitative longitudinal research is to explore changes and to describe changes, if any. Such changes are dependent on the specific context of a study, therefore the notion of flexibility should be taken into account when designing and analysing a study (e.g. Tomanovic, 2003). Moreover, four types of change have been defined by Lewis (2007), including narrative change, reinterpretation by the participant, researcher's reinterpretation and absence of change.

Narrative change shows how individual stories evolve over the course of the study in terms of events or interactions and feelings, hopes, reactions, plans.
Change in the context of time when a story is retold and reinterpreted by the participant at later interviews.
Change is evoked as the researcher sees the participant more clearly over time.
There may not be any change, as mentioned above. (cited in Carduff, 2013: 42)

Allowing for these four types of change, Lewis (2007) emphasises the multidimensional nature of change. Pettigrew (1990) interprets the change as a process. Akin to this, Saldaña (2003) discusses the connection between time and change in qualitative longitudinal research and points out that this method is not simply studying from A to B but studying "from A to B *through* time" (Saldaña, 2003, cited in Carduff, 2013: 42). Such a notion indicates a process rather than a direct outcome. Given both the multidimensional nature and the process-based nature of change, causes that lead to

such change and impacts of change through time may be explained. Therefore, instead of a one-off event, the qualitative longitudinal method focuses on the process of changing (Pettigrew, 1990).

Over time, contemporary qualitative longitudinal studies have been well established in social sciences disciplines such as education, sociology, social policy, psychology and anthropology (e.g. Carduff, 2013). Neale and Flowerdew (2003) describe qualitative longitudinal research as a theoretical paradigm in the social world through time.

As summarised by Hermanowicz (2013), qualitative longitudinal research is manifested in other approaches such as in ethnography (Burton *et al*., 2009), case studies (Thomson, 2007) and mixed methods (Huber, 1995; Tomanovic, 2003).

The qualitative longitudinal approach provides rich data on a comparative basis to better understand patterns of continuity and trace changes (e.g. McLeod). Not only examining what changes happen, the qualitative longitudinal method also helps to understand how and why a sociocultural phenomenon happens (Holland *et al*., 2006). McLeod argues that the non-longitudinal way of interpreting qualitative data, compared with adopting a longitudinal approach, is "in a binary logic", which seems "inadequate" and "reductive" (2003: 202). This has also been raised within the longitudinal scope, as stated by Neale *et al*. (2003), quantitative longitudinal research depicts time as a linear phenomenon, whilst the qualitative longitudinal method sees the interaction between time and social norms.

McLeod (2003) further adds that attention to the differences seen through longitudinal data enables new insights. In this sense, a notion of evolving in understanding life through time becomes a major advantage for qualitative longitudinal methodology (McLeod & Thomson, 2009).

The nature of this study required a qualitative longitudinal research method. Literature on adaptation suggests a lengthy period of time to analyse the process of sociocultural and educational adjustment in a new environment. Berry's acculturation framework involves five steps of acculturation process, including new acculturation experiences, appraisal of experiences, coping strategies or resources, immediate effects or outcomes and long-term outcomes. Such a long process requires time to implement. An empirical

study on sociocultural adjustment of Chinese international students in the US carried out by Wang and Mallinckrodt (2006) claims the length of time of staying in the US is significantly negatively related to sociocultural adaptation difficulty and to psychological stress. This also supports the length of time needed for empirical study on international students' adaptation.

3.5 Process

The process designed for this research took into consideration the length of the qualitative longitudinal interviews, the sample chosen for this research, research design, and challenges in conducting the longitudinal interviews, including ethical concerns.

3.5.1 Length

Literature on the qualitative longitudinal method suggests the length is dependent on the context of the research as well as the theoretical discipline. When defining the length of longitudinal research, Saldaña (2003) states that it is difficult to decide as the length can be varied. Corden and Nice (2007) further support Saldaña's point that definition of the length of a longitudinal study so far is not clear. Acknowledging the difficulty of defining the length of the study, Saldaña also holds that " 'long'itudinal does not have to be 'lonnnnnnng' " but depends on the context of study (2003, citied by Carduff, 2013: 43). Saldaña (2003) provides an example of study on education – the suggested length of study is the school year. A short-term longitudinal study on vulnerable youths was conducted over 4 months (Taylor, 2009). The justification for the period of 4 months was that the group Taylor studied was considered vulnerable and hence not easy to follow up. McLeod (2003) designed a longitudinal project on secondary school students in Australia for 7 to 8 years from age 12 to age 18, and such a long time allowed the students to understand their "present, prospective and retrospective sense of self" in the long view and to reflect on their thoughts in the previous phase (McLeod, 2003: 204). Defining the length of longitudinal study is not simple but can be designed through conducting the study to understand how long the process of change (if any) will take (Carduff, 2013). In this sense, it is important to be able to design the research flexibly.

The time period of this longitudinal research was c. 18 months, throughout the 1-year master course plus c. 6 months after dissertation submission. The first wave of interviews were naturally conducted at the beginning of the 1-year master studies in order to identify the expectations towards studying in the UK, the interviewees' initial

impressions of the UK and the locals, their initial intention to find employment in the UK and challenges for such employment. The second wave of interviews was conducted from 6 months after their courses began. Choosing this interview time was because it was halfway through their year's study in the UK. It was also the time when interviewees finished classes. Taking interviews at that time would detect changes, if any, during the first half of the course. Since interviewees had just finished all the classes and seminars, their experience of classroom interaction and seminar group working were fresh. The third wave of interviews were conducted from 6 months after they submitted their dissertations. This round of interviews was conducted after all of their students visas had expired. These 6 months allowed time for interviewees to look for employment in the UK if desired.

3.5.2 Sample

The unit of analysis in this research is the individual. There were 24 interviewees in a UK-based Russell Group university, who graduated with scores of over 85% from universities in China before coming to the UK. These interviewees were full-time 1-year taught postgraduate female Chinese students who were in their 20s. The age group was not chosen deliberately, but by the distribution nature of Chinese students. As Turner (2006) points out, the model Chinese students in the UK are "young, unmarried, full-time students" (p. 33). When choosing the researching institution, consideration was made based on findings from Iannelli and Huang's (2014) research which suggests Chinese students in the UK increasingly graduate from Russell Group universities.

The reasons for choosing only female Chinese students as interviewees lie in the following perspectives. Of 116 studies around the world on experiences of international students, published from January 1995 to March 2006 and collated by Spurling (2007), 31 were conducted considering gender as a variable and only 6 focused exclusively on female students.

The most important reason for choosing females only in this research is due to the longitudinal nature of this research. The possible attrition or dropout rate for longitudinal research may cause problem. If including both male and female, the research may end up with different dropout rate between male and female in different rounds of interviews. Another practical problem for longitudinal research is that it costs much time and energy. Three waves of interviewees with a single gender can already

generate a great amount of data. If males were included for the three waves of interviews the data would be too great in volume and thus hard to manage.

Another reason for choosing females only in this research is due to internationalisation. Chinese society is changing such that more female students are able to study in higher education. Many have the opportunity to study overseas and hence have involved in the internationalisation of higher education. The social changes that Chinese women have experienced make them an interesting sample. The intersectionality element is considered in selecting research samples. Discrimination on ethnicity and on gender are regarded as overlapping and could lead to 'double jeopardy' (Bozionelos, 2010) in shaping Chinese women's experience in the UK. It is worth mentioning that there are very few single gender studies on Chinese women in the UK. Another reason lies in the family factor. Family persuasion influences much in Chinese women's decisions on where to study, where to live and work and when to get married (see Sections 2.1.1 & 2.4.3). This family factor is considered to affect female Chinese more than male Chinese.

For the programme types, 13 interviewees were studying MSc programmes and the remaining 11 were studying MA programmes.

Regarding the interviewees' subject of study, most were studying Management-related courses or Finance-related courses, with a few studying Education or Translation Studies (Table 8).

Table 8. Programmes Titles.

Number	Course Title
I01	Corporate and International Finance
I02	Finance
I03	Finance
I04	Education
I05	Financial Management
I06	Human Resource Management
I07	Translation
I08	Translation
I09	Human Resource Management
I10	Human Resource Management
I11	Financial Management
I12	Economics and Finance
I13	Financial Management
I14	Finance
I15	Finance and Investment
I16	Accounting and Finance
I17	Finance and Investment
I18	Finance
I19	Financial Management
I20	Human Resource Management
I21	Financial Management
I22	Finance
I23	Financial Management
I24	Finance

Figure 10. Interviewee Course Distribution.
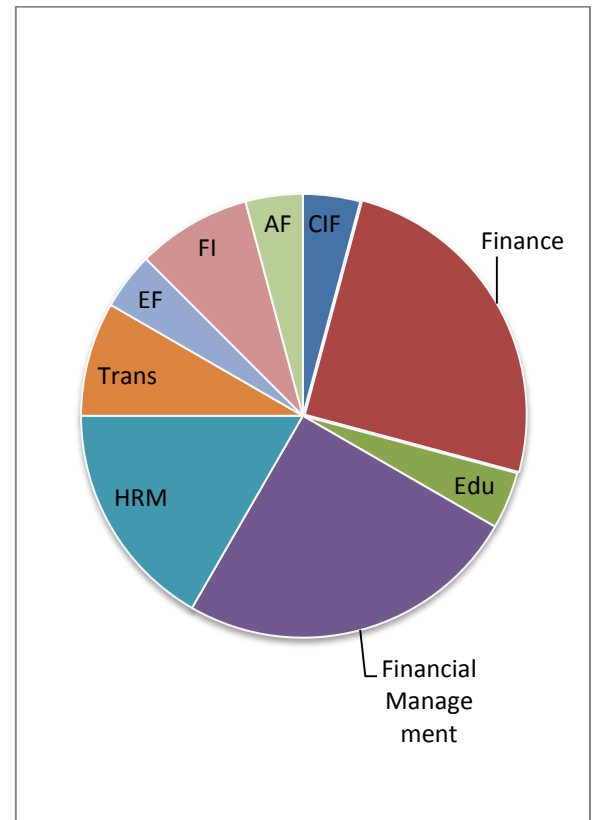
As can be seen from the above table, the two most popular programmes chosen by interviewees were Financial Management and Finance, which matches the two most popular taught master programmes in *** University Business School (***.ac.uk). For the faculty of study, the Chinese student number in the Social Sciences Faculty was the highest among the three faculties in *** University in 2011/12 academic year. 523 out of 679 (77%) Chinese students in *** University studied in the Social Sciences Faculty in 2011/12 (***.ac.uk). This academic year was when the interviewees undertook their 1-year study in the UK.

The average length of all interviews was 1 hour. In the first round, the average length of the interviews was 52 minutes. For the second round, the average length of the interviews was 58 minutes. In the third round, the average length of the interviews was 1 hour 12 minutes. It might be considered an advantage of utilising longitudinal method that informants gradually adapted and therefore held a more open attitude and provided rich data.

The geographical location of the interviews was in North East England, as the North East England was described as the whitest region in England: "the white population comprises over 90% of local people" (*The Guardian*, 2011). Most existing research on Chinese migrants including Chinese students has studied this social group in relatively big cities such as London, Manchester and Newcastle rather than in a small and tranquil place. Reasons for selecting this small North East city were first due to its difference in diversity from big cities in the UK. International student experience in the whitest region in England might be different from the big cities where most existing research is based. Secondly, a different perspective of adjustment may be seen for international students in a small city than those in a big city.

A convenience sampling method was utilised in this research. Filtering for the suitable sampling method followed the criteria of qualitative sampling set by Saranrakos (2013). According to Saranrakos (2013), qualitative sampling is directed:

Not towards large numbers of respondents but rather towards typical cases
Not towards fixed samples but towards ones that are flexible in size, type or subjects
Not towards statistical or random sampling but towards purposive sampling
Not towards 'mechanical' sampling but towards theoretical sampling

Towards fewer global settings than quantitative sampling

Not towards choosing a sample before the study has started, but (often) while the study is in progress

Not towards a strictly defined size but a sample whose number will be adjusted while the study is in operation

Not towards representativeness but rather towards suitability.

Samplings for conducting qualitative studies, according to Marshall (1996) and Oppong (2013), are naturalistic samplings and can be put into three broad strategies, namely convenience, judgement and theoretical models. Compared with the other two sampling strategies, convenience sampling is helpful in getting access to research subjects and is "the least vigorous technique" (Marshall, 1996: 523). Use of convenience sampling is due to its efficiency in time, cost and accessibility. However, convenience sampling is criticised for leading to "poor quality data and lacks intellectual credibility" (Marshall, 1996: 523). Research results based on this type of sampling collected data may face problems with conviction (Oppong, 2013).

There are reasons for not choosing judgement sampling and theoretical sampling. Theoretical sampling is eliminated as this sampling method is "theory driven" (Marshall, 1996: 523), while limited theories could frame the sampling for this research. The purpose of theoretical sampling is to "examine and elaborate" (Marshall, 1996: 523) on existing data, and this clearly did not match the purpose of my research. Judgement sampling, also called purposeful sampling, is claimed to be widely used in qualitative research (Marshall, 1996). One reason for not choosing judgement sampling was that it requires that the researcher "actively selects the most productive sample" (Marshall, 1996: 523). In this research, it was not possible to select the most productive participants as there was no definition on what type of sample was regarded as the most productive. In addition, before conducting the first wave of interviews, it was not possible to predict interviewees' future experiences of study, living and employment proactivity, which experiences may be gained at least after the first round of interviews. Therefore, the active selection of the most productive sample does not make much sense if used in this research.

Another reason for not choosing judgement sampling was that it involves "developing a framework of the variables" that might be "based on the available literature" (Marshall,

1996: 523). Before conducting this research, there was limited literature on what variables should be controlled or limited. Therefore, even if the researcher wished to limit the measurements on potential interviewees, there was insufficient theory to refer to. Nevertheless, all interviewees in this research were guaranteed to meet certain requirements. Four basic requirements were set when recruiting participants:

Ethnicity: Chinese

Gender: female

Level of study: taught postgraduate

Took undergraduate study in China

Although judgement sampling was not chosen, one guidance from this sampling may shed light on choosing the suitable sampling method for this research. The suitable sampling method ought to contribute to "developing a framework of the variables that might influence an individual's contribution and will be based on the researcher's practical knowledge of the research area, the available literature and evidence from the study itself" (Marshall, 1996: 523). Under this guidance and other considerations mentioned above, convenience sampling was chosen for its easy access to potential interviewees under the four requirements.

Possible informants were recruited via the most popular Chinese social media network, QQ (im.qq.com). The reason for choosing QQ as the tool for participant recruitment was because QQ, organised by Tencent (tencent.com), is the leading internet communication platform in China. In the second quarter of 2013, the number of monthly active QQ accounts was 818.5 million, with a peak of 173.2 million simultaneous online QQ user accounts (prnewswire.com).

The procedure for participant recruitment was as follows. First, I joined several QQ groups whose group names contained the name of the university. Most members in such QQ groups are assumed to be students at *** University. The second step was to post a recruitment advert in the group chats. In the recruitment advert, it recommended that interested participants should contact the interviewer through individual chat. After seeing the recruitment advertisement in QQ groups, students interested contacted me to participate. Some participants directly agreed, while others agreed to do interviews after

checking details of the research. Finally, 24 volunteers agreed to participate in the research. The final step was to set an interview time and venue with each participant.

3.5.3 Research design

The research adopted a qualitative approach involving longitudinal semi-structured interviews with 24 female Chinese students from taught master programmes at a leading university in the UK.

Primary research data were collected through three-phase in-depth interviews from 2011 to 2013, respectively at the beginning of the 1-year taught master programmes, at the middle of the programmes when all interviewees had finished their classes and at least 6 months after their thesis submission. The reason for choosing these three time periods was due to the aims of each phase of interviews. The first-round interviews focused on reasons for choosing the UK as an international education destination, the initial scoping experiences, both favourable and unfavourable, when coming to the UK, the initial employment intentions to work in the UK and perceived challenges for gaining the intended employment. These involved various aspects of experiences when studying in the UK, which the primary research question aimed to discover.

The second-round interviews concentrated on the changes in the interviewees' impressions of the UK, interviewees' interactions with their group members and interviewees' employment proactivity. The experiences when living in the UK at this phase were enriched by adding the 6 months' experience, compared with the first phase. At this phase, all lectures and seminars were finished, therefore it was a time when the interviewees held a fresh and complete experience of classroom interaction and group work interaction. Due to these classroom experiences, plus 6 months' new adaptation experiences and employment-seeking experiences, the content of experiences of living in the UK expanded. The third-round interviews were concerned with experiences in the abovementioned perspectives and reasons for leaving or remaining in the UK. The longitudinal method allowed the detection of changes in impressions of the UK and changes of employment desires.

In terms of setting, venues where interviews were carried out were the bedrooms or sometimes kitchens of the interviewees. These interview venues were requested by the interviewees. The advantages of conducting interviews in interviewees' bedrooms or

kitchens were convenience, less disruption, safety of expression and ease of recording. In terms of convenience, interviewees did not have to walk to take the interview, particularly when the weather was not good. This can also save preparation time in going out for interviewees. Holding interviews in their bedrooms or kitchens could be less easily disrupted by others compared to interviewing in public places such as a café. Most interviews were conducted in bedrooms which provided a private space for the interviewer and the interviewee. Considering the bedroom as a private space of the interviewee, interviewees were able to express themselves freely, particularly when talking about their flatmates and sensitive topics such as discriminatory experiences. For recording, bedrooms are much quieter than public places, hence reducing noise on the recording. Minimal levels of noise occurring during the interviews aided the word-for-word transcription later. It is worth mentioning that the interviewer and interviewees being the same gender set the foundation for interviewing in the bedrooms. In addition, the interview venues were college bedrooms, where a certain level of security is ensured by porters and cameras on site.

As stated by Neale and Flowerdew (2003), qualitative longitudinal research is a theoretical paradigm founded on concepts of time and texture, through which approach the interconnectedness of the "temporal and cultural dimensions of social life" (p. 189) is understood. The temporal aspect is crucial for qualitative longitudinal research, along with process and change (Holland *et al*., 2006). Process and change are the main focus in longitudinal studies, as Berthoud (2000) argues the aim of longitudinal research on social life is to display a movie rather than a snapshot to the audience. Carduff (2013) adds that the understanding of "what, why, and how change happens" is the fundamental aim and key strength of qualitative longitudinal studies. This research tried to explore the process of sociocultural adaptation through its longitudinal setting. It aimed to detect any change in employment intention and contexts behind the changes.

The aspect of flexibility and the iterative nature of qualitative longitudinal research made refinement possible over the research process. The iterative nature of qualitative longitudinal approach carries more weight than the aggregate of cross-sectional studies (McLeod and Thomson, 2009).

3.5.4 Challenges

Challenges when conducting qualitative longitudinal research include ethical challenges along with various practical challenges including data management, minimising attrition and the research relationship (Carduff, 2013). By following Carduff (2013), we will examine the ethical challenges and then practical challenges.

3.5.4.1 Ethical challenges

When managing, analysing and reporting qualitative data, researchers have an ethical responsibility to use the data (Corden and Nice, 2007). Detailed discussion on particular ethical challenges for qualitative longitudinal research has initiated a separate section at a later part of this chapter (see Section 3.5.5.).

3.5.4.2 Data management

Literature in qualitative longitudinal studies suggests that managing qualitative longitudinal data is vital (Holland *et al*., 2006). The huge volumes of data generated from qualitative longitudinal research are "at once the delight" and a challenge of data analysis (Lewis, 2007: 550).

In this research, data management was not very complicated but took a considerable amount of time, owing to the large volumes of data generated through three waves of interviews. Indeed, 254,753 words of transcript were generated after conducting 64 interviews in total. The data was then sorted and stored in categorised folders. Under the folder 'interview', there were three subfolders: '1st round', '2nd round' and '3rd round'. Each audio recording and transcript was labelled with the interviewee's name and the interview date. The audio files and the transcript files were put into relevant '1st round', '2nd round' and '3rd round' subfolders. I had tried to use NVivo to help manage the data and to help with data analysis. Data management with NVivo was satisfactory, but problems arose when carrying out data analysis using this software. After loading the fully transcribed first-round interviews, I coded through the transcripts in NVivo. After checking the nodes, I tried to ask NVivo to generate models out of the nodes. The software always collapsed after being requested to generate models. After being checked by the departmental IT team, I was told the collapse problems may have been due to there being too many nodes. Manual data management and data analysis was then chosen after even the department IT staff were unable to fix the NVivo problem.

After each round of interviews, interviewees were offered the opportunity to receive a transcript of the last interview to read. Corden and Millar (2007) claim that participants expect that much use will be made of the data generated from them. Balancing such expectation from the participants and the real need of research, innovative strategies in data organisation are necessary to warrant the clarity of the data (Holland *et al*., 2006). Providing interview transcripts to my interviewees allowed them to get involved in decisions on the clarity of the data and ensured the accuracy of the data.

The issue of when and how to report or to disseminate interim findings is another challenge when managing qualitative longitudinal data. The question of when to report qualitative longitudinal findings has been raised in the literature. According to Holland *et al*. (2006), researchers should be cautious when considering interim publication that the longitudinal findings are subject to change. The challenge of what to disseminate in qualitative longitudinal findings was raised by Corden and Nice (2007). They remind researchers not to over-interpret the findings, particularly interim findings that may lead to a false outcome. In this research, although the issue of when to disseminate findings did not arise, the challenge of what to write on the longitudinal findings was tackled by systematic analysis of the data. Over-interpretation aimed to be avoided by double-checking with the interviewees.

3.5.4.3 Minimising attrition

Loss of interviewees through the three waves of interviews occurred in this research. The study began with 24 interviewees in the first round of interviews. One was lost in the second round and a further 6 were lost in the last round of interviews. This meant 23 interviewees participated in the second round of interviews and 17 interviewees participated in the third round. The loss of one in the second round was due to a lack of time claimed by the interviewee who left the study. The primary reason for the loss of 6 in the third round was the fact of location distance. All the six lost had already left the country when the third round of interviews occurred. On the other hand, I managed to maintain 96% of the interviewees in the second round and 70% of the interviewees in the third round. The strategies for minimising attrition will be discussed later.

Loss of interviewees did not only occur in this research, it is considered a problem for qualitative longitudinal research owing to its longitudinal nature. For example, Corden and Nice (2007) lost 6 interviewees from 24 after the first round of interviews in their

longitudinal study. They regard such exclusion of data on the basis of attrition as both unethical and uneconomical. They felt it unethical not to use the data that those interviewees had provided before attrition, particularly for those who strongly wished their viewpoints to be disseminated. They also felt it uneconomical not to use what data they had already collected.

Strategies for minimising attrition have been studied in the literature, in particular studies involving vulnerable groups such vulnerable youths and drug users (Carduff, 2013). There are differences among different groups of participants, but we may draw out common strategies from previous research. Based on a qualitative longitudinal social study on vulnerable youths by Taylor (2009), five coping strategies on minimising attrition have been illustrated as follows as well as the researcher's own practice.

Use of self and researcher role

The role of the researcher has been discussed much in qualitative studies. The research relationship in qualitative studies is widely recognised (Taylor, 2009) and has attracted much research focus (Holland *et al*, 2006; Thomason and Holland, 2003). In the qualitative literature, presenting information on the interviewer's use of self is said to be beneficial for setting up a trusting relationship and allows the research process to be more transparent (e.g. Drisko, 1997; Meyrick, 2006; Taylor, 2009).

In this research I believe the role of the researcher contributed to retaining participants, as Taylor (2009) also believes. Guided by Taylor (2009), I tried to engage properly with the interviewees to develop trustworthiness, where the participants felt safe, empowered and comfortable in sharing personal data. This researcher role guided me through the research process, including interviewee recruitment, data collection and data analysis. Nevertheless, I followed what Taylor (2009) reminds qualitative researchers to remember: the primary role of being a researcher rather than a friend.

Screening procedures

Taylor (2009) contacted the potential interviewees before conducting interviews. She contacted participants first by speaking through phone calls and then in face-to-face meetings. The 5-minute phone calls allowed Taylor to verify whether the person met the criteria for her research based on a screening script. The prospective participants were

asked about their age, income status and education or employment status. Only if the participants met the eligibility criteria and showed interest in participating in the study was their identifying information then documented. Afterwards, potential interviewees were then invited for a 20-minute face-to-face meeting at a mutually agreed time and place (usually in public locations such as libraries and cafes). Participants were asked to sign consent for the screening interview. This consent is a plus compared with the traditional consent, which is only for participation in the main body of the study. These face-to-face screening meetings allowed the researcher to set up an initial in-person contact with the participants in a comfortable environment and to measure how a standardised instrument (the Multnomah Community Ability Scale-Self Report by O'Malia *et al.* 2002) worked on her interviewees, particularly since half of the interviewees of her study had mental health illnesses.

In the current study, potential interviewees were also contacted before the real interviews through QQ and text messages rather than face-to-face meetings as Taylor (2009) did. The contact beforehand for this study was more of an information-sharing session or a query-answering session. Through this procedure, I told the potential interviewees that they could withdraw from participation via text or email at any point of the process, following the guidance of Taylor (2009). This provided a low-risk investment environment that either party could walk away from if they felt they needed to.

Initial interview

Through the two screening procedures, Taylor (2009) considered herself as no longer a stranger to the participants. In the first-round interviews, she used a card-sorting task where interviewees were asked to pick up five cards from a pile and rank the five cards in descending order of their importance to the interviewee. Interviewees were then asked to discuss each card in turn. Taylor (2009) claims the interviewees found this card-sorting task non-threatening and interesting. Weller and Romney (1988) reveal the advantage of using ranked card sorting as an efficient method of generating large amounts of qualitative data and of comparing rankings among interviewees. In addition to the card sorting method, there are other qualitative methods that may improve the participants' engagement. McDowell (2001) has used magazine articles and Sanders and Munford (2005) have used city maps to engage youth in dialogue.

In this study, I did not use the card-sorting task, magazine articles or city maps as a strategy to make the interviewees feel safe and then share a large amount of qualitative data. The reason for not doing so was due to the performance of the interviewees in the pilot study, in which they did not feel threatened and were able to produce effective data without using these methods. The outcome of the pilot study did not indicate any need for atmosphere-easing activity like the card-sorting game. Additionally, it is not easy to design and justify a suitable card-sorting game for this research.

Structure and process of participant stipends

Each participant in Taylor's (2009) research received US$140 cash in total for enrolling in the study. Aside from the cash itself, Taylor (2009) regards the researcher's attitude and the timing of offering the stipend as other aspects of the reward. Vander Stoep (1999) asserts the importance of the attitude interviewers convey when providing a stipend; the stipend should be provided with appreciation for the time and effort spent, not as a "favour" to participants, which makes light of their engagement (Vander Stoep, 1999: 311). In terms of timing, Taylor (2009) paid the $140 stipend in five instalments, one $15 for the screening, three $25 for the three monthly interviews and $50 for the completion bonus.

Taylor (2009) argues the stipend she paid did not put pressure on participants for two reasons. One reason is that she offered the stipend at the beginning of each interview, giving the participants the opportunity to leave at any time, while the average interview lasted for an hour. The second reason lies in the two times of consent (one at the screening meeting and the other at the first real interview), giving plenty time for participants to ponder their decision to engage the study.

This research did not pay any form of financial stipend to interviewees. The primary reason was that paying people to be involved in studies, either longitudinal or in other forms, is still a matter of debate, as Dickert *et al*. (2002) question whether ethically this method is coercive, manipulative or an excessive enticement. Besides, there were no travel expenses from the interviewee side as interviews were carried out in their college bedrooms. Although not paid any stipend, interviewees were offered opportunities to consult me about any questions on study and living adaptation at any time during the interim periods. Living experiences and information on recruitment adverts and career workshops were shared with interviewees who asked.

Frequency of contact

Frequent contact with participants is regarded as an effective strategy for preserving youth participants in qualitative longitudinal research (e.g. McLeod and Thomson, 2009; Taylor, 2009; Vander Stoep, 1999). Taylor (2009) made phone calls and emails to her interviewees during the interim periods to keep up the connection. She contacted participants 10-12 times, with each conversation lasting 10 minutes or less. Such brief contact allows the researcher to keep a record of any update to email addresses or phone numbers and also reminds the interviewees about the subsequent interviews. McLeod and Thomson (2009) illustrate other similar approaches such as sending birthday cards, Christmas cards and newsletters to maintain contact with participants.

In this study, I also put effort into retaining interviewees. Christmas wish messages were sent to interviewees as one strategy to keep up the connection. Opportunities were offered to interviewees to ask any questions about their study or life if I could answer. Frequent contact was the case, particularly when trying to sort out a suitable interview time with the interviewees. When preparing for the third-round interviews, each interviewee was contacted at least three times for the last interview invitation, as most of the interviewees had already left the UK.

3.5.5 Research ethics

Ethics is an important issue in first-hand data research. The ethical concerns in this study include the issues of serial consent and confidentiality, in particular with the case of longitudinality. The following section will discuss the two issues respectively.

3.5.5.1 Serial consent

Serial consent is an ethical challenge for longitudinal interviews. The process of consent is generally one-off and is necessary before any participation in a research project, while in qualitative longitudinal studies this process has been expanded to a re-negotiation setting (Murray *et al*., 2009). Although informed consent is conferred under the set of expectations, respondents should respectfully be given the right to withdraw cooperation with the research team at any interim period between the serial data collection. Claimed by Holland *et al*. (2006) and Taylor (2009), the consent process for longitudinal studies is complex due to the fact that respondents may feel obliged to carry on with the participation from the beginning until the last data collection session

out of a sense social responsibility. Carduff (2013) further adds that the true essence of informed consent means that any refinement of research objectives should be conveyed to interviewees as the study proceeds.

Consent for access is a multifaceted moral issue, particularly with vulnerable groups. For example, Saldaña (2003), Ward and Henderson (2003) and Thomson (2007) conducted research with youths whom they categorised as a vulnerable group; Watson *et al*. (1991) and Harocopos and Dennis (2003) studied a group of drug users.

Ward and Henderson (2003) felt responsible for their interviewees as their study followed the experiences of youths who had violent childhoods and were departing from the care system. Taylor (2009) also felt a sense of responsibility for her participants. She conducted the consent procedure twice in her research, the first when she contacted the potential participants before the real interviews, and the second at the beginning of her first real interview. She screened the potential respondents before the real interview due to her concerns about the psychological burden of her participants. Although it could be argued that such screening may lead to silencing some of the voices which may need to be heard, she articulates that her purposive sample was for the sake of ethical and welfare concern.

All of my interviews were audio recorded, and this was done with consent. Respecting the rights of respondents, they were informed the recorder could be turned off or paused at any time. No interviewee asked to turn off the recorder. One interviewee asked that we pause during an interview.

3.5.5.2 Confidentiality

The issue of confidentiality for longitudinal studies is multifaceted as more stories of the respondent's life over time are portrayed. This is particularly complicated in the context of studying vulnerable groups or when collecting sensitive data. Collecting such data more than once increases the risk of data "falling into the wrong hands" (Carduff, 2013: 55). This requires the need for managing data securely and for organisation (Holland *et al*., 2006). For longitudinal studies, cases may be identified by the narrator although can be kept anonymous to the reader (Thomson, 2007).

How to maintain confidentiality in this longitudinal research was also of concern to me. I have been inspired by Thomson (2007). In her research on qualitative longitudinal methods, Thomson (2007) reflected the ethical and practical challenges of forming case histories. She employed a case history approach by which she recorded details of individual participants. She provided the tape recording to her participants after the third wave of interviews to let them understand the standpoint of the researcher. Not all respondents listened to their tapes, but they were granted an alternative opportunity later to check the stories the author wrote about them before proceeding to publish.

I have adopted a similar approach by providing interview transcripts after each wave of the interviews to individual participants. After communicating with each participant, I was determined to ensure interviewees were satisfied with what I had written about them without feeling insecure. By retaining the autonomy of the participants, the thoroughness of the research was ensured. Nonetheless, as articulated by Thomson (2007), keeping a balance between maintaining the anonymity of the respondents with the integrity of the research is still hard work for qualitative longitudinal researchers.

Confidentiality of details such as names of informants was ensured in that no personal details have been either published or given to anyone else beyond the original research team (Sekaran, 2003). All research materials including notes, recordings and transcripts are stored in a locked location. According to Pettigrew (1990), the data should only be made available to members of the research staff on the particular research project from which these data are drawn. He adds that interview data can only be made available beyond the research team after consent from individual informants; in this circumstance the records should be retained in the research centre for scrutiny.

Audio recording was used throughout the interviews when permission was granted, and all recording files were subsequently transcribed accurately. A comprehensive examination and analysis of the interviews was then conducted and compared via systematically coding the transcripts. Furthermore, unwanted subconscious bias was also considered in this study, as no information was disregarded or deleted by the researcher during the transcribing procedure.

3.6 How to Conduct the Research

This study was conducted in three waves of interviews. The reason for conducting the interviews three times was due to the purpose of this study. This research hoped to explore varied experiences of female Chinese international students and to detect any changes during their stay in the UK. I intended to explore their initial experiences upon arrival, living and studying experience changes throughout their stay in the UK, and view changes relating to finding employment in the UK and job proactivity throughout the year. The interviews were carried out at first arrival, in the middle of their 1-year taught postgraduate study, and 6 months after their dissertation submission.

The study began with 24 interviewees in the first round of interviews. One participant left before conducting her second interview. The reason for leaving the study, this participant claimed, was due to her pressure to study. The pressure to study made it difficult for her to cope with study, thus leaving no extra time and energy for activities beyond study. This led to 23 interviewees in total for the second wave of interviews. During the third round of interviews, most of the participants were in China. The location distance and the time zone difference made it difficult to maintain all the participants. After invitation messages were sent to individual participants through the QQ message service at least three times, 20 interviewees agreed to be interviewed for the third time, while 17 interviewees actually participated. The other three who agreed to engage in the third-round interviews failed to set up a sufficient time schedule due to personal reasons such as taking care of a grandmother who was suddenly ill. In the end, 17 interviews were conducted for the third round. All these 17 interviewees participated through the three waves of interviews, which forms the longitudinal character of data for this research.

Interviews were conducted in the English language. The primary reason for using English as the interview language is that English is the language of learning where participants receive instructions in English and English is used as lingua franca when living in an English town. English language as a second language for both the participants and the researcher has also featured in many qualitative studies (such as Gao 2016; Sung 2014a, 2014b, 2014c, 2014d, 2016a 2016b, 2016c). The second reason is to avoid translation issues. Translated work may not be able to convey the accurate perception as a direction quotation could do. The translation issue was a concern since one of the main aims in this research was to tease out the perceptions and feelings

which may be problematic when translated from the first language. The English language competency that the interviewees possess enabled the interviewees to express their opinions in English. All participants and I have reached at least 6.5 in the IELTS score. At the same time, on any occasion when interviewees had difficulty in expressing certain terms and expressions in English, they were given the opportunity to speak in the Chinese language. When an interviewee spoke in Chinese, I tried to express her meaning in English back to the interviewee immediately to assess whether what I said represented what she intended to express.

In the cases when interviewees spoke Chinese, they tended to use Chinese words or word phrases in the middle of an English sentence rather than speaking long sentences of Chinese, except for rare situations. There were several times when single Chinese words were spoken by interviewees, and all such Chinese words were written in the transcripts. No matter how much time an interviewee spoke for in Chinese, the interviewer always tried to express the same meaning in English immediately back to the interviewee after listened to their Chinese expressions. Interviewees then checked whether the English expressions were what they meant to say. In all cases, the English expressions interpreted by the interviewer were conveyed to interviewees and agreement was given by interviewees.

The fluency of expression was prioritised and the right to choose a language for expression was granted. Interviewees were encouraged to use the English language when they felt comfortable. This gave priority to the content and rich text of the answers provided by the interviewees.

3.6.1 Longitudinal data collection methods

Deciding how and when to generate longitudinal data is also dependent on the context of the study and the theoretical paradigm. The iterative nature of the longitudinal method allows participants to tell a story based on earlier sets of data collection and allows researchers to depict what has changed (if anything) (McLeod & Thomason, 2009). Similarly, Lewis (2007) builds up the narrative by summarising each interview from the previous wave of data combined with a framework. This iterative approach has made the qualitative longitudinal research more than a cross-sectional summary (McLeod & Thomason, 2009). In comparison with cross-sectional qualitative research,

longitudinal qualitative research is more developed in innovative and multi-faceted strategies in eliciting data (Carduff, 2013).

Most qualitative longitudinal studies adopt interviewing methods (Carduff, 2013). For example, the 7-8 year longitudinal study on secondary school students by McLeod (2003) used interviews, tape recordings, photographs and video recording for data collection, which it is believed has emphasised the range of options (McLeod and Thomson, 2009). Holland *et al.* (2006) have used interviews, written narratives, case studies, videos and other visual methods. More contemporarily, Carduff (2013) suggests the increased use of technologies in blogging and social media in qualitative longitudinal research.

3.6.2 Interview questions

Interview questions are designed to answer research questions. This research used an inductive approach combining elements of a deductive approach when designing the interview questions as this is an exploratory piece of work. Interview questions were designed based on subjects that arose from the literature, while at the same time they were flexible enough to make sure interviewees could raise any unclear points or clarify the questions to provide rich data and possible additional insights. Detailed interview questions will be discussed in the later part of this section. Before discussing the interview questions this study used, I would like to first focus on the rationale of interview question design.

A deductive approach, as suggested by Yin (2009), is mainly used in research based on existing theories or frameworks to explain your research questions, and this approach can also allow you to use a theoretical framework to help organise and analyse your data. However, Bryman (1988) has discussed the weakness of using a deductive approach. He argues the disadvantage of using such an approach occurs when researching in a well-developed field. He claims,

> The prior specification of a theory tends to be disfavoured because of the possibility of introducing a premature closure on the issues to be investigated, as well as the possibility of the theoretical constructs departing excessively from the views of participants in a social setting. (p. 81)

Contrary to the order of the deductive approach, an inductive approach is to collect data first and then generate theoretical frameworks based on the data (such as Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Yin, 2009; Saunders *et al*., 2012). The inductive approach is not easy to adopt. As asserted by Yin (2009), the inductive approach may be difficult to follow for inexperienced researchers.

In addition, Saunders *et al*. (2012) have also discussed the circumstances for using the inductive approach as follows:

> When your study does not have a clearly defined theoretical framework;
> When you identify relationships between your data and develop questions and hypotheses or propositions to test these;
> When your theory emerges from the process of data collection and analysis.
> (p. 549)

In the circumstances of this study, there is no one theoretical framework to cover the whole research, while there are segmented theories in different themes to guide interview questions in order to solve the research question. Considering the exploratory nature of this research, which existing theories have not discussed, and the innovative contribution to academic frameworks, in this research it was reasonable to adopt an inductive approach as the main analysis mechanism, while guided by existing theories.

Accordingly, interview questions were designed based on the literature. Three detailed sets of interview questions can be found in the following sections. Interview questions are listed in the left column, whilst key references are noted in the right column. This design allowed me to be reminded of the key literature when conducting interviews.

3.6.2.1 First-round interview questions

Questions for the first round of interviews were divided into four sections, including initial experience, experiences of coming to a new country, perceptions of Chinese students and interviewees' intention to work in the UK. The first-round interviews focused on reasons for choosing the UK as an international education destination, the initial scoping experiences – both favourable and unfavourable – when coming to the UK and the initial employment intentions to work in the UK.

A – Initial experience

1. *What course do you study?*
2. *When did you come to the UK?*
3. *What attracted you to study in the UK? Why?*
4. *What were your initial impressions when you first came to the UK?*
5. *Why did you choose ***University? What's your first impression about the university?*
6. *What were your expectations before arriving in the UK?*

Interview questions in this first section were warm-up questions. These questions allowed the interviewer to obtain some background information about the interviewees. Questions in this section were set to be not too difficult to answer, and this allowed interviewees to gradually enter into the setting. Through these questions, I learned the basic information about the interviewees on the course of study and the time of entering the UK as well as reasons for choosing to study in the UK and choosing the particular institution.

B – **Experiences of coming to a new country**

7. *How do you find adapting to life in ***?*

8. *What if any difficulties have you experienced since coming to the UK?* [Can you explain it more? Why do you find it difficult? How does that happen? Can you give me an example?]

9. *Have you found it easy to interact with others?*

10. *How do you find others treat you?* E.g. college, department, or shops staff? *How does that make you feel about the UK?*

11. [If they say nothing on discrimination] *Have you experienced any discrimination on the grounds of your RACE? On the grounds of your GENDER?*

12. *Have you adopted an English name? When did you decide?* [E.g followed blogs before coming to Britain.]*What does it mean? Why did you choose that one?* [Is it easier for non-Chinese speakers to remember or to pronounce? Or you just do not want them addressing you by your real names?] *Does adopting an English name make you feel more British, or feel less Chinese? What advantages do you see of adopting an English name?*

Interview questions in this section focused on the initial experiences of adapting to a new living environment. Such experiences included the difficulties in adaptation and interaction with others. I aimed to discover the difficulties or challenges of living in the UK and in particular the extent to which discrimination played a role in interviewees' adaptation. Interviewees were asked if they had adopted an English name as a coping strategy, as Sliwa and Grandy (2006) suggest using an English name as a tool for cultural adaptation. The use of an English name was also asked about due to a series of researches by Noon (1992 and 1998) which claimed names matter in employment selection.

C – Perceptions of the Chinese

13. *Generally in the UK, how do you think others view the Chinese/Chinese students?*

14. *Why do you think people think of the Chinese in these terms?*

15. *Do you think these impact on the chances of Chinese students gaining employment in the UK?* [may play up to / play down to]

Interview questions in this section aimed to discover the perceptions towards the Chinese and the degree to which such perceptions would impact on the chances of Chinese students gaining employment in the UK. A list of perceptions of the Chinese was prepared after interviewees finished giving their answers to question number 13 openly. That list was as follows:

> Hard working? Passive-receptive learner? Highly competitive with others in cohort, strives to be the 'best'? Combines intellectual capability and 'good' moral behaviour – a good citizen? Responds to teacher direction obediently and adopts both structures and substance of the study according to teacher direction? Does not question accepted norms and ideas in the classroom? Learns within defined disciplinary rules and boundaries and lacks creativity?

This list of perceptions of the Chinese was compiled based on Turner's (2006) study. This list was prepared because a) there are existing theories which can be used as guide points and shall be evaluated; b) in case some interviewees may not know where to start to answer this question, which turned out to be the case for some interviewees.

D – Intention to work in the UK

16. Do you hope to find employment in the UK? Following on from your degree will you be seeking employment in the UK [post-degree work intentions]*? When will you apply for a job?*

17. *What type(s) of job do you hope to gain? Part-time, full-time or intern work? Why?*[E.g. money / CV]

18. *In what industry do you hope to find employment? At what level do you hope to start?*

19. *What, if any, challenges do you think you will face in trying to gain employment in the UK? Do you think discrimination will impact on your intention of working here?*

Interview questions in this section were set to examine the willingness to find employment in the UK by interviewees. If willing, the following questions tried to elicit details of the target employment, including the type of employment, the level of employment and the industry of employment. Finally, perceived challenges and difficulties for gaining employment were asked about, and particularly the extent to which discrimination was perceived as a challenge for interviewees.

3.6.2.2 Second-round interview questions

Questions for the second round of interviews were designed in four sections, including general impression, experiences of living in the UK, perceptions of the Chinese and work in the UK. The second-round interviews concentrated on the changes in the interviewees' impressions of the UK, interactions with group members and interviewees' employment-seeking experiences.

A – General impression

> 1. *After about 6 months in the UK, what are your impressions about the UK now? Have they changed? What influenced these changes?*
>
> 2. *After about 6 months at ***University, what are your current impressions about the university? What are your current impressions of your programme of study?*

Interview questions in this section set out to learn the general impressions of the interviewees. This included their impressions of the UK generally and impressions of the institution and the programme. The focus was on whether there was any change in their impression since the first round of interviews.

B – Experiences of living in the UK

3. *Since we spoke last, how are you finding life in ***?*

4. *Have you experienced any difficulties? If yes, what difficulties?*

5. *Looking back on the taught element of your masters degree:*

- *What did you think of the classroom dynamics and interactions?*

- *What were your experiences of group work?*

- *How well did groups work?*

- *What was the interaction between group members like?*

- *Did you experience any difficulties?*

- *If any difficulties, do you think they were a result of cultural differences between group members?*

   [May connect to the perceptions of Chinese]

6. [If they say nothing on discrimination] *Have you experienced any discrimination on the grounds of your RACE so far? On the grounds of your GENDER?*

7. *How do all the above experiences make you feel about the UK now?*

8. *Do these experiences have any influence on your desire to remain and work in the UK?* [Explain]

Interview questions in this section aimed to discover the interviewees' living experiences in the UK. The experiences included living adaptation, any difficulties encountered in life and in study and the interaction experience with classmates or group members. This section also tried to elicit whether the impression of the UK would impact on the desire of the interviewees to remain or to work in the UK.

C – Perceptions of the Chinese

9. *After at least 5 months in the UK, what is your current view of how others view the Chinese/Chinese students?*

[Hard working? Passive-receptive learner? Highly competitive with others in cohort, strives to be the 'best'? Combines intellectual capability and 'good' moral behaviour - a good citizen? Responds to teacher direction obediently and adopts both structures and substance of the study according to teacher direction? Does not question accepted norms and ideas in the classroom? Learns within defined disciplinary rules and boundaries and lacks creativity?]

10. *Why do you hold this view?*

Interview questions in this section were set to elicit the interviewees' perceptions of how non-Chinese people view Chinese people. The same list of perceptions of the Chinese summarised from the literature was also prepared in this round of interview. The list was provided after interviewees answered question 9 openly. The question and the list were identical to those in the first-round interview, in order to detect any changes in their views.

D – **Work in the UK**

> 11. *Do you hope to find employment in the UK now?*
>
> 12. *Have you applied for employment in the UK?* If yes, *tell me what this have involved?* If not, *why haven't started? When will you apply for a job?*
>
> 13. [If they hope to find employment in the UK]
>
> - *Have you attended any career fair?*
>
> - *Have you been to any company presentations?*
>
> - *Have you searched job information on companies' official websites?*
>
> - *Have you looked up job information on any bbs or blogs?*
>
> - *Have you visited any job information websites?* e.g.
>
> - www.***.ac.uk/careers
>
> - www.prospects.ac.uk
>
> - www.wikijob.co.uk/
>
> - www.efinancialcareers.co.uk/
>
> - http://targetjobs.co.uk
>
> - *Have you contacted the university for the Career Advisory Service?* e.g. to modify your CV
>
>   [Make sure to delve into any of the measures which they have taken to find employment especially in relation to HOW THEY FOUND THE EXPERIENCE etc.]
>
> 14. *Have you felt any sense of discrimination when attempting to find a job?*

Interview questions in this section introduced employment proactivity in the UK. Firstly, the willingness to gain employment in the UK was asked about. If willing, any employment proactivity was asked about; if unwilling, an attempt was made to elicit any reason behind this. This question on the willingness of getting employment in the UK was designed to compare the employment intention in the first round of interviews. When intentions changed, the reasons leading to such change were sought.

Questions on employment proactivity at this stage focused on seeking job information. A list of pre-application stage questions was prepared as a reminder in case interviewees could not identify their employment activity. For example, some interviewees did not recognise the attendance of career fairs as an employment proactivity. The list of pre-application stage questions included whether career fairs had been attended, whether company presentations were attended, whether companies' official websites were

browsed, whether job information Bulletin Board Systems (BBS) or blogs were looked up, whether job information websites were visited and whether they were aware of and used university career services. After the 'whether' questions, what the interviewees had learned from such employment proactivity was also asked. How interviewees found their employment proactivity experience was also elicited. The sense of discrimination when attempting to gain employment in the UK was particularly pointed out by the interviewees in answering the research question on to what extent discrimination served as a barrier to female Chinese students gaining employment in the UK.

3.6.2.3 Third-round interview questions

Questions in the third round of interviews had four sections, including background information, perceptions of Chinese women, employment proactivity in the UK and career plans. This round of interviews aimed to track any changes in their impressions of the UK and their university experiences, and to explore their new experiences after finishing at the university. This included any changes in their general impressions of the UK, any changes in their intentions to work in the UK, the relation between their impressions and their intentions, and job application experiences.

According to the possible current status of the interviewees when this round of interviews was carried out, interviewees were divided into four subgroups. The following figure (Figure 11) was sent to each interviewee, and they were required to tell the researcher the subgroup to which they belonged. This was done before the third-round interviews were conducted to make sure the interviewees would answer the appropriate set of questions.

Figure 11. Four Subgroups in Third Round Interviews.
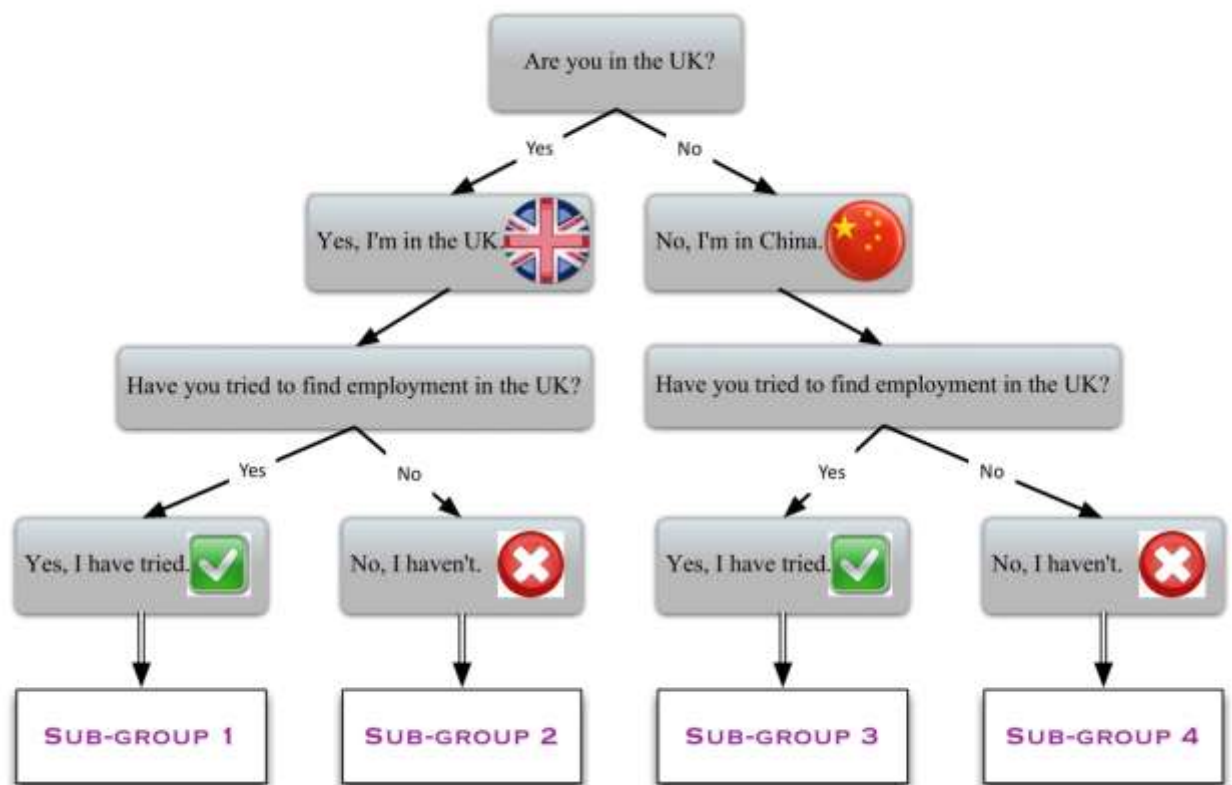
Subgroup 1: Yes tried to find employment in the UK – in the UK at the moment
Subgroup 2: Not tried to find employment in the UK – in the UK at the moment
Subgroup 3: Yes tried to find employment in the UK – in China at the moment
Subgroup 4: Not tried to find employment in the UK – in China at the moment

Subgroup 1: Yes tried – stayed in the UK
Questions in this subgroup aimed to seek the reasons why this subgroup chose to stay in the UK and to find out their strategies for seeking employment.

A – Background Information

1. *What are you currently doing? How have things been since finishing at *** University?*
2. *What are your general impressions of the UK? Are there any changes since the last interview? Have your impressions influenced your desire to stay in the UK?*
3. *What are the circumstances that allowed you to remain in the UK?*
4. *Did the experiences on your Masters at *** influence your decision to remain in the UK?*
5. *What is it like living in London/Oxford as a Chinese woman? Why did you choose this particular area? How does it differ to ***? Is there more/less discrimination? Do you have any fears because you are a Chinese female?*

Interview questions in this section were designed to obtain background information about the interviewees who applied for employment in the UK and were still in the UK, 6 months after finishing their dissertation. The background information included their current employment status, job proactivity in the UK since the second-round interview, any changes in general impression of the UK, what circumstances allowed them to stay in the UK, factors that influenced their decision to remain in the UK and why they all chose a different place instead of where they had their 1-year taught postgraduate course.

B – Perceptions of the Chinese and Women

> 6. *Having been in the UK for more than 12 months, how do you now think others in the UK view the Chinese?*
>
> 7. *Do you think gender discrimination influences the likelihood of Chinese females gaining employment in the UK? Why?*
>
> 8. *What, if any, are the typical characteristics of female Chinese workers in the UK? Do you think they share similar values and attitudes? What are the values and attitudes?*
>
> 9. *How do others label the Chinese?* [If they do] *What does it mean to you to label yourself as a Chinese woman in the UK?*
>
> 10. *To what extent do you think female Chinese workers in the UK have reframed themselves to change other's attitudes toward them? What strategies do you think the female Chinese workers have used in order to reframe themselves?*

Interview questions in this section aimed to find out how interviewees viewed female Chinese workers in the UK. The first two questions (Question 6 & Question 7) tried to seek out views on Chinese ethnicity and the female gender separately, and the later questions (Questions 8, 9 and 10) combined the two elements together to detect the differences, if any. Question 6 was the same question that had been asked in the previous two phases of interviews to detect any changes in the views of the Chinese in the UK. Asking about ethnicity three times while asking for gender only once was because the majority of the literature studying the Chinese in the UK focused on the ethnicity feature rather than the gender feature. Question 7 focused on the gender aspect of how much discrimination impacted on the likelihood of Chinese women getting a job in the UK. After this general question on the role of gender discrimination, a list was prepared to obtain some detailed opinions about possible gender discrimination. This list of questions was generated from Abrams' (1989) work in Berkeley Law School on gender discrimination. The summarised list on gender discrimination is as follows.

> [E.g. be denied with maternity leave; be moved to a 'slow track' with less interesting work or poorer promotion opportunities; are not given enough opportunities; be propositioned; be judged devalued or subordinated; have boundaries between family and workplace; be measured with male-generated standards] (Abrams, 1989)

This list of questions was checked with the interviewees if the interviewees did not raise the terms in the list unprompted. Interviewees were asked whether they thought Chinese women in the UK were affected by the terms in the list, and if so whether gender discrimination or ethnic discrimination was the primary reason for the impact. Since interviewees in this subgroup had experience in employment proactivity in the UK, they had practical experience in attempting to gain employment in the UK. Question 8 tried to combine the elements of gender and ethnicity together and to find out the view towards the combined character (i.e. Chinese females). Questions 8, 9 and 10 were based on social identity theory, where social categories are defined by prototypical characteristics abstracted from the members. Question 8 tried to find out similar values and attitudes in the social group of female Chinese workers, and Question 9 focused on labelling or stereotyping the group. Question 10 was concerned with social identity maintenance strategy, including the likelihood of Chinese females reframing themselves to change others' attitudes towards them, and the identity reframing strategies.

C – Employment strategy

11. Why did you decide to seek employment in the UK?

12. [pre-application stage]*What did your pre-application job searching consist of?*
e.g.

- *Have you attended any career fair?*
- *Have you been to any company presentations?*
- *Have you searched job information on companies' official websites?*
- *Have you looked up job information on any bbs or blogs?*
- *Have you visited any job information websites?* e.g.

    www.***.ac.uk/careers

    www.prospects.ac.uk

    www.wikijob.co.uk/

    www.efinancialcareers.co.uk/

    http://targetjobs.co.uk

- *Have you contacted the university for the Career Advisory Service? e.g. to modify your CV*

    [Make sure to delve into any of the measures which they have taken to find employment especially in relation to HOW THEY FOUND THE EXPERIENCE etc.]

13. [application stage]*What the application process entail? Where did you apply? For what position? To whom did you send your CV to? What was the process like? Did you get shortlisted? Why/why not? Did you receive any feedback?* [If shortlisted] *what were your experiences of the selection process?*

14. *Have you used your English name (or both English and Chinese names) when finding employment in the UK, e.g. in CV?*

15. [post-application stage] *Why do you think you were (not) successful in gaining employment?*

16. *Have you felt any sense of ETHNIC discrimination when attempting to find a job? Have you felt any sense of GENDER discrimination when attempting to find a job? Do you think the degree of ETHNIC discrimination has increased, decreased or remained the same when seeking employment? Do you think the degree of GENDER discrimination has increased, decreased or remained when seeking for employment?*

17. *What do you think about the political discourse/talk about immigration?*

18. *What's your view of the current UK visa system? Do you think the visa system reflects a discriminatory attitude on the part of the British government? To what extent do you regard the visa regulations as a factor that may prevent you from remaining in the UK?* [actual or perceptual]

19. *Do you think male Chinese students would face the same degree of difficulties when seeking employment in the UK? Why?*

20. *Do you think it is easier for Chinese women to find employment from CHINESE employers in the UK? In the UK, do you think Chinese employers discriminate against Chinese employees in work?* [ingroup bias]

21. *Would you encourage current and new Chinese female students to apply for employment in the UK? What, if any, advice would you give them?*

Interview questions in this section were set to find out any job proactivity the interviewees had engaged in after the second phase of interviews. Questions in this section tried to explore employment proactivity in various stages of gaining employment in the UK, namely pre-application stage, application stage and post-application stage. The first question (Question 11) in this section tried to explore reasons for engaging in job proactivity and remaining in the UK. The following several questions (Questions 12-15) were designed to explore the employment proactivity experience in three stages. Question 12 focused on the pre-application stage, with the question repeating what was asked in the second phase of interviews. The pre-application stage was the main stage most interviewees had reached in the second round, while interviewees in this subgroup had reached the application stage or even the post-application stage. Therefore, questions on the application stage and the post-application stage were added to this round of interviews. Question 13 was set to learn about the application experience from the interviewees. It involved job application details such as the organisation applied to, the position applied for, the application channel, the application process, the application result and feedback received, if any. Question 14 was concerned with whether an English name was used during job application in the UK. This question was based on research by Noon (1992) and Hoque and Noon (1998), demonstrating that names matter in job applications. The question here aimed find out whether interviewees perceived using an English name would make their application more advantageous than using their Chinese name, as Noon and Hoque and Noon suggest. Question 15 aimed to elicit the perceived reasons for interviewees being successful – or not – in gaining employment in the UK. Question 16 aimed to elicit both

the ethnic discriminatory and gender discriminatory experiences, if any, when attempting to find employment in the UK. Any change in view on ethnic discrimination and gender discrimination was also asked about to learn the attitude of the interviewees. Questions 17 and 18 were designed to look at the attitudes towards immigration policy in the UK. Question 17 asked interviewees about their views on political discourse on immigration. Question 18 addressed the UK visa system. This question tried to find out how interviewees viewed the UK's visa system and its impact on their employment destination decision. This question also asked whether interviewees viewed the UK visa policy as a discriminatory attitude from the UK Government. Question 19 focused on gender, where Chinese females were compared with Chinese males. This question aimed to see how much gender discrimination was perceived by interviewees and how it influenced employment hunting in the UK. Question 20 was set from the employer's point of view. This question tried to find out the difference between British employers and Chinese employers in terms of discrimination perceived by interviewees. This question was also concerned with whether there was perceived in-group bias i.e. that employers from the Chinese social group in the UK discriminated against candidates from the same social group. Question 21 asked whether interviewees would like to encourage future Chinese students to seek employment in the UK based on their own experience.

D – Career Plans

> *22. What are your career aspirations and hopes in the next five years? Have you considered continued remaining or working in the UK?*
>
> *23. What barriers do you think might prevent the realisation of your career plan?*

Interview questions in this section tried to find out whether the interviewee had considered working in the UK in the future and if so what were the perceived barriers preventing them from realising this career plan. This served to build information on future trends in the interviewees' intention to work in the UK. By asking this set of questions, it was hoped to learn what might be the long-term attractions for Chinese women to stay in the UK and the perceived barriers that prevent them staying.

Subgroup 2: Not tried – stay in the UK

This group of interviews aimed to seek out the reason why this subgroup chose to stay in the UK without attempting to find employment. This included why these students chose to pursue another degree in the UK.

A – Background Information

1. *What are you currently doing? How have things been since finishing at *** University?*
2. *What are your general impressions of the UK? Are there any changes since the last interview? Have your impressions influenced your desire to stay in the UK?*
3. *What are the circumstances that allowed you to remain in the UK?*
4. *Did the experiences on your Masters at *** influence your decision to remain in the UK?*
5. *What is it like living in London/Oxford as a Chinese woman? Why did you choose this particular area? How does it differ to ***? Is there more/less discrimination? Do you have any fears because you are a Chinese female?*

Interview questions in this section were set to learn the background information of the interviewees after finishing their 1-year taught master's study. This section of questions began with a current status check, which was assumed to be simple to answer. This helped interviewees to settle into the interview environment. The second question was a longitudinal question which had been asked in the previous rounds of interview. This longitudinal question was concerned with the general impression of the UK and how much such an impression influenced the desire to remain in the UK. The next question asked about the circumstances that allowed the interviewees to stay in the UK. Question 4 tried to find out any connection between the experience of the 1-year taught postgraduate study in the UK and the decision to stay in the UK after their study. Question 5 concerned the local living environment. This question tried to elicit reasons for choosing a particular area and whether discrimination played a role in the decision.

B – Perceptions of the Chinese and Women

6. *Having been in the UK for more than 12 months, how do you now think others in the UK view the Chinese?*

7. *Do you think gender discrimination influences the likelihood of Chinese females gaining employment in the UK? Why?*
   [E.g. be denied with maternity leave; be moved to a 'slow track' with less interesting work or poorer promotion opportunities; are not given enough opportunities; be propositioned; be judged devalued or subordinated; have boundaries between family and workplace; be measured with male-generated standards]

8. *What, if any, are the typical characteristics of female Chinese workers in the UK? Do you think they share similar values and attitudes? What are the values and attitudes?*

9. *How do others label the Chinese?* [If they do] *What does it mean to you to label yourself as a Chinese woman in the UK?*

10. *To what extent do you think female Chinese workers in the UK have reframed themselves to change other's attitudes toward them? What strategies do you think the female Chinese workers have used in order to reframe themselves?*

Interview questions in this section were the same as in Section B, subgroup one.

C – Employment Strategy

11. *Why did you decide not to seek employment in the UK?*

12. *Why did you decide to continue studying in the UK?*

13. *Did the prospect of discrimination play a role in your decision not to seek employment in the UK? What, if any, discrimination did you think you might experience?*

14. *Do you think the degree of ETHNIC discrimination in living experiences in the UK has increased, decreased or remained? Do you think the degree of GENDER discrimination in living experiences in the UK has increased, decreased or remained?*

15. *What do you think about the political discourse/talk about immigration?*

16. *What's your view of the current UK visa system? Do you think the visa system reflects a discriminatory attitude on the part of the British government? To what extent do you regard the visa regulations as a factor that may prevent you from remaining in the UK?* [actual or perceptual]

17. *Do you think male Chinese students would face the same degree of difficulties when seeking employment in the UK? Why?*

18. *Do you think it is easier for Chinese women to find employment from CHINESE employers in the UK? In the UK, do you think Chinese employers discriminate against Chinese employees in work?* [ingroup bias]

19. *Would you encourage current and new Chinese female students to apply for employment in the UK? What, if any, advice would you give them?*

Interview questions in this section were set primarily to explore reasons and factors that influenced the decision not to seek employment in the UK. The first question (11) directly asked the reasons for not seeking employment in the UK. Question 12 was then concerned with reasons for deciding to stay in the UK. The next question was concerned with one possible factor (discrimination) that may have influenced the decision not to apply for employment in the UK. Question 14 continued the topic of discrimination, but focused on any change of attitude towards ethnic discrimination and gender discrimination in living experiences in the UK. Questions 15 to Question 19 were the same as Questions 17 to Question 21 in subgroup 1.

D – Career Plans

> *20. What are your career aspirations and hopes in the next five years? Have you considered continued remaining or working in the UK?*
>
> *21. What barriers do you think might prevent the realisation of your career plan?*

Interview questions in this section were the same as the questions in Section D in subgroup 1.

Subgroup 3: Yes, tried – went back to China

This group of interviews aimed to find out the reason why this subgroup chose to go back to China after trying unsuccessfully to find employment in the UK. This included any changes in their general impressions of the UK, the job application process, the factors that influenced their final decision, and why they thought they were unsuccessful in finding employment in the UK.

A – Background Information

1. *What are you currently doing? How have things been since finishing at *** University?*
2. *What are your general impressions of the UK? Are there any changes since the last interview? Have your impressions influenced your desire to stay in the UK?*
3. *Why did you decide to leave the UK?*
4. *Did the experiences on your Masters at *** influence your decision to remain in the UK?*

Interview questions in this section were designed to learn the background information of the interviewees after completing their 1-year masters degree. The background information included employment status, experience after submitting the dissertation, any change in general impressions and their influence on their leaving the country, factors that influenced the decision to leave the UK and how much the 1-year experience studying in the UK influenced their decision.

B – Perceptions of the Chinese and Women

5. *Having been in the UK for more than 12 months, how do you now think others in the UK view the Chinese?*

6. *Do you think gender discrimination influences the likelihood of Chinese females gaining employment in the UK? Why?*
   [E.g. be denied with maternity leave; be moved to a 'slow track' with less interesting work or poorer promotion opportunities; are not given enough opportunities; be propositioned; be judged devalued or subordinated; have boundaries between family and workplace; be measured with male-generated standards]

7. *What, if any, are the typical characteristics of female Chinese workers in the UK? Do you think they share similar values and attitudes? What are the values and attitudes?*

8. *How do others label the Chinese?* [If they do] *What does it mean to you to label yourself as a Chinese woman in the UK?*

9. *To what extent do you think female Chinese workers in the UK have reframed themselves to change other's attitudes toward them? What strategies do you think the female Chinese workers have used in order to reframe themselves?*

Interview questions in this section were the same as the questions in Section B of other subgroups. The perceptions of the Chinese and women were be asked for those who engaged in employment proactivity or not, and for those who left or remained in the UK.

C – Employment Strategy

10. Why did you decide to seek employment in the UK?

11. [pre-application stage] *What did your pre-application job searching consist of? e.g.*

- *Have you attended any career fair?*
- *Have you been to any company presentations?*
- *Have you searched job information on companies' official websites?*
- *Have you looked up job information on any bbs or blogs?*
- *Have you visited any job information websites?* e.g.

  www.***.ac.uk/careers

  www.prospects.ac.uk

  www.wikijob.co.uk/

  www.efinancialcareers.co.uk/

  http://targetjobs.co.uk

- *Have you contacted the university for the Career Advisory Service? e.g. to modify your CV*

  [Make sure to delve into any of the measures which they have taken to find employment especially in relation to HOW THEY FOUND THE EXPERIENCE etc.]

12. [application stage] *What the application process entail? Where did you apply? For what position? To whom did you send your CV to? What was the process like? Did you get shortlisted? Why/why not? Did you receive any feedback?* [If shortlisted] *what were your experiences of the selection process?*

13. *Have you used your English name (or both English and Chinese names) when finding employment in the UK, e.g. in CV?*

14. [post-application stage] *Why do you think you were not successful in gaining employment?*

15. *What do you think about the political discourse/talk about immigration?*

16. *Have you felt any sense of ETHNIC discrimination when attempting to find a job? Have you felt any sense of GENDER discrimination when attempting to find a job? Do you think the degree of ETHNIC discrimination has increased, decreased or remained the same when seeking employment? Do you think the degree of GENDER discrimination has increased, decreased or remained when seeking for employment?*

17. *What's your view of the current UK visa system? Do you think the visa system reflects a discriminatory attitude on the part of the British government? To what extent do you regard the visa regulations as a factor that prevents you from remaining in the UK?* [actual or perceptual]

18. *Do you think male Chinese students would face the same degree of difficulties when seeking employment in the UK? Why?*

19. *Do you think it is easier for Chinese women to find employment from CHINESE employers in the UK? In the UK, do you think Chinese employers discriminate against Chinese employees in work?* [ingroup bias]

20. *Would you encourage current and new Chinese female students to apply for employment in the UK? What, if any, advice would you give them?*

Interview questions in this section were the same as the questions in Section C of subgroup 1, as both subgroups engaged in employment proactivity in the UK.

D – Career Plans

> *21. What are your career aspirations and hopes in the next five years? Have you considered working or staying in the UK?*
>
> *22. What barriers do you think might prevent the realisation of your career plan?*

Interview questions in this section were the same as the questions in Section D in the other subgroups, as these questions did not differentiate between subgroups. Both those who engaged in employment proactivity and those who did not try to gain employment in the UK could be asked about career plans.

Subgroup 4: Not tried – went back to China

This group of interviews aimed to find out the reason why this subgroup chose to go back to China without seeking employment in the UK. This included any changes in their general impressions of the UK, any changes in their intentions to work in the UK, and the factors that influenced their final decision.

A – Background Information

1. *What are you currently doing? How have things been since finishing at *** University?*
2. *What are your general impressions of the UK? Are there any changes since the last interview? Have your impressions influenced your desire to stay in the UK?*
3. *Why did you decide to leave the UK?*
4. *Did the experiences on your Masters at *** influence your decision to remain in the UK?*

Interview questions in this section were the same as the questions in Section A in subgroup 3, as both subgroups were in China by the time this round of interviews took place.

B – Perceptions of the Chinese and Women

> 5. *Having been in the UK for more than 12 months, how do you now think others in the UK view the Chinese?*
>
> 6. *Do you think gender discrimination influences the likelihood of Chinese females gaining employment in the UK? Why?*
>   [E.g. be denied with maternity leave; be moved to a 'slow track' with less interesting work or poorer promotion opportunities; are not given enough opportunities; be propositioned; be judged devalued or subordinated; have boundaries between family and workplace; be measured with male-generated standards]
>
> 7. *What, if any, are the typical characteristics of female Chinese workers in the UK? Do you think they share similar values and attitudes? What are the values and attitudes?*
>
> 8. *How do others label the Chinese?* [If they do] *What does it mean to you to label yourself as a Chinese woman in the UK?*
>
> 9. *To what extent do you think female Chinese workers in the UK have reframed themselves to change other's attitudes toward them? What strategies do you think the female Chinese workers have used in order to reframe themselves?*

Interview questions in this section were the same as the questions in Section B of the other subgroups. The perceptions of the Chinese and women could be asked for those who had employment proactivity or not, and for those who left or remained in the UK.

C – Employment Strategy

10. *Why did you decide not to seek employment in the UK?*

11. *Did the prospect of discrimination play a role in your decision not to seek employment in the UK? What, if any, discrimination did you think you might experience?*

12. *Do you think the degree of ETHNIC discrimination in living experiences in the UK has increased, decreased or remained? Do you think the degree of GENDER discrimination in living experiences in the UK has increased, decreased or remained?*

13. *What do you think about the political discourse/talk about immigration?*

14. *What's your view of the current UK visa system? Do you think the visa system reflects a discriminatory attitude on the part of the British government? To what extent do you regard the visa regulations as a factor that prevents you from remaining in the UK?* [actual or perceptual]

15. *Do you think male Chinese students would face the same degree of difficulties when seeking employment in the UK? Why?*

16. *Do you think it is easier for Chinese women to find employment from CHINESE employers in the UK? In the UK, do you think Chinese employers discriminate against Chinese employees in work?* [ingroup bias]

17. *Would you encourage current and new Chinese female students to apply for employment in the UK? What, if any, advice would you give them?*

Interview questions in this section were the same as the questions in Section C of subgroup 2, as both subgroups had no employment proactivity in the UK.

D - Career Plans

> *18. What are your career aspirations and hopes in the next five years? Have you considered working or staying in the UK?*
>
> *19. What barriers do you think might prevent the realisation of your career plan?*

Interview questions in this section were the same as the questions in Section D in the other subgroups, as these questions did not differentiate between subgroups. Both those who had employment proactivity and those who did not try to gain employment in the UK could be asked about career plans.

3.7 Coding and Analysis

After conducting the interviews, I transcribed all 64 interviews verbatim, with attention to details such as pause time and laughter. After verbatim transcription, I had 578 pages of transcripts, with a word count of 254,753. Details on transcript page numbers and transcript word count of each round of interviews are displayed in the below table.

Table 9. Transcript page numbers and word count.

	1-round	2-round	3-round	Total
Number of pages of transcript	187	237	154	**578**
Word count of transcript	77,530	98,118	79,105	**254,753**

Based on these detailed transcriptions and notes made during the interviews, two cycles of coding were manually created. The first cycle was initial coding, where key words and sentences were collected to form basic themes for later data analysis. After theming the data through initial coding, the second cycle of coding was conducted to seek patterns and to compare with the existing theories. This followed not only one axial, but was checked through longitudinally. The theoretical reasons behind the two cycles of coding method and the thematic analysis method will be discussed respectively in the following.

3.7.1 Coding

The term coding has various definitions, a common one being to categorise in relation to data materials (Flick, 2014). For grounded theory studies, coding is defined as "naming segments of data with a label that simultaneously categorizes, summarizes and accounts for each piece of data" (Charmaz, 2006: 43). In qualitative content analysis, coding has been defined as "assigning segments of the material to the categories of the coding frame" systematically (Schreier, 2014: 171). The reason for the abovementioned coding frame, which is a clearly defined structure of categories, is that qualitative content analysis emphasises developing codes more from the theory than from the material collected, compared with other qualitative analytic methods.

According to Flick (2014), coding, as the first step in data analysis, refers to a process of labelling, sorting and categorising data. The purpose for building up a coding system by labelling and comparing data is to develop concepts. "Sensitizing concepts" are usually generated in ethnography and grounded theory research, and "definitive concepts" are much closer to qualitative content analysis (Blumer, 1970: 57). A definitive concept refers to "what is common to a class of objects, by the aid of the clear definition of attributes or fixed benchmarks" (Blumer, 1970: 57), whereas sensitizing concepts offer a general sense of principles and guidelines, with mere suggestion on directions of what to see in empirical studies.

Whereas one can "code every excerpt of the data to only one category" (Flick, 2014: 373) in qualitative content analysis, ideally speaking, the process of coding in ethnography is more open and inclusive. Compared with coding on mutually exclusive categories in qualitative content analysis, ethnography researchers code "anything that might be felt to be cogent … if we have any reasons to think that anything might go under the heading, we will put it in. We do not lose anything" (Becker, 1967: 245).

> "We also code them in multiple categories, under anything that might be felt to be cogent. As a general rule, we want to get back anything that could conceivably bear on a given interest …. It is a search procedure for getting all of the material that is pertinent." (Becker, 1967: 245)

The term coding shares some similar ground with the term sequential analysis. They are both basic strategies when working with texts. However, coding can be done sequentially as well as "hopped over" across the texts, depending on the need.

Hermeneutic interpretations are advised to follow a three-step procedure (Flick, 2014). The first step is open coding, according to Strauss (1987), where word by word or line by line sequential structured coding is applied. The second step is aggregated coding, where concepts and meaning units are bound together. The third step is to seek new data for interpretation, and the need for later data collection may be raised at this stage (also see Soeffner, 2004). This three-step coding method depicted by Flick (2014) has provided a generic rule for coding qualitative data. Yet, these three steps are introduced too briefly, without detailed consideration of the various types of qualitative data. Saldaña (2009) considers the coding procedures in great detail compared to Flick.

Saldaña (2009) in his book *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers* introduces two cycles of coding methods. The first cycle coding methods are classified into seven categories by Saldaña (2009). The seven categories encompass Grammatical Methods, Elemental Methods, Affective Methods, Literary and Language Methods, Exploratory Methods, Procedural Methods and finally Theming the Data. Be aware that these individual methods are not purely isolated from each other; some slightly overlap and can be applied "mixed and matched" (Saldaña, 2009: 51) in a particular study.

The ways of coding vary greatly among different researchers, as Saldaña (2009) states, "coding is not a precise science; it's primarily an interpretive act" (p.4). It is accepted in research if one's choice of words or phrases for coding is different from another. One way of coding, as suggested by Saldaña (2009), is to summarise or to condense the data instead of simply reducing it. How much to summarise and interpret data depends on the academic discipline of the researcher, the ontology and epistemology of the research, theoretical framework and the choice of coding method (Saldaña, 2009).

Accordingly, I finished the first cycle of coding throughout the three rounds of interviews. A sample of first-cycle codes of three interviewees in the first-round interviews can be seen in the following table. I7, I11 and I19 were numbers assigned to the interviewees. The left column is the first cycle codes. The Arabic numbers in the three remaining columns were paragraph numbers for the code on the left column, shown in the transcript of each interviewee.

Table 10. A sample of first cycle codes of three interviewees in the first-round interviews.

	I7	I11	I19
Drivers			
Ranking	9	8	8
Reputation			3, 8
Academic system	4	3	
Course		9	19
College system	8		10
Beautiful scenery	9		10
Easy to apply	9		
– No GRE/GMAT		4	
Friend's recommendation		10	8
Initial impression (favourable)			
Friendly	5, 15	5-7	5-6
Well-educated		5	
Patient		7	
Helpful	6, 14		15
Traditional	8		
– history			
– culture			10
– college system	8		
Peaceful and slow			6
Beautiful scenery		5	5
In order	5		
Polite	6		
– words	6		
Small	12		5
– convenient	12		

Initial impression (unfavourable)			
Modern college	7		
Shop opening hours			24-25
University			
No walls	10		
– mixture of academic and living	10		
Professional atmosphere		15	
Independent thinking		15	
Expectations before coming			
Formal daily wear	13		
Intensive study		16	
Discriminatory culture		17	
High quality of life			20
Strong in academic fields			20
Adapting to local life			
Food	14		29
– fresh	14		
– dairy products	14		
Cooking habits		20	
Got lost	14		26
– no significant signs for location			26
– hilly roads			28
Making friends from other countries		19	
Psychologically prepared			23-24
Difficulties			
Working style	16, 17		
– taking turns in one position	17		
Distribution of commercial facilities	18, 19		

– have to walk long distances	18, 21		24
– not many convenient stores	19		
Language difficulty	22	27	
– academic reading		19, 23-25	
– listening		29, 31-32	
– accent	22	30	
Have to be independent	73		
Fitting in with foreign people		26, 36-37	32
Personality		20-22, 34, 37	
Interaction			
Department staff			15, 36
college staff		18, 38, 41-48	36, 40
– friendly		38	36
– rude and misunderstanding		41-48	
Shop staff	22	38-40	37-38
smiling			37
– accent	22		
Students	24		
Perception			
Clear rules	29		
Simpler lifestyle	30		
Feel nice			42
Experiences led to the intention to stay	31	41-55	46
Racial discrimination	35-36	18, 53-55	48
– shouting at Chinese	36		
– gossip about Chinese		55	
– not polite			48
Feel disappointed			35

– be ignored			34, 49
Inconvenience in life			43

English name			
Time	39	57-58	52
Meaning	41	59	53
Reason	40-41	60-61	53-54
– like the meaning	41	60	
– sound		61	53-54
Easier for non-Chinese speakers	42	69	55
English name first			
Chinese name first	43	66	57-58
Not to hide real name	45-48	65	56
– don't want to hide	46	65	56
– can't hide	46		
– skin, hair and face	46		61
Not feel more British	46		61
Chinese name: Identity	48		59-60
symbol		68	62
not real name		70	62
no meaning			62

Others view the Chinese			
Don't like Chinese people		72	66
Good at mathematics		75	
Hard working	49		70
Passive learner	50	76	71
– silent in class		78	71
– not active in teamwork			77

Less creative	51		73
– famous for plagiarism	51		
– cultural difference	51		74
Try to be the best	52		71
'Chinese society' in class	53		
Follow teachers' directions obediently	54		72
Good citizen			71-72
Better in designing PPT			73-74
Impact on job chances	55	79	77
– play up to			77
Find employment (During Study)			
Time		100	90
Type		89	83
Industry		91	85-86
Level		91	
Purpose		92	87
Find employment (After Degree)			
Time	57	100	96
Type	58-59	90	84
Industry	60-62	93-94, 98-99	91-92
Level	63		93-95
Purpose		95-97	
Challenges			
Personality	65		32
– not active	65		
Language barrier		79, 103	97
Communication	66	103	
Working experience	67		

Academic knowledge	103	97
Culture	103-104	
Discrimination		100-101
Visa		97

Second-cycle coding methods are advanced ways to restructure and re-examine data after coding via first-cycle methods. Reasons for employing second-cycle coding can be various. Morse (1994) regards data analysis as a creative process which requires apt questioning, effective observation, precise recall and a constant search for answers. She describes the process as "conjecture and verification", "correction and modification" and "suggestion and defense" (Morse, 1994: 25). Data in qualitative studies may have to be recoded if more accurate words or appropriate phrases are detected after the first round of coding. Some codes may be merged when found to be similar conceptually. Some codes may be dropped due to infrequency, being "marginal" or "redundant" (Lewins & Silver, 2007: 100) after fully reviewing their utility. It is a process of "piecing together data, of making the invisible obvious, of recognizing the significant from the insignificant, of linking seemingly unrelated facts logically, of fitting categories one with another, and of attributing consequences to antecedents" (Morse, 1994: 25). A coherent blend of data corpus can then be developed.

Saldaña (2009) summarises the second-cycle coding methods as pattern coding, focused coding, axial coding, theoretical coding, elaborative coding and longitudinal coding. *Pattern coding* follows initial coding, which is a first cycle coding method. Pattern codes are "explanatory or inferential codes, ones that identify an emergent theme, configuration, or explanation. They pull together a lot of material into more meaningful and parsimonious units of analysis" (Miles & Huberman, 1994: 69). *Focused coding* also follows initial coding. Focused coding is to search for the most significant initial codes to grow the "most salient categories" in the data corpus and it "requires decisions about which initial codes make the most analytic sense" (Charmaz, 2006: 46-47). *Axial coding* follows initial coding and focused coding. Axial coding is to reassemble data from split or fractured codes strategically. The axial coding method "relates categories to subcategories and specifies the properties and dimensions of a category" (Charmaz, 2006: 60). Such properties and dimensions of a category include conditions, causes and

consequences for a process and those components that let the researcher know about "if, when, how, and why" something occurs (Charmaz, 2006: 62). *Theoretical coding*, also known as selective coding, is often used in grounded theory analysis. After finding the core category of the research which "consists of all the products of analysis condensed into a few words that seem to explain what 'this research is all about'" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998: 146), in theoretical coding, all codes and categories are systematically connected to the core category (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The core category is regarded as a well-built collection of propositions (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). *Elaborative coding* is the "process of analyzing textual data in order to develop theory further" (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003: 104). This has to be done with a previous study in mind. Compared with the initial coding (bottom-up), where coding is generated with no preconceived ideas in mind, the elaborative coding method is a top-down coding with the theoretical constructs from a completed study. The goal of elaborative coding is to "refine theoretical constructs from a previous study, relevant text is selected with those constructs in mind (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003: 104). *Longitudinal coding* is used in studying change processes from qualitative data and is conducted across time periods. Saldaña (2009) introduced this method in the field of life-course studies. The method of longitudinal coding is conceptualised under constructionist epistemology by Holstein and Gubrium (2000). In *Constructing the Life Course*, they state:

> The life course and its constituent parts or stages are not the objective features of experience that they are conventionally taken to be. Instead, the constructionist approach helps us view the life course as a social form that is constructed and used to make sense of experience. … The life course doesn't simply unfold before and around us; rather, we actively organize the flow, pattern, and direction of experience in developmental terms as we navigate the social terrain of our everyday lives (Holstein & Gubrim, 2000: 182).

In the longitudinal qualitative data analysis method, Saldaña (2008) recommends researchers employ a series of matrices or tables for data comparison and interpretation generation on change, if any. Tables, or matrices as called by Saldaña (2008), of this research are generated through longitudinal data. These tables will be discussed, or partially presented due to page layout limits, in the next chapter.

3.7.2 Data analysis

Schreier (2014) summarises the process of qualitative content analysis in eight steps:

Deciding on a research question

Selecting material

Building a coding frame

Segmentation

Trial coding

Evaluating and modifying the coding frame

Main analysis

Presenting and interpreting the findings (Schreier, 2014: 174).

Flick (2014) comments that building a coding frame is central among the above steps.

To analyse qualitative data, a 'thematic networks' framework is suggested by Attride-Stirling (2001). According to Attride-Stirling, three levels of theme can be generated from qualitative data, helping to form a structure for the data analysis. As can be seen from Figure 12, groups of basic themes are first generated, followed by fewer groups of organising themes. Finally, a central global theme (or themes if more than one) is summarised based on groups of organising themes.

Figure 12. Structure of thematic network
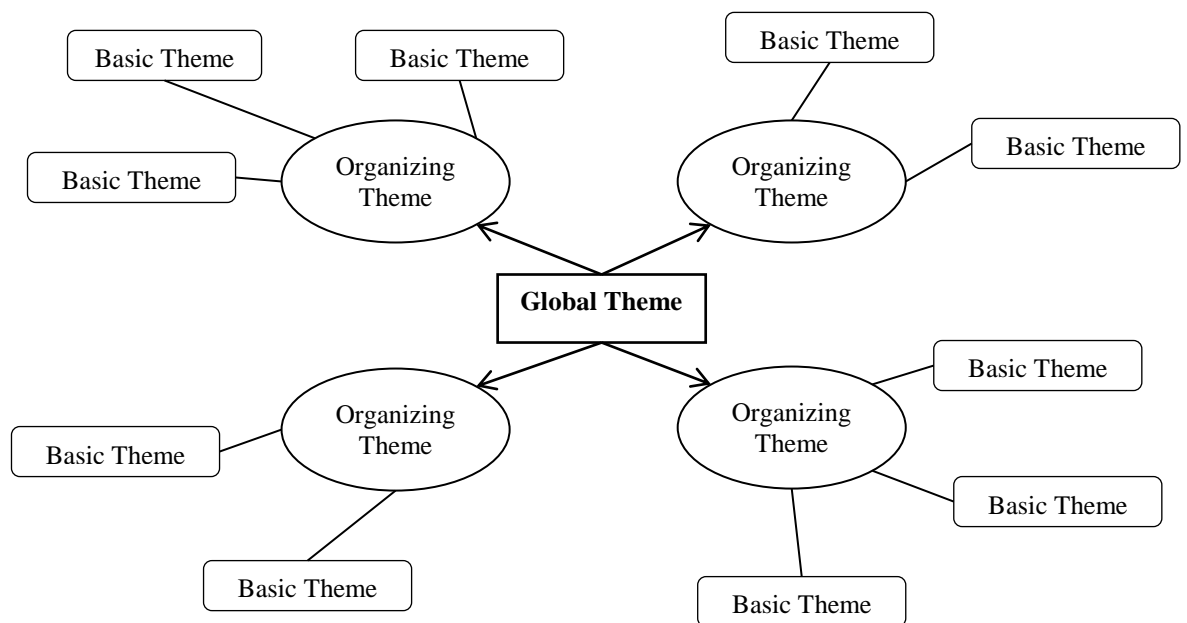
Source: Attride-Stirling (2001: 388)

According to Attride-Stirling (2001), the analytic steps suggested in the thematic network framework consist of the following six steps in three stages. Three analysis stages include reduction or breakdown of text, exploration of text and integration of exploration. The first stage has three steps: coding material, identifying themes and constructing thematic networks. The step of coding material requires researchers to devise a coding framework and dissect text into text segments by using the coding framework. The step of identifying themes involves abstracting themes from the step 1 coded material and then refining themes. The step of constructing thematic networks advises researchers to arrange themes, select basic themes, rearrange into organising themes, deduce into global themes, illustrate as thematic networks and verify and refine the networks. For the stage of exploration of text, researchers are advised to describe and explore the networks, followed by a summarisation of thematic networks. Finally, patterns for data analysis are interpreted and drawn out through integration of the thematic networks based on all the previous steps.

Figure 13. Steps in analyses employing thematic networks

ANALYSIS STAGE A: REDUCTION OR BREAKDOWN OF TEXT

Step 1. Code Material

    (a) Devise a coding framework

    (b) Dissect text into text segments using the coding framework

Step 2. Identify Themes

    (a) Abstract themes from coded text segments

    (b) Refine themes

Step 3. Construct Thematic Networks

    (a) Arrange themes

    (b) Select basic themes

    (c) Rearrange into organizing themes

    (d) Deduce global theme(s)

    (e) Illustrate as thematic network(s)

    (f) Verify and refine the network(s)

ANALYSIS STAGE B: EXPLORATION OF TEXT

Step 4. Describe and Explore Thematic Networks

    (a) Describe the network

    (b) Explore the network

Step 5. Summarise Thematic Networks

ANALYSIS STAGE C: INTEGRATION OF EXPLORATION

Step 6. Interpret Patterns

Source: Attride-Stirling (2001: 391)

Guided by the thematic network analysis framework and the analysis steps from Attride-Stirling (2001), codes generated in this study were put into basic themes and then organizing themes and global themes. The following is an example of the structure of the thematic network of this research.

Figure 14. A sample of structure of thematic network.
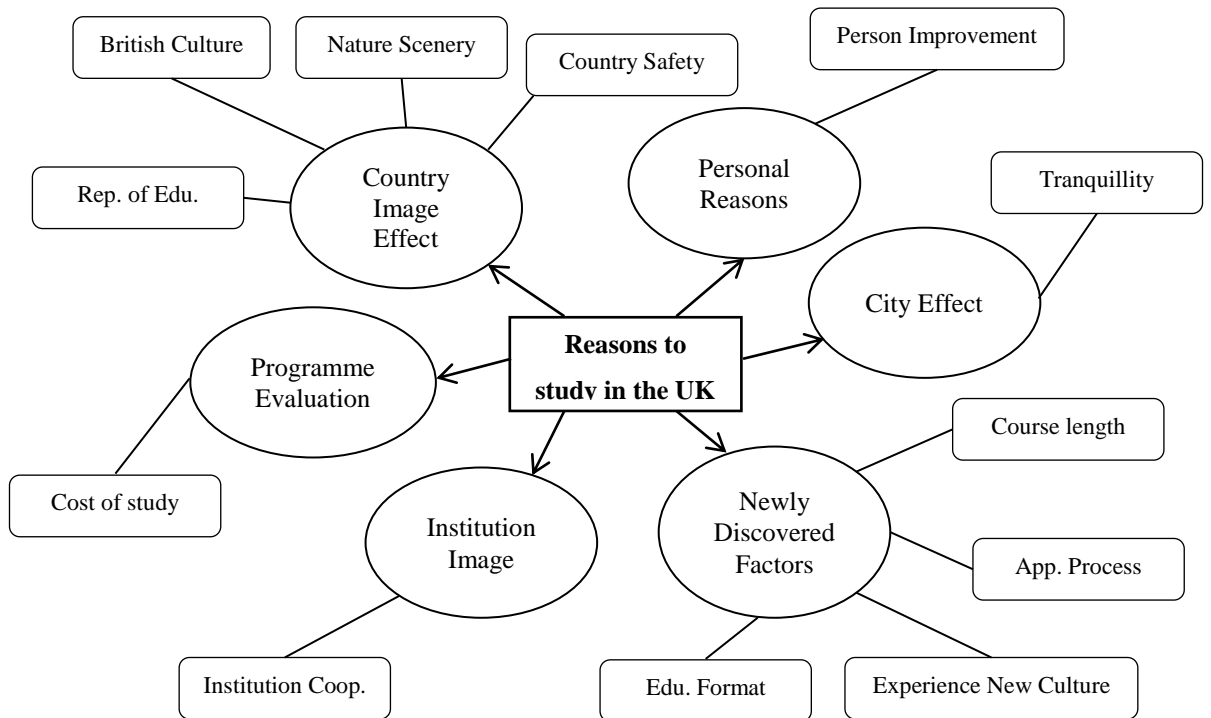
Qualitative longitudinal analysis is time consuming, but it also offers various analytical opportunities to make the time spent worthwhile (Holland *et al*., 2006). In terms of how to organise the data, some scholars advocate the use of data management software such as NVivo to deal with the complex qualitative data. Analysts using such data management software state it helps the reflection of data based on certain assumptions, argue Thomson and Holland (2003). However, the software packages are not ideal for processing large amounts of data, which is often the case in qualitative longitudinal studies (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000).

According to Holland *et al*. (2006), there are three directions for qualitative longitudinal analysis, including

Cross-sectional analysis at each time point
Across time analysis, across cases
Across time analysis, within cases (Holland *et al*., 2006, cited by Carduff, 2013: 46)

Lewis (2007) further adds that this multiple dimensional analysis requires researchers to make full use of the longitudinal data. Carduff (2013) highlights that the research design,

research methods and data analysis are highly dependent on the context of the research for all qualitative studies, while qualitative longitudinal studies allow opportunities for flexibility and innovation to justify the wealth of data.

Flick (2009) offers four points of reference for selecting an analytic method in qualitative research, including "criteria-based comparison of the approaches", "the selection of the method and checking its application", "appropriateness of the method to the issue", and, finally, "fitting the method into the research process" (pp. 282-290). In the newest edition of his book, Flick (2014) suggests two points of reference, consisting of, firstly, qualitative data analysis methods (such as qualitative content analysis and grounded theory coding), which are widely applicable, and, secondly, qualitative data analysis methods for particular forms of data (such as narrative data, conversation analysis, documents and visual data). The former universal analysis methods can be applied to all sorts of data, while the latter narrowed applicable methods may require analysis on multiple levels or a specific analytic treatment. We can take either a widely applicable analytic method to start with and move to a particular data set or take a specific form of data analysis as a starting point and then zoom out for a generalised picture. The key judgement is how extended a data analysis approach we want to apply to suit the data collected.

3.8 Concluding Remarks

After justifying the suitable theoretical perspective and methodology for this research, the appropriate research process was designed and conducted. Based on two cycles of coding and the thematic analysis on the qualitative longitudinal data, findings accordingly will be presented and critical views will discussed in the next two chapters, aggregately and individually. Based on the coding, the major themes of the result sections will be the reasons for choosing the host country and host institution, general impression of the UK, academic adaptation, sociocultural adjustment, employment proactivity, and employment intention.

Chapter Four: Aggregate Findings and Analysis

The findings and analysis of the longitudinal interviews conducted for this study will be presented in the following chapters. This chapter focuses on an analysis of the research outcomes from an aggregate perspective, while Chapter Six concentrates on individual representative cases. The findings in Chapter Five will be discussed according to global themes based on the data obtained from the interviews.

This study aims to discover the employment intentions of female Chinese international students in the UK, and to detect any change in intention over time and the contexts in which these changes occurred. The global themes obtained from the body of data include the students' reasons for choosing to study in the UK, and particularly the chosen institution and the region; their general impressions of the UK; their academic adaptation; their sociocultural adjustment; their job proactivity; and their perceptions of stereotyping in relation to Chinese people and its impact on their employment prospects in the UK. All themes are discussed using a longitudinal approach, except for the theme concerning reasons for coming to the UK, due to the fact that their decision to study in the UK was made before interviews were conducted.

4.1 Motivation for international education

This section sets out to explore the factors that influenced the participants' choice of destination when seeking HE overseas. In particular, it will shed light on what they expected to experience in the UK, which may influence their impression of the UK later.

The theoretical framework and interview questions for this theme are based mainly on an influential model, the Push-Pull model. It considers factors which influence the decision of international students to study overseas. A detailed discussion on this model is located in the section on motivations for internationalisation in Chapter Two.
The results of this study provide rich evidence for the Pull side of motivation; surprisingly, none of the respondent has mentioned the Push side in the Push-Pull model.

Reasons for choosing the destination country and the institution for Chinese students will be discussed respectively to enrich the level of perspective in viewing this theme.

4.1.1 Country perspective

Factors that influence students' decision to study in the UK are summarised and shown in the following table in descending order of times mentioned by interviewees.

Table 11. Reasons to study in the UK (country focused) summarised by this research.

⟶ Length of Course
⟶ Easy Application Process
⟶ Experiencing a New Culture
⟶ British Culture
⟶ Reputation of Education System
⟶ Educational System
⟶ Personal Improvements
⟶ Cost for Study (Country level)
⟶ Institutional Cooperation
⟶ Beautiful Scenery and Tranquillity
⟶ Country Safety

These factors were elicited from the interviews carried out in this research, using a grounded theory approach. The terms in this table are the remaining codes after the second cycle coding method, following Saldaña (2009).

Most of the factors drawn from this research fit into one or more elements which are reviewed from literature listed in Chapter 2. The programme evaluation category was not found in the factors on the destination country perspective but on the destination institution choice. Factors beyond the existing literature were discovered, while new categories were also generated in this research.

Factors that attracted interviewees to study in the UK were varied. The first reason lay in the time efficiency in terms of the **length of course**. Specifically, the time taken for finishing a taught postgraduate degree in the UK was the primary reason given by interviewees. When asked what attracted the participants to study in the UK, their immediate answers included:

> First because the UK postgraduate is 1 year… the most important thing is the study here is just 1 year. It's very fast for me to get a degree. (WYQ)

> The short period. The postgraduate only costs [lasts] one year. The postgraduate degree in China costs [lasts] three years. (ZYY)

> I think the most important thing attracting me is the 1 year. It's the short period of the master's study. It's the time. (JY)

As can be seen from the above quotations, respondents were primarily attracted by the 1-year length of the taught postgraduate study in the UK. Interviewees ZYY, CQR and HYY compared the length of master's study between the UK and China. A master's degree in China takes 2 to 3 years to finish, depending on the policy of each university. Interviewee WYQ also compared the length of postgraduate study in the US with the UK. She said she preferred the UK to the US as the latter requires more than 1 year in postgraduate studies.

In addition, the **easier application process** for master's programmes in the UK was frequently mentioned by the interviewees. Compared with the master's programmes in China, no entrance exam and interview are required in the UK. In terms of why the application process is a factor, one interviewee commented,

> At that time, I had no time to prepare for the entrance examination to the postgraduate study in China and I didn't have time to prepare for GRE or GMAT, so I took IELTS and I applied for universities in the UK. (LXD)

This is an issue of the time that is consumed in the application process. When applying for a postgraduate programme in China, applicants must undertake a National Postgraduate Entrance Examination, which is held once per year across the country. This National Postgraduate Entrance Examination, a written exam, has four sub-exams, including a politics exam, a foreign language exam, one exam on the fundamentals of

the subject and one exam on the subject at an advanced level. The politics exam and the exam on fundamentals of the subject are standardised nationwide so that applicants from different regions of China use the same exam papers. If this national examination is missed or the prerequisite scores for the target university are not met, applicants need to wait for a year for the next trial. After reaching the score set by the target HE institution, applicants are then eligible for the next stage of application. The second stage of the application is assessment set by individual HE institutions. This assessment usually consists of a written exam on the specific subject of study one applies for and a panel interview with the board of examiners in the target institution.

This two-stage postgraduate application not only takes a long time to prepare for but also requires a great amount of effort. One interviewee was concerned about the effort needed for the entrance examination:

> It is too hard to take the Postgraduate Entrance Examination in China. It is easier for the entrance [here]. (ZYY)

This participant stated one factor that encouraged her to leave China to pursue a master's degree, this was the difference in difficulty between the application process in China and the process in the UK.

Compared with the master's programmes in the US, no GRE or GMAT is required for the postgraduate programmes in the institution where interviewees undertook their postgraduate courses.

> Maybe it's don't [it doesn't] need the GRE or GMAT. (CL)

> Well, honestly speaking, the reason why I would like to study in the UK but not other countries like US or Australia is because US needs TOEFL and GRE, which are more difficult to do. (SB)

Interviewee SB compared the application requirements in popular Western countries. It can be speculated that having the requirement for GRE or GMAT has pushed many potential applicants out of the US market for overseas study.

From the above quotation, an interesting point to note is that she perceived the language test TOEFL in the US to be harder in terms of difficulty compared with the IELTS in

the UK. As can be found from most British university websites, universities accept language ability approval by either an IELTS score or its equivalent score in TOEFL. For example, the English-language requirement for Oxford University admission is 7.0 in IELTS Academic and 600 in TOEFL (paper-based) and 100 in TOEFL iBT (internet-based) (Oxford University, 2015). Universities such as Oxford accept more than one type of TOEFL certificate and state that the TOEFL score requirement is equivalent to IELTS. This statement indicates an equal standard between TOEFL and IELTS. However, interviewee SB apparently does not hold the same belief and this directly led to her decision to give up the US as a destination country for overseas study.

If the UK would like to maintain or increase its market share in internationalisation of HE, the interviewees' comments clearly suggest not setting any extra examinations like the GRE test in the US and the Postgraduate Entrance Examination in China. These examinations were perceived to require too much time and effort and had pushed the participants away from the US and the Chinese education markets. Chinese students like the interviewees who are concerned about the requirement of taking the entrance test(s) are less likely to go to a US university. That is not to say that entrance exams such as GRE push all Chinese students away from the US education market, as the US is still the largest HE education market for Chinese international students (OECD, 2014). The decision to choose a study destination is not guided by one single reason but is complex. This is one reason for conducting this study.

Another popular reason is **experiencing** a new culture. First, interviewees expressed their incentive to experience a new culture in a more general sense. They stated,

> To experience more, to know more about outside China. (GS)
>
> It's a totally new environment. Everything's new here. Just interesting. (MY)
>
> I think I just [want] to change or adapt myself to a different environment or culture. (JY)

Here, we can see that "to experience" a new culture was more important than the location and the content of the culture, and they did not focus on anything specific in British culture that attracted them. The following interviewee made the point more clearly that she did not care much about the location for her study as long as it was abroad:

> For the one reason, just to experience study aboard [abroad], no matter if it's in UK, America, or some other place. Just to experience it. (CN)

Ways of experiencing a new culture, claimed by interviewee CN, include meeting new people and travelling around. She explained,

> To enjoy the local culture, meet new people, to talk with them, to study a very new environment I've never met [seen] before, and then I got the chance to travel around. Just like this. (CN)

Secondly, while it seemed that most interviewees who wanted to experience a new culture would like to go to anywhere outside China, several participants focused on British culture. For example, one interviewee pointed out she was attracted by the sense of British tradition. She said,

> I like the traditional atmosphere here. I want to experience. (SQR)

A detailed discussion on the culture in the UK will be presented later as this section focuses on experiencing a new culture in general rather than in the UK in particular. Additionally, one interviewee (CQR) spoke of the geographical advantage of the UK, which is near the European continent. This geographical advantage expanded the realm and the cultures of the realm that she could experience. In comparison, there are fewer countries in the continent of Australia or America. Britain's culture retains a pull factor that attracts participants to choose this country as their overseas study destination.

According to Goldsmith and Shawcross's (1985) categorisation, students from economically rich countries are motivated by cultural concerns and students from less wealthy countries are motivated by academic concerns. Based on this categorisation, Chinese students may be put in the middle, as they are largely motivated by both cultural and academic concerns.

Interviewees mentioned the attractiveness of the **culture** in the UK. One representative interviewee credited the cultural element as the primary drive to come to the UK. She claimed,

Since I'm very interested in British culture and British history, that's why I came here to have my master's degree. (WJ)

She defined British culture as "anything related to Britain" (WJ). This expression may reflect a strong emotion connected to the general definition of a culture rather than a specific perspective of culture. Some other interviewees mentioned the term "culture" from a specific perspective.

The traditional perspective in British culture was discussed by participants. For example, Interviewee SQR liked the "traditional atmosphere" in the UK. The sense of being conservative was valued by interviewee WYQ. She said,

For me, I am a conservative person, and the UK culture is more suitable for me. The America people are more open. So I think that's the reason why I came here. (WYQ)

This interviewee spoke of both her understanding of British culture and the primary values of her own character. She compared the UK to the US regarding the degree of conservativeness. Some other interviewees also viewed the UK as a conservative country; some of them viewed this conservativeness as a positive feature, while others linked the conservativeness to being "boring". This will be discussed in detail in the sociocultural adaptation section.

Similar to interviewee WJ, interviewee CQR was also an admirer of British history. She loved the fact that "English is a long historic country" (CQR). Castles are a specific element of British culture that enticed her to the country. However, unfavourable elements of British culture were also pointed out by her unprompted during the interview. She articulated,

But not the food – the food here is very rubbish. (CQR)

Clearly this interviewee was not fond of British food, but this had not altered her decision to come to the UK. She was the only interviewee who mentioned an unfavourable aspect of the culture in the UK.

Notably, two interviewees were not concerned with British culture when making their decision. One interviewee claimed the cultural element was "not very important" (ZHT)

but that the MSc programme of only 1 year was very important to her. In the case of interviewee WY, she perceived all cultures to be the same. In her mind, British culture was not in a more advantageous position than any other culture; she said she did not prefer culture from one country over another. Instead, she focused on where high quality, low-cost education could be found in the world education market. Under this focus, her belief in the quality of education in the UK and less financial costs due to the short length of the course made her choose Britain as the destination country for her postgraduate study.

In terms of the source of knowledge of Britain's culture, most participants did not mention this, aside from one. Interviewee HZE unprompted stated that she learned about British culture from television, films and advertisements. Although this may not be the case for other international students, government officials who wish to increase the UK's market share in the international education competition may promote British culture through TV shows and films. British HE institutions who are interested in advertising themselves should also take a note of this.

The **reputation** of the British education system was also regarded as a main driver for Chinese students to study in the UK. Most interviewees tended to believe in the quality of education in the UK. One interviewee regarded education in the UK as "the most advanced" (WT). Apart from this extreme praise for the quality of the British education system, others held a much more rational view. For example, one interviewee stated,

> I chose UK for my study destination because their education system is well-developed. (HY)

This interviewee further explained how she could benefit from the educational system in the UK. Through education in the UK she perceived her general competency would be improved and her career prospects would be enhanced.

The **educational system,** particularly the education format, in the UK is appreciated by Chinese students, whereas in China there are no seminars involved in its education. Interviewee WQQ interpreted her understanding of the education system as equalling the education format, which combines lectures and seminars. She explained that her reason for liking lectures and seminars in the UK was that she was granted the

opportunity to talk with other people and to do group work together. Here, a link was created between the education system the education format. This interviewee saw the education format in the UK as a contributor to the high quality of education in the UK.

According to Cubillo *et al.* (2006), **personal improvements** include enhancing career prospects, future job prospects, future earnings potential, higher status, experiencing a different culture, making international contacts and improving language skills. Factors identified in this research include living in a different culture, making international friends and practising English, which also echoes the argument by Bourke (2000), who has proposed the factors of living in a different culture, making international contacts, meeting new people and improving language skills for non-English speakers choosing to study in English-speaking countries or vice versa.

The perception that studying in the UK would help with English language practice attracted interviewee WT to study in the UK.

> I think here I can learn different cultures and different thinking patterns, which I think is very important for my future career and for my general competency. (HY)

The above interviewee was concerned with the benefits to her career and general competency by studying in the UK.

In a previous section on the factor of experiencing a new culture, personal improvements such as making new friends were also discussed. Another link between two of the factors that influence the destination for international education is that the factor of experiencing a new culture or a new environment may lead to a consequence of personal improvement in English-language ability, network expansion and career prospects.

The **cost of study** in different countries was raised by three interviewees. Interviewees compared the tuition fees between the UK and other popular countries for international education such as the US and Australia. One interviewee commented,

> Compared with the tuition fee in USA, the tuition fee in UK is a little bit cheap. I mean not too cheap but a little bit. That's also my reason. (SL)

Tuition fee was not her primary concern but it did add weight to the dilemma of choosing the UK rather than the USA as the destination country for study. Another interviewee stated her concern about tuition fees was owing to the economic condition of her family. She said,

> I guess you know the tuition fee is not so high compared with America and Australia. This is a consideration of my family's economic condition and situation, so I chose UK to study. (GS)

In Cubillo *et al.*'s (2006) model, cost of living is marked as a factor within the category of city effect. However, their model does not include the tuition fee as a factor that influences international students' decision on destination country choice. In Cubillo *et al.*'s (2006) model, the factor on cost and finance comes under the programme evaluation category. From what the interviewees assert in this research, tuition fee should be regarded as a factor in the country perspective. The interviewees have compared the cost of study between different countries rather than between different programmes. That is to say, the tuition fee can be credited as a factor at the country level rather than the institution or programme level.

In order to save money, Interviewee WY sees the short length of postgraduate course as a way. She said,

> It only takes you 1 year to study here … Maybe I can save some money. If I spend 2 years in America or other countries, I will spend more money on my study. (WY)

The words of this interviewee indicate a link between the length of course and the cost for study. These two factors are connected in a causal relationship. She suggests the 1-year length of the taught postgraduate course results in a lower tuition fee compared with a 2-year course. This is another link between two of the factors that influence the country decision for international education.

Institutional relationships play a role in deciding the destination for international education. To be specific, **institutional cooperation** between universities in China and universities in the UK offers opportunities to gain general knowledge about the target

HE institution or undertaking an exchange programme. Two of the interviewees have experienced such a situation. One interviewee said,

> The college has a relationship with universities [here], so that's why I come here. (HD)

The institutional cooperation between her previous university in China and the one in the UK provided her with fundamental knowledge of what the UK is like and what the UK educational system is like. The other interviewee (CZ) came to the UK due to a joint postgraduate project between the two HE institutions. This joint educational programme on one hand improved her career prospects by gaining quality academic knowledge from the UK university; on the other hand, it limited her stay in the UK after she finished her study in the there as she had to continue her other half of the study in China.

Beautiful scenery and tranquillity also attracts Chinese students to come to the UK, but not to a notable extent. Few interviewees mentioned this point, only one the beautiful scenery (WQQ) and one the tranquillity (CY), briefly. The beautiful scenery and tranquillity were frequently mentioned later when answering the question on general impressions of the UK.

The UK was considered a **safer** country than the USA, which one interviewee claimed attracted her to choose the UK for her postgraduate study location. She pointed out that safety was a concern for her and of her parents:

> My parents worried about American university, so that is a reason. (HD)

From this quotation, she seemed to indicate that the safety level in university in the US was lower than in the UK. This quotation may also indicate the influence that family may have on a daughter in the Chinese culture. The impact of the family on female Chinese students was not frequently mentioned as a factor that influenced the interviewees to come to the UK but was frequently raised as a factor that influenced their decision of going back to China afterwards.

4.1.2 Institutional perspective

Based on the codes from the interviews, seven factors have been identified on overseas study destinations from an institutional perspective.

Table 12. Reasons to study in a British university (institution-focused) summarised by this research.

Ranking of the Institution
Reputation of the Institution
Culture of the Institution
Cost for Study (Institutional-level)
Programme Specialisation
Other People's Influence
City Environment

When it comes to the reasons why interviewees chose a particular university, the ranking and the traditional culture are the two main selling points of *** University. First, the **ranking of the institution** was the most frequently mentioned by participants. For example, when asked why she had chosen the particular institution for study, one interviewee said, "The ranking is in the top 10. I think the ranking is the most important factor" (CY). For rankings, most interviewees considered the ranking of the university in general, while some interviewees were more concerned about the ranking of the subject of study. A typical answer sounds like the following:

> Honestly, I have applied for five universities, but *** University was always my top choice. The first is because its ranking is very high. (SB)

In terms of the region where ranking lists are based, interviewees tended to consider the UK HE institution ranking lists rather than World University Rankings; they concentrated on the ranking of an institution among British universities. When asked why they had chosen the particular institution for study, one interviewee answered,

> The rank. In 2010, *** was about 6 to 8 in UK. This is quite a big rank for me. (GS)

Another interviewee also cared a great deal about the ranking in the UK. She articulated,

> To speak the truth, I choose *** University, first of all, because of its ranking. According to the research, I've found out *** ranks perhaps six in UK. (HY)

Only one interviewee mentioned the specific ranking list that she referred to, called "the Times Good University Ranking List" (ZHT).

Most interviewees admitted they were attracted by the high ranking of their chosen university compared with the ones with lower ranking. One interviewee filtered the universities by their rankings from top to bottom. She said, "I can't go to Oxford and Cambridge, so I just go here" (HD).

An interviewee who also came to the particular institution for its ranking, added an additional factor to the ranking. She filtered universities by their ranking and focused on the top ten institutions. This interviewee then compared the ease of receiving an offer from the top ten ranking universities. She said,

> Compared with other colleges [universities] that are top ten in the UK, it's fairly easy to apply. (HYH).

Only one interviewee pointed out that she did not consider the ranking of the institution at all; compared with other institution options, the ranking of the institutions was not a concern for her. Instead she paid more attention to the tradition of the institution and the level of difference in local culture. She said,

> To be honest, I chose several universities when I made my applications such as LSE and Manchester, and I received several offers. But I think the reason I chose *** is the old history, the tradition of this university. You know, I just want to experience a different culture during my study, so I don't think the ranking or something else is important. So I didn't consider much about the rankings. (JY)

The level of cultural difference was measured by the difference between the local culture and the original culture she came from. Here she combined the factors of the tradition of the institution with the level of cultural difference.

The **reputation of the institution** was frequently considered by interviewees when choosing a particular institution for their postgraduate study. Some interviewees were concerned with the general reputation of the institution, without focusing on a specific

country. For example, when asked why one interviewee chose the particular institution, she answered, "The important reason is high reputation" (HD), when she had other choices such as City University, Manchester University and Exeter University. One interviewee combined concern with the reputation globally as well as the ranking in the UK. She said,

> Its reputation around the world and its rank is almost top ten in the UK as far I'm concerned. (WY)

From this quotation, she seemed to mix up the concept of reputation with the concept of ranking. She was not the only one to mix reputation and the ranking together, as another interviewee answered: "Because of the reputation in UK and the rank" (CQR) when asked the reasons for choosing her institution.

While some interviewees were concerned with the institutional reputation in a more general sense, one interviewee paid attention to the reputation among the British people.

> ZYY: It is not so famous in China, but I think the local reputation is more important.
>
> Interviewer: Why were you concerned about the local reputation?
>
> ZYY: Local people know the best.

The above quotation indicates the importance of reputation among the people in a location. This interviewee was not the only one concerned about local people's opinion. Another interviewee also highly regarded local people's opinion. She said,

> Its fame in UK people's heart is also very high. It's got a fantastic reputation among the UK people. And also I've heard from one of my friends that *** is like another Cambridge in the UK people's eyes. (SB)

Here, she seemed to link the reputation of an institution to its ranking. She first praised the high reputation of the institution and then compared the institution with Cambridge University. She was not the only one who connected the reputation of the institution with its ranking. Another interviewee regarded her university as a "very prestigious" institution. Her understanding of "very prestigious" was "It's very famous, very old, and ranked the 3rd in the UK" (CZ).

The reasons for caring about the reputation of an institution when making decisions was raised by an interviewee. She claimed the reason was due to applicants having insufficient information on British HE institutions, thus external information such as the general reputation was easy to access and to start with. She said,

> Actually, before I applied for any university, the agent recommended some universities to me. Actually I didn't know much about each university. Like most Chinese people, we only know the most prestigious, like Oxford and Cambridge, LSE. (LXD)

She pointed out that most Chinese people only know the top HE institutions in the UK and she did not know much about other institutions. It cannot be generalised that Chinese people do not know much about British universities, although feedback from another interviewee seemed to back up the point that Chinese people do not know much about British institutions:

> Even though it's not very famous in China, but I do believe the trustworthiness of the ranking. I found that *** enjoys a very good reputation in UK and even in EU. (HY)

Interviewee LXD applied for the UK universities through an agent rather than doing it by herself, which may have been due to her insufficient knowledge of British universities. Although she later mentioned the reason that she used an agent for the university application was that she did not have enough time to do the application, we cannot deny the possible impact caused by her insufficient knowledge of the UK universities.

In terms of the **culture of the institution**, the **tradition of the university** was frequently mentioned. Specifically, their interests in the Harry Potter story and the college system were frequently raised. For example, when asked why she had chosen the particular institution, one interviewee said,

> I am a big fan of Harry Potter. (FF)

She directly expressed her fondness for the Harry Potter story and the corresponding elements in the local culture. Similarly, another interviewee also stated, "I love the film of Harry Potter. I think it's similar. So I chose it" (ZHT).

This has echoed Shiner and Modood's (1992) argument that the Chinese are more likely to study in a traditional university, as one interviewee stated,

> The first reason is that I just want to go to a very traditional British university, and *** is. (SL)

Similarly, another interviewee was also attracted by the tradition of the institution, saying,

> Because I heard it's a very traditional university. It has a long history. (SQR)

This quotation demonstrates the factor of the tradition of the university and another factor of the history of the institution. **History of the institution** was mentioned by interviewees. One interviewee claimed her reason for choosing *** University was because she thought "it's the first oldest British university" (MY). Although her statement is not true, it reflects her passion for the history of the institution when choosing a location to study. A more detailed understanding of the tradition of the institution is explained by an interviewee as the environment of the university: She commented that the environment of the university includes:

> Natural environment and cultural environment and academic environment. Some universities only have several small buildings and are not that old. I don't like universities like that. (JY)

She interprets the tradition of the university from the perspective of the environment.

Aside from history, another aspect of being traditional is the proportion of native students in the total student population. The more native students there are, the more traditional a university appears to be. One interviewee viewed the tradition of the university from the background of the students' families. She said,

> And another reason is … many students here in ***, I mean the natives, they are from some very traditional families. Maybe all their family members are Christian. (SL)

The concern with the background of students' families was raised in this quotation. This interviewee was not the only one who was influenced by the family background of the

students. Another interviewee was influenced by the social class of the students' families. She said the social class in the destination institution suited her:

> They said the people in *** usually have the very high social classes in the whole of UK society. So I think it's perfect for me to choose it. (HZE)

She commented that most students in the destination university were in the "medium to high social class" (HZE). The source of such information was her friends who had studied in the same institution.

One specific aspect of the culture of the institution is the collegiate system. Many interviewees mentioned the collegiate system had attracted them to choose the institution for their overseas studies. One interviewee stated,

> I think the most precious treasure of *** is the college system. That's also one of the reasons why I choose ***. (SL)

As to why the college system was such a concern, one interviewee provided her reason as:

> Because it's unique and I can really experience the traditions of this university. (SL)

In terms of how the college system was regarded as unique, one interviewee gave her answer as:

> Different colleges have different cultures. It's not like [just] an accommodation. They've got their own culture here. So that's what makes *** different. (MY)

In terms of what specific culture of the college system was attractive, one interviewee asserted,

> Quite artistic I have to say. When they welcomed the new freshers, they painted many pictures with the college's logo on it. They are really artistic guys here. (MY)

This is her understanding of her college's culture. She said members of her college felt proud of being a member as the culture in her college was quite "artistic". Each college member seemed to be an artist.

According to Bourke (2000), **experiencing a different culture** is a lure that attracts international students. For interviewee MY, she liked the college system, which brought new culture for her to experience. The experience of the college system was different from other institutions for her. She said,

> Like Harry Potter. It's quite interesting to live with people who have different majors together. People with different backgrounds are always very interesting, not only business people are cool. (MY)

Three interviewees mentioned that they had received offers from more than one British university, and among those offers they chose *** University in particular. Common reasons for interviewees choosing *** University were the ranking and the educational reputation, although interviewee ZYY also stated that *** is "village-like". One interviewee (ZYY) had received an offer from Manchester University but chose *** to study. She claimed,

> I received the Manchester University offer also. I think it is maybe better to go to Manchester because it is a large city and more chance [to work], but I think *** is better than Manchester, not because of the chance but because of the university. (ZYY)

This quotation has also shown the opportunity for employment is not as weighted as the opportunity for experiencing a new culture. She added that,

> ZYY: I just think here is better than Manchester. Manchester University has a lot of Chinese people. And I don't think it's a good chance for me to really practice English and …
>
> Interviewer: To adapt to local life?
>
> ZYY: Yes.

She clearly stated the importance to her of having the opportunity to practise the English language and the importance of being in contact with local people to experience local culture rather than socialising with the Chinese. She later added her perception that there are more White people in the North East of England than in Manchester. This may

indicate the importance of the destination city being culturally authentic. Keeping the local culture authentic is recommended for countries who are interested in attracting more international students. The attitude of not liking to see so many Chinese students in a UK HE institution was expressed again by interviewees in later questions.

Among those who had been drawn by the culture to study in a UK HE institution, some interviewees spoke of the culture as a whole rather than specific elements of culture such as tradition. After one interviewee said she was attracted by the culture when deciding which university to choose, I further explored her answer by asking:

> Interviewer: What kind of culture? Food?
> SQR: [laughed]. To be honest, I really don't know… I think it's typical. In my concept, it's a typical represent to [representation of] the British culture… The way people live and the way people there think.

She gave no particular aspect of culture but a general concept of culture. She expressed her understanding of culture as "the way people living [live] and the way people there thinking [think]" (SQR). She also expanded the realm of culture from the institutional level to a country level.

Some interviewees did not see the connection between the local culture and their decision to choose a UK HE institution. One interviewee applied for two universities in the North East of England, and I was aware of this location choice. I wondered whether the location choice was something to do with the local culture, and I was told the choice of the North East of England was a "coincidence" (WYQ) rather than intentional.

One interviewee provided a reason why she did not consider the local culture as a factor that encouraged her to come to the UK university. When asked whether she was attracted by the local culture when choosing her institution, she answered,

> No, I haven't thought that much before I came, because I really don't know what would *** [be] like. (GS)

This quotation indicates a reason for not considering the local culture is not being familiar with the local culture. During this interview, I had already been informed by many interviewees that they went to the institution for a taste of the Harry Potter culture.

I was interested to know whether this interviewee was also aware of the Harry Potter connection. She said,

> Yes, I just heard some [information on Harry Potter] from website about ***, but this is not really first-hand experience. (GS)

From this quotation, we may say the influence of Harry Potter did not always affect international students' decisions. This interviewee seemed to be less influenced by second-hand information than many others.

Programme evaluations have also influenced the decision on international education destinations, including the cost for study and programme specialisation. One interviewee brought up the factor of **cost for study**. Interviewee WYQ had two university offers in hand to choose from before she came to the UK. The programme in the other university required 2 years of study for the same degree. To reduce the expenses she chose the institution whose programme took less time to complete. She said,

> *** University is not the only university that gave me an offer. I also received an offer from N** University, but the Translation Study in N** is 2 years. I can't afford the expensive spending. (WYQ)

In terms of **programme specialisation**, four interviewees discussed the programme of study. One interviewee perceived the "MSc" degree to be "very good" (ZHT) for her, particularly as this very good MSc programme only took a year. Another interviewee chose *** University because of the offer of a Finance programme, whilst other institutions made offers of non-Finance programmes. She said,

> *** is a university that gave me the offer of majoring in Finance. Other universities just provide me opportunities to study Management or something [else]. (FF)

She preferred the specialisation in the Finance-related course, thus she took up the offer of a place at *** University. Similar to her, another interviewee also chose the institution for its area of study. She said,

> Actually I applied for five universities, and I was only admitted by two. Another is Loughborough, but they only accepted me in their Management programme or Marketing and Management. I don't like that, I want to study

something more closely related to finance, so I chose Financial Management in *** University. (LXD)

The third interviewee who mentioned the programme of study was more focused than the above three on the fact that the programme had to be specialised in the field of Management. When I asked her why she chose the particular university, she answered,

First I decided to choose the HRM major, so I have a list of schools of which college [university] has this course. And *** University is top school in the list. It ranks high, and I chose it. (CL)

Here can be seen not only the impact of the programme specialisation but a combination of the impact of programme specialisation and the ranking of the institution. These two factors together seemed to add more value than the impact from an individual factor.

More specifically, one interviewee discussed the suitability of the programme. She pointed out that the "courses are well-developed" which is "very suitable for myself so I chose ***" (HY). This was the only interviewee out of 24 who brought up the suitability of the programme offered by the institution.

Other people's influence is another reason that encourages Chinese students to come to the UK. The other people here can refer to one's family members, friends, graduates from the institution and teachers. One interviewee stated her decision was influenced by one of her family members as "my cousin graduated from *** University in master" (HD). Religion of family members was also a factor, as one interviewee stated,

And my parents are Christian. I'm not, but my parents they are. So they prefer this university. That's also one of the reasons. (SL)

Encouragement from friends is another factor as an interviewee said,

I came here with my friend and he also applied for *** University. (SQR)

She came to the UK for her postgraduate study due to the fact that her friend from China was also applying for the same institution. Aside from the influence of the Chinese people, interviewees can also be influenced by British friends. One interviewee said,

> I have asked my friends who live in UK, and they told me that the ***
> deserves… *** has a good reputation in the UK residents, so they
> recommended a lot for me to choose this university. (HZE)

This quotation reflects the influence caused by her British friends and the importance of local reputation to her.

Graduates from the institution have also encouraged Chinese students to come. One interviewee was encouraged by a graduate who shared the previous experience of studying in the institution. She said,

> Before I applied any university, I met a girl in Malaysia. She told me she
> studied in *** University as an undergraduate. She told me she really enjoy
> the life here. That somewhat influenced me. (LXD)

This quotation shows the impact that the previous pleasant experience of the graduate had on this interviewee in her decision on the destination institution. Although such an impact was not claimed by the interviewee to be strong, nevertheless it could be recommended that British universities who intend to expand their recruitment of international students do some work to improve the satisfaction of the graduates and of the current international students who will be graduates in the future.

Teachers' influence was raised by one interviewee and this was claimed as the only reason for her choosing the particular institution. She made her institution choice on the recommendation of her teacher. She explained,

> CN: My teacher recommended me to *** University.
>
> Interviewer: Your undergraduate teacher?
>
> CN: Yes, one of my teachers teach us law in foreign countries. She
> graduated from UK. She got her master's degree and PhD in UK, and she
> said *** is quite good.

Although her decision on institution choice was made entirely due to her teacher's influence, she was the only interviewee who mentioned the teacher as a factor.

The **city environment** attracted two interviewees when deciding where to pursue their postgraduate studies. The city environment includes the natural environment, size of the city, safety of the city and living cost in the city. In terms of natural environment, one

interviewee (SQR) did not specify a particular element of the natural environment but referred to the natural environment as a whole. Another factor was the natural environment of the institution, as one interviewee commented,

> The second reason is because it is cited as one of the most beautiful universities in the UK. I really want to spend my 1 year time in the place that is worthiness [worthwhile] so that I can both enjoy myself and then pursue my academic study. (HY)

This quotation shows not only the impact of the beautiful natural environment of the institution of her choice but also the importance for her of experiencing a new environment. The latter factor has been discussed in the country choice section. Here we may interpret a link between the factor of natural environment and the factor of experiencing a new environment. The beauty of the natural environment may enhance the experience in a new environment.

In terms of the size of the city, one interviewee liked the city location of her chosen institution as she commented, "It's such a beautiful small city" (HYH). Another interviewee mentioned the size of the city and its impact on other factors such as the safety of the city and the living expenses there. She said,

> *** University is located in a small town, with relatively lower living expenses and the environment is much safer than some other big cities like Liverpool and Manchester. (WY)

Here, the size of the city is connected with the living cost and the factor of safety. As mentioned in the previous section, cost for study in the destination country is a factor that Chinese students would consider. The above quotation offers the cost of living in the destination city as a new factor in cost. The interviewees take into account the living cost of the specific city (in comparison with living costs in other cities) and the tuition fees of the country (in comparison with tuition fees in other countries).

The size of the city was also criticised by an interviewee in terms of employment opportunity. She articulated,

> But I think it is difficult to find a job here, because the job opportunity may be few than cities like London or other big cities. (WY)

Safety is another sub-factor when choosing a city for study by Chinese students. Another interviewee also connected the size of the city with the safety of the city. After she said that the small size of the city encouraged her to come for study, I followed with question of why the size was a factor for her. She answered,

> It's much more peaceful and I think it will be much safer than the big cities. (WJ)

It is worth mentioning that the location of the institution as a factor was not only in relation to the scope of the city but also to the scope of the country. Instead of concentrating on the features of a city as interviewee HYH did, interviewee GS considered the location of an institution in terms of the country in which it was located. She claimed,

> I applied for another university, St. Andrew's, but it's in Scotland. I do want to experience more in England, so I chose ***, which is in England. (GS)

This concern with the location of the institution in the country category is not the same factor as location in the country perspective section. The "country" in the previous section refers to the UK and the "country" here refers specifically to England.

4.1.3 Theoretical contribution

Personal improvement is not only a motivator for female Chinese students but also for female Japanese students to come to the UK, as found by Habu (2000). Similarly, Japanese women in Habu's (2000) research were not strongly motivated by career and the associated financial rewards. Chinese students seem to follow the route for a "rich" country (see Goldsmith and Shawcross, 1985 in Chapter Three), in that their motivations for international study become less "serious" and more "relaxed", similar to how Japanese students were in the 1990s (see Matsui, 1991 and Habu, 2000). However, female Japanese students in Habu's (2000) study were not particularly interested in taking more practical and business-oriented courses like the Chinese students did. This might be due to the differences in parental influence on subject choice between the two nations, keeping in mind that Chinese parents are "extremely influential" in educational choices (Bamber, 2014).

In this section, several links among factors were discovered when individual factors were discussed. Previously only links between two factors have been discussed. In order to clearly see all the links at the same time, I summarise the discovered links in groups as presented in the following table.

Table 13. Summary of links between country choice factors.

Length of Course	Institutional Cooperation	British Culture
↓	↓	↓
Cost for Study	The UK Education System	To Experience a New Environment
	↓	↓
	Reputation of the UK Education System	Personal Improvement
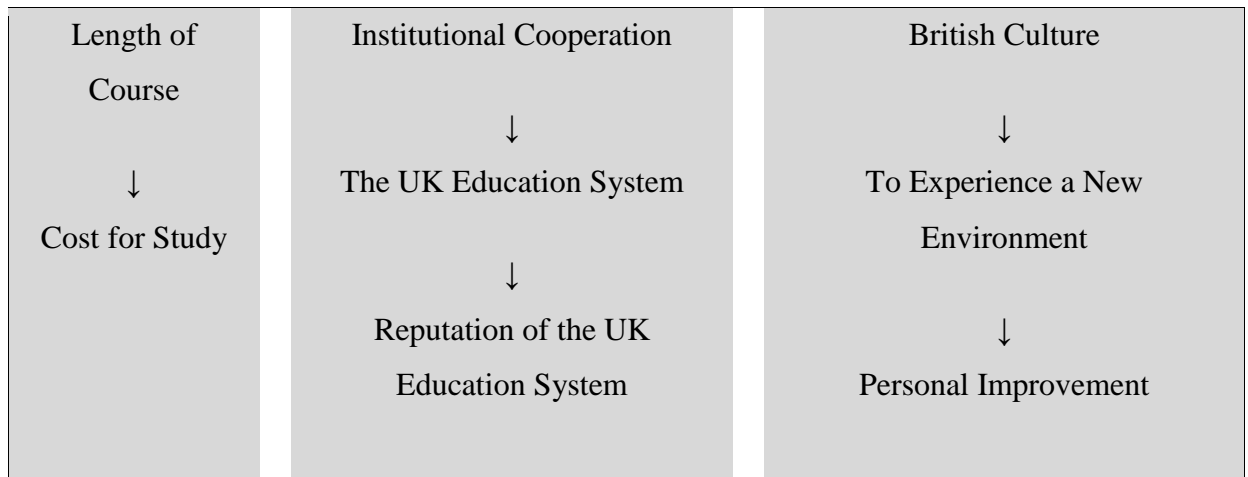
From the above summary, we can see the three groups of links among the factors that influence the country choice for international education. The detailed discussion on these links can be found from the previous two sections (4.1.1 & 4.1.2).

To answer the question on how much career prospects influenced the decision on country choice and institution choice for international education, interviewees suggested there was no direct relationship between them. Employment opportunities in the destination country and the destination city were not a concern for interviewees. The impact of career prospects on the destination choice was minimal, with only one indirect connection. This indirect connection is the belief that the quality of education in the chosen country can lead to prosperous career prospects.

4.2 Impressions of the UK

4.2.1 Initial impressions of the UK

The initial impressions of the UK reported by interviewees were generally positive and satisfactory. This supports the literature by Dekker and Van der Noll (2011 & 2013) and Van der Noll and Dekker (2014), which states that the majority of Chinese people view the EU and EU citizens positively. Drawn from the interviews, favourable impressions

of the UK are summarised in several dimensions, namely local people, tradition, natural environment and social orderliness (see the table below).

Table 14. Favourable initial impression of the UK.

Favourable Initial Impression	
People	Friendly, well-educated, gentle, patient, kind, warm-hearted, helpful, respectful, polite
Tradition	History, culture, collegiate system
Natural Environment	Beautiful scenery, fresh air, architecture
Social Orderliness	Orderly, peaceful

Interviewees viewed the British people as friendly, well-educated, gentle, patient, kind, warm-hearted, helpful, respectful and polite citizens. All these terms are mentioned unprompted by respondents. 14 out of 24 interviewees specifically said that British people are friendly by using the word "friendly". Below are some examples of the friendliness of British people:

> "And also in here the local people are very friendly to help you when you are confused which way to go." – HD

> "The people whether you know or just strangers on the street, they are very friendly." – HYH

> "I think the staff there are friendly. For example, during the registration, they explain things. The lady from the finance office explained how to pay the tuition fee and accommodation fee very patiently." – LXD

> "I think they are friendly, because when I came to the masters office or a restaurant they always wear a smiling face." – CY

> "Very friendly. Whenever I've got something to ask them or for directions or for help, they are always willing to help me." – CZ

> "I think that generally they are friendly. Especially when I buy something in the supermarket or in the food shop always ask me where I come from and "How long have you been here?" and "How do you like here?" Just like that. I think they are friendly." – JY

Although most interviewees expressed their appreciation for the friendliness of the local people, doubt as to the authenticity of the friendliness also arose. One interviewee commented,

> Perhaps they have their inner feeling to be indifferent, but from the appearance they can express in a very polite way. On the surface they are very friendly. You just don't know what their true thoughts are. (CZ)

This interviewee voiced her doubt as to the true attitude of the locals. She was concerned about the authenticity of the surface friendliness she perceived.

The result of the surface friendliness is that it not only leaves a pleasant initial impression of the UK, but also contributes to settling down in the UK smoothly. One interviewee (HY) claimed the soothing effect of such friendly behaviour of local people. She said, "people in *** are very friendly and helpful, which makes me feel very comfortable. And to some degree, it can help me recover from my homesickness." This shows the reassuring effect of friendliness on homesickness, aiding her better adaptation to a new culture.

Being traditional is another favourable impression that British people made on interviewees. In terms of tradition, interviewees were in favour of British history, British culture and the collegiate system. For instance, one interviewee (SB) claimed, "Englishmen are traditional very gentle-men [gentlemanly]. And also people here are very polite." This matches interviewees' expectations of the UK before entering the country. Several interviewees expressed they expected to experience traditional British culture. For example, men in the UK should be gentlemen, and British daily wear should be formal wear. The actual experience after coming to the UK fulfilled the expectations on a gentlemen-like culture, but not on the formal daily wear. The collegiate system was much appreciated by most interviewees.

The natural environment was also regarded as having made a favourable impression by interviewees, including beautiful scenery, architecture and fresh air. Beautiful scenery, particularly countryside scenery, was strongly appreciated by Chinese students in the UK. Most interviewees used the word "beautiful" to describe their first sight of the UK. For example,

It's such a beautiful small city. – HYH

It's a very, very beautiful place. It's like a dream when I came here. Everything is totally different: the architecture, the buildings, the styles and people here around you is [are] really different, but I like it very much. – GS

Life in UK is very tranquil and quiet. I think the scenery is very beautiful. When I first get off my bus in front of the Collingwood, it was a big grass. It really gave me a deep impression. – CY

My impressions: the first thing is the viewing [view] here is really very beautiful. I'm deeply attracted by the beautiful viewing [view]. – SL

Various styles of architecture in the UK are also described favourably, including the world heritage site of the Cathedral and Castle.

The view here, the buildings is [are] beautiful. – CQR

I think it's quite good – the beautiful landscape. – FF

The buildings are really beautiful – the cathedral and castle. – CY

Another favourable initial impression was the social orderliness. Social orderliness means everything is in order, which makes society peaceful. There was only one interviewee (HYH) who complimented the social orderliness of the UK. Several interviewees mentioned the peacefulness of the UK or *** in particular, but only one interviewee (HYH) brought up a reason for the peacefulness, which was the social orderliness.

Although most of the initial impressions were positive, there were a few unfavourable impressions. Negative initial impressions of the UK included food and weather, boredom, dissatisfaction with modern colleges and interactions with teenagers.

Food and weather are different from China. Although many interviewees held that food in the UK was fresh and dairy products in the UK were delicious, some interviewees did not enjoy the cooking style of British food. For instance, interviewee I1 claimed, "The food here is very rubbish." In terms of the weather, interviewees who encountered rain on first arriving had a bad memory of the British weather. When it was sunny, their feelings improved.

The boredom was due to an insufficient number of commercial and entertainment facilities, short opening hours and insufficient forms of entertainment aside from going to pubs. In terms of the lack of facilities, interviewee SB claimed, "*** is frankly speaking not a very interesting place. It's kind of boring, because it's small and there are not many shops in the city centre … So it's kind of boring." Many interviewees were unhappy with the opening hours of commercial facilities in the city centre. The shops closed earlier than interviewees expected. For example, interviewee HZE stated, "Normally you expect to take care of a lot of things at weekends or in the late afternoon, but actually they are closed." and interviewee CL complained, "Life in the UK is kind of boring, because shops and stores will close at 5pm. It's not so open like China, actually. I expect it may open or be active, but actually it's not." Therefore, these interviewees found life in *** was inconvenient and it took time to adapt to the local culture.

In terms of the small size of towns/cities in the UK, most interviewees viewed "small" as a neutral word but some saw the "small" as a disadvantage of living in the UK. Interviewee HZE claimed, "When I first fly [flew] down to Newcastle Airport, I think it's actually not as good as I'm expecting – very small!" The big comparison between where she lived before coming (Shanghai city) and the relatively small cities in the North East of England led to a culture shock for her when she first came to the UK. She found a lot of things were different, and it took time to get used to the culture shock.

Although the collegiate system was a significant attraction for interviewees, modern colleges were disliked by interviewees who were keen on experiencing the traditional collegiate culture. Interviewee HYH did not like the fact that she was assigned to a modern college instead of a traditional one. As can be seen from Figure 15, most interviewees were allocated with a modern college, with only 25% assigned to an old college. Nonetheless, there was only one interviewee (HYH) who complained about her dislike of her modern college.

Figure 15. Interviewee college distribution
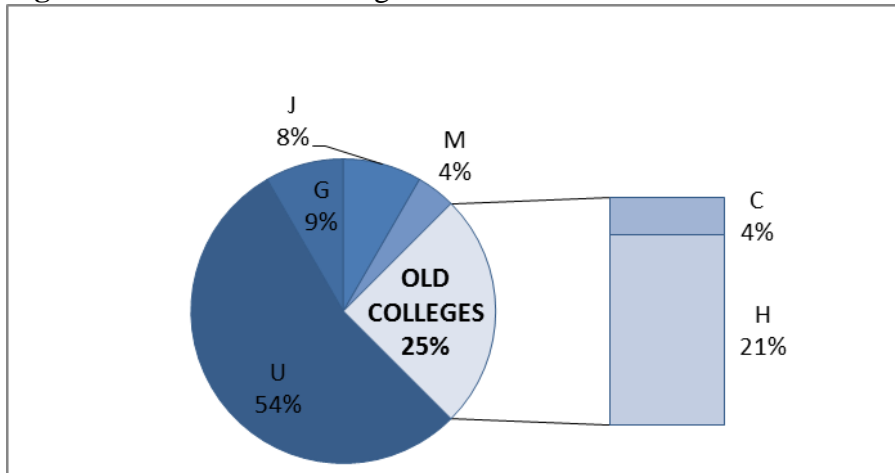
The distribution of the colleges was also a concern for one interviewee. This interviewee (SB) pointed out that colleges are separated from each other. Students communicated easily within a college but not with students from other colleges, and information was not easily disseminated across colleges.

Interaction with teenagers was a problem for interviewees and their friends. Although British people in general were viewed as polite and kind, teenagers in the UK were an exception. Screaming or throwing things at Chinese students was reported by interviewees. For example, interviewee CQR claimed, "The teenagers are very rude. For example, since I have been here, I have met [them] three times. When I was walking on the road, they were screaming. The first day a friend of mine came here, when we walked along the road, a car passed by and an egg was thrown at her." Even I (the author) have been screamed at by teenagers more than ten times. Interviewees regarded the behaviour of such teenagers as racial discrimination. For example, interviewee SB told her story and of her friends' experiences of racial discrimination.

> SB: Last year, one of my friends was thrown eggs on her arms and also milk. It's true. It's because she is Chinese.

> Interviewer: How do you know that's because she is Chinese?

> SB: Because many friends in Birmingham have met those kinds of problems. Last year, one of my flatmates was from Bulgaria. It was eight o'clock in the evening. When my friend was together with his girlfriend, they doesn't [don't] look at [like] they are British, and some black guys scared them in one of the big streets in Birmingham.

Interviewer: Threatening them?

SB: Yes, threatening them. And two weeks ago, my friend and I were walking along the road in *** at 8 something when it's dark. There was only my friend and I walking on it. A British White man was sitting in the car and shouted at us. I can't really hear what he talking about, but I'm pretty sure he is shouting at us. There's nobody there. But I don't think that's because of gender. That's because of race.

Such experiences have an impact. Later in the interview, in terms of challenges that might prevent this interviewee from working in the UK, she claimed the discriminatory experiences would to some extent influence her willingness to find employment in the UK. However, the interviewee regarded the language barrier as the most significant factor that might prevent her from being employed in the UK.

4.2.2 Changes in impression

As stated, all 24 interviewees reported a more positive than negative general impression of the UK during the first-round interview. In the second round, general impressions to some extent changed, although 10 out of the 23 respondents retained their general impressions of the UK. Among those whose general impression changed during the second round, most respondents' (10 out of 13) impressions declined, while 3 out of 13 interviewees had more favourable views towards the UK (see Table 15).

The changes in impression during the second round were mainly based on the students' experience in the UK, including living experience and study experience. Each interviewee had their own reasons for this change and several specific cases will be presented in detail in the next chapter. The enhancement of the general impression was found to be due to greater understanding through communication with people and the teamwork experiences in study. Interviewee HYH, who claimed during the second interview that her impression had improved, explained the reason for this:

I met people, both local and foreigners, both European people and people from Middle East and Asia. I spoke to them. They are nice people. So I think if the people you met are nice, your life may be better. (HYH)

She suggested a connection between cross-cultural communications and the perception towards a country.

Living experiences that caused a decline in the general impression included bad weather, discriminatory living experiences, cultural differences, boredom and friends' influence. For example, one respondent said,

> About the people, most people are good, but I also met some bad person. And about the weather, I think in winter the weather is terrible, because it's become dark like in the 3pm afternoon, but now it become better. They changed. I remember last time I said I love the weather, now I changed, because after the winter I quite confused why the sky become dark so quickly in the afternoon. (ZYY)

Impressions can be changed by the influence of other people's perceptions. One interviewee changed her impression of British people from "friendly" in the first interview to "indifferent" in the second interview. She said,

> Many Chinese friends have this view. I talked to an Italian student who also shared the same view. He even told me British people are not only indifferent to foreigners, they are also indifferent to each other. Actually one of my English flatmates, who is kind of talkative, he told me one reason why British people to get drunk is that they are too defensive so they need to get drunk and be more open to each other. (LXD)

Her impression of the British people was influenced by her Chinese co-nationals and an Italian student and her British flatmate.

Table 15. Longitudinal change of general impressions of the UK.

Intervi ewees	SQ R	ZY Y	FF	HY H	SB	GS	CL	LX D	W YQ	M Y	HY	W Y	HD	CZ	CY	WJ	SL	HZ E	CQ R	CN	ZH T	W QQ	JY	W T
1 Round	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
2 Round	↘	↘	↘	↗	↘	↗	↘	↘	↘	→	→	→	↘	→	→	→	→	↘	→	→	→		↘	↗
3 Round	↘	↗	↗	→	↗	→	→	↗	↗	→	→	→	↗	→	→	→	→							

Code: P = Positive

→ = Remained; ↗ = Increased; ↘ = Decreased

Interestingly, only one respondent reported any decline in general impression of the UK during the third-round interviews. In the third-round interviews, 10 out of 17 interviewees claimed that their general impressions of the UK remained the same, and the impressions of 5 out of 17 interviewees of the UK improved. The positive impressions included helpful and kind local people, a beautiful natural environment, beautiful scenery, and a peaceful lifestyle.

Few negative impressions were due to boredom. Some interviewees complained that there were not many types of entertainment in the evening aside from drinking. The shops in the city centre closed at around 5pm, which was too early from the interviewees' perspective. Therefore, most evenings interviewees had to stay inside and this sometimes led to boredom. Other negative impressions included "terrible" weather and difficulty in finding a job.

The experience of staying in the UK for most respondents reinforced their positive impression of the UK and therefore made them more willing to stay. However, the positive impressions did not overcome the extrinsic factors that prevented them from remaining in the UK after graduation. The main reasons for most interviewees going back to China were external factors, including visa restrictions in the UK, family influence, and the economic situation and employment opportunities in China.

4.3 Experiences and Challenges in the UK

4.3.1 Educational experience

Almost all of the discussion on the educational experiences in the UK was done by interviewees during the second round of interviews. This made sense as when the first-round interviews took place the respondents had just started their courses, while when the third-round interviews took place the respondents had been finished their courses for at least 6 months. The timing of the second-round interviews was just right in terms of getting maximum data on respondents' educational experiences. The second-round interviews took place just after the respondents finished all their classes and seminars so that they had a fresh and comprehensive idea of classroom activities and group work experiences.

The majority of respondents were not active in class; they stayed quiet and listened to the teacher. They noticed British students were actively participating in classroom activities, but this did not change the Chinese students' silence in lectures. Not participating in classroom activities did not seem to affect their academic performance. One interviewee said,

> Although we didn't ask questions a lot, I can finish the examinations. I can't say whether the essays we can do as well as examinations, but examinations we can finish better than the foreign students. That's true. (JY)

Not interacting with the teacher does not mean the Chinese students were not thinking. Respondents said they either asked the questions in their minds without speaking out in class or went to the teacher after class. Although not participating in lectures, most respondents enjoyed their participation in seminar group work.

Group work experiences were reported as the most welcome educational experience when studying in the UK. Benefits to participating in group work are varied. One respondent summarised what she learned through seminar groups:

> How to contribute your own ideas, how to compromise with others, and how to coordinate your own ideas with others. And then during these experiences you can find a lot about your way of working and even your potential to be a leader. … I find teamwork is really important, because you are not just following but also try to challenge. It's good that such kind of challenge does not give rise to conflict but gives rise to a better understanding between group members. So it's really a good experience for me to know how to create effective communication between your group mates. (HY)

The large volume of the master's course content in the UK was both praised and criticised by respondents. Research participants who studied a different subject from their undergraduate study particularly praised the amount of knowledge they gained.

The intensive course for master's programmes in the UK was also criticised by respondents. They criticised that the volume of material was too much to prepare before class and the content was difficult to follow during class. For example, one respondent mentioned that students found it difficult to understand what a teacher had said. She explained the reasons as,

First you can say it's because the way the teacher give out the lecture is not interesting. People can't be attracted to what he or she is talking. And secondly perhaps it is because the difficulties. People find obstacles in understanding the content. Thirdly perhaps people don't like such kind of content the teaching material. They think they should learn something different. So that's why they lose their interest in listening to the lecture but doing their own businesses. So that's why I think in the lecture we find that there's not enough interaction between he or she and the students. (HY)

She not only explained why students did not understand the teacher but also gave a reason as to why students did not participate in this class. Respondents also complained about the course content design. Several interviewees reported that the content in some of the modules was repetitive.

Chinese teachers were criticised by students for using too many examples of the Chinese market in class. One interviewee complained,

Many students complain about those Chinese teachers really like to give examples in context of China, just like Chinese companies, Chinese stock market and Chinese laws. They always give examples in Chinese context. So it's very difficult for Western students to understand. Maybe it's easy for them to interpret, but it's difficult for students to understand. While we also have other teachers like from Russia, from Egypt, they never give examples about their own country. They always try to give the British company example. So I think maybe this is better, because we came here we also want to learn some local examples, not all the things about China. (SL)

This connects to what motivates Chinese students to study in the UK. One factor that draws Chinese students to the UK is the different educational experience in the UK compared to that of China. Having teachers from other countries such as Russia and Egypt made the students happy as these teachers taught using British company examples, whilst the Chinese teachers were criticised for using too many Chinese company examples. The Chinese teaching method was also criticised. One interviewee stated,

When some foreign or western students doubt what they are taught, the teacher feels a bit offended. Maybe they try to be nice, but they still would be a bit rude, let's say. I heard a lot of complaints about this. Especially about the teacher I had last term who taught us Econometrics II. Many of my friends think he's quite rude, because he refused to help. In his mind maybe he thinks you have to work on your own. You have to finish your work independently. You can't rely on me. But my other teachers from different countries and we have British teacher also, they are very willing to

help. They don't think it's kind of cheating. They are very happy to help you about your assignment, even summatives. If you have some problem regarding the questions, you can ask. Of course you can ask how to do it. They will always reply. But this Chinese teacher he never reply, and he will just tell you "You have to work on your own." You have to figure out by yourself. (SL)

One interviewee mentioned the difference in educational system between the UK and China. She said,

> I don't think it's clever or not, but I just said maybe in our education system, we study more difficult, complicated things in our undergraduate. (CN)

She perceived the undergraduate education in China contained more difficult material such as in advance calculations. This perception came from her experience during her master's study in the UK that Chinese students could solve difficult calculations while other students could not.

Language difficulty was a commonly mentioned difficulty in interviewees' studies. Chinese students were perceived as being poor at essay writing. One reason for their poor essay writing mentioned by an interviewee was the language barrier. She said,

> If it's an essay-style question, I think the foreigners maybe get higher marks, because they use the language more sophisticated. Because it's not our mother language, sometimes there is a mistake or in the explanation of feelings. (CN)

4.3.2 Living experience

Many interviewees enjoyed their living experience in the UK. Some respondents joined student societies which enriched their experiences in the UK. One interviewee joined a debating team and benefited from her experience in this student society. She commented,

> I joined the debate team and we have been trained for several weeks. During this period I work with my teammates. We exchange our ideas freely. Because we are debate, so we are not only exchanging our ideas but also try to challenge each other so that we can find different way to defend other attacks from our debaters. (HY)

Although some respondents interacted with the others by joining student societies, most students' daily interaction was still with Chinese students. They maintained a close relationship with their co-nationals and did not interact much with the local citizens or British students. One respondent commented,

> Foreign people I get along well with are those who are quite open to different cultures and are those who are quite interested in Asians. I think some British people, I mean some of my classmates, they are just indifferent. They don't care. My Thai friend said the same thing. (LXD)

She was concerned that if she asked a question of British people, she may not get a true or an honest answer. She had an experience of asking a question of one of her British flatmates. The answer she received was "diplomatic", she said. At the same time, she felt the British people were polite, although superficially.

Difficulties with living in the UK were experienced by informants. Common difficulties included the language barrier, adaptation difficulty, acculturation difficulty and personality issues. As asserted by Mukonoweshuro (2013), the language barrier to communicate effectively in writing and verbally is one of the two principal worries of Chinese accounting and finance students while studying in a UK university. Language difficulties experienced by interviewees consisted of academic reading difficulties, listening difficulties and problems understanding accents. The academic reading problem was mainly caused by the difference in education between the two countries. British HE requires a far greater amount of reading than in China. Listening difficulties arose when the native speakers spoke quickly and interviewees could not keep up. One interviewee (CZ) expressed weakness in her English listening ability. When she had only grasped several key words from the speakers and could not keep up, she explained her situation to the speakers. As a result, instead of speaking slowly, the speakers just continued to speak quickly. She introduced her story about the issue of speed.

> For example, if I want to ask them where some shop is and they will say 'It's over the corner. If you cross the road you will find another thing and you turn left you will get to the place' in a very fast way. If I try to say that 'Excuse me, I can't catch up with you. Could you explain it a little bit slowly?' and he will just repeat the sentence again without slowing down. I don't think it's very friendly. But they express in a very polite way. If you don't understand, they will repeat the sentence again and again, but never slowing. That's the problem I find. (CZ)

This experience made her doubt the authenticity of the friendliness of local people. She assumed that British people were friendly and polite on the surface. They could pretend to be friendly and you could not tell their true feelings as they always had the appearance of being polite.

Adaptation is a feature of everyday life when one comes to a new environment. Difficulties of adaptation claimed by the interviewees included food adaptation, difference in cooking habits, lifestyle differences, transportation differences, easily getting lost and psychological needs.

In relation to cooking habits, there is more slow-cooked food in Chinese cuisine. For example, one interviewee (LXD) claimed cooking a beef or pork chop took her two hours. In terms of the lifestyle difference, British people go to pubs more often than people in China, and UK universities hold many more parties during freshers' week than Chinese universities. McMahon (2011) has presented a review of literature on Chinese learners and their experiences of living and studying in the UK. When analysing the theme of difficulty in meeting with British students, McMahon argues that Chinese students do not understand why British students like parties and drinking so much; this is perceived as a cultural difference, with insufficient shared areas of interest. Transportation difference is another problem for new students. Interviewee CQR considered the train ticket booking system to be complicated and had to ask a roommate for help. She also mentioned that in China travellers did not need to change trains at any time on a single train journey but in the UK travellers may have to transfer, particularly with a cheap train ticket. Easily getting lost was another difficulty for new students. Reasons claimed by interviewees included insufficient significant location signs and too many hilly roads. One interviewee (HZE) said,

> HZE: Normally I would lose my way in ***, especially I could not see very significant sign.
>
> Interviewer: Landmark?
>
> HZE: Ya, landmark. It's very difficult for me to find the specific building or the classroom.
>
> Interviewer: Cathedral. You can see it from everywhere.

HZE: When I went to the main library from my dormitory, at first I think I have tried three times to go to the different ways and I'll always got lost. Because in the mountain road, for me it's difficult to recognise it. But in the city centre it might be more easier. Also the 'hilly', it's a bit difficult for me.

Interviewer: So you're not used to walking a long way?

HZE: Ya. And also you have to go up and down, and the road is very steep, I should say."

Even small practical skills for living in a new country can be difficult. One interviewee (JY) experienced difficulty in recognising the recycling bins and their categories. These situations added adaptation difficulties when first entering a new country. As time went by, interviewees started to get used to the hilly roads and could find their way gradually. A more advanced adaptation is coping with psychological needs, including homesickness and loneliness. One interviewee (CZ) felt such a strong sense of homesickness that she even booked her flight back to China within the first month of entering the UK. Fortunately, most of the interviewees did not have such strong psychological needs.

Acculturation was considered to be a significant difficulty for interviewees, including differences in the way of thinking, working style differences, distribution of commercial facilities and fitting in with local people. Personality issues included shyness and an inability to communicate with people. For example, interviewee WJ claimed that she was not a "people person", that she did not know how to communicate with people and found it difficult to carry on a conversation.

In terms of adaptation strategy, Sliwa and Grandy (2006) suggest people should learn the behaviours needed to survive in a new culture. Interviewees' solutions involved psychological preparation, asking for help online and from friends and staying within their own social group. Psychological preparation seemed to be effective for some interviewees. For instance, interviewee HZE has told herself that

You have to accept everything here, because right now I'm in ***, not in China, so I have to accept the behaviours here and I have to accept the customs here. So I just try my best to get used to it, to find the solutions, to solve the problems in daily life. I think it's not too difficult for me to handle them, because I have prepared for it in my mind. (HZE)

At first she found shopping took a lot longer than expected as she had to walk a lot. She was not used to the wide dispersal of commercial facilities as she lived in Shanghai before coming to the UK. She told herself to think positively and to see the health benefits of walking. Another problem she experienced was the short opening hours of stores in the UK. She felt inconvenienced at the beginning, and then she told herself to accept it and to remember it. Gradually she became used to the customs and the working styles in the UK. Constant positive psychological reminders and comforts helped her cope with the adaptation process more efficiently.

Using the Internet as a source of information and asking friends for help is another way to adapt to a new culture. Staying within one's social group is the least adventurous but safest approach when moving to a new culture. As theories on enculturation suggest, interaction with co-nationals helps to lower psychological stress and contributes to greater life satisfaction in a new culture (e.g. Du and Wei, 2015; Triandis, 1989; Ye, 2006). Due to the large proportion of Chinese students in the taught masters programmes in *** University, particularly in the business school, Chinese students can easily find other Chinese companions whenever needed. This helped respondents to calm their nerves and adapt to a different culture. One interviewee claimed,

> Sometimes I tend to stay with Chinese people. Perhaps it's more comfortable. Especially when I'm tired, especially when I felt a lot of pressure, I like to stay with Chinese people. In that way I feel happier. (LXD)

Using an English name is arguably a way to adapt to a new culture. As argued by Sliwa and Grandy (2006), using an English name can be a way of acculturating, can be used to help native speakers who have trouble pronouncing Chinese names, or can be significant in identity development. They further claim that adopting an English name makes that person more British-like, and they identify this behaviour as a surface acting strategy while adapting to a new culture.

In terms of English names, all interviewees had at least one English name. The most popular reason for choosing one particular English name was the interviewee liking a character either from a film or a novel. Some interviewees used an English name because their Chinese names were difficult to pronounce for non-Chinese people. Interviewees chose their English names either for the similar pronunciation or the same initial as their Chinese name, or because they liked the meaning of an English word. An

interesting phenomenon is that some interviewees used an 'English word' such as 'Orange' as their English name rather than picking up a proper 'English name'. None of the interviewees used a Christian baptismal name as their English name.

When introducing themselves to a British stranger, most interviewees claimed that they would use both their English name and Chinese name. In terms of preference, a number of interviewees preferred to be called by their Chinese name. One reason lay in the link between their Chinese name and their identity; interviewees saw their Chinese name as containing their Chinese identity. Conversely, some interviewees they felt there was no connection between themselves and their English name. For example, one interviewee (CZ) said that she could not respond to her English name when people were calling her. This finding was in contrast to Sliwa and Grandy's (2006) argument that utilising an English name to some extent represents a person's identity. When using an English name, no interviewee wanted to hide their real name, it was purely for the purpose of providing a convenient way for non-Chinese speakers to pronounce and to remember their name, in order to adapt to a new culture.

In terms of whether using English names can be seen as an effective strategy, most interviewees provided a negative answer. The only function for English names was for ease of pronunciation and remembering when their Chinese names were hard to pronounce. They perceived English names as a "symbol" which could be any word, with no link to their identity, while many of them regarded their Chinese names as their Chinese identity. For instance, one interviewee said, "They should have confidence to use their own names."

The reframing strategies suggested by interviewees were mainly around active communications, including improving oral English, communicating with colleagues, and joining social events such as going to pubs and various parties. Understanding and adaptation to the British culture was addressed. One interviewee suggested a book titled *Underlying Rules in British Society,* written by an anthropologist.

A small number of interviewees suggested one adaptation strategy was to act in the opposite way to how others view the Chinese. For example, when Chinese are viewed as isolated and silent they should break the isolation and try to find common topics.

4.3.3 Employment proactivity

Data on employment proactivity for part-time jobs were largely collected from the second set of interviews, and data on employment proactivity for full-time jobs were collected from the third set of interviews. When respondents first came to the UK, the majority of them had an intention to work in the UK but did not begin employment proactivity. When the second round of interviews took place, most of the respondents had engaged in pre-application proactivity for part-time jobs and only one respondent managed to get a part-time job. When the third wave of interviews was carried out, employment proactivity increased, as one respondent managed to get a full-time job and another one worked part-time between the last two rounds of interviews.

For those who claimed their intention to find employment in the UK, the majority engaged in job proactivity, including the pre-application stage and application stage. Pre-application stage activity here refers to job information seeking practices. Such practices involve, but are not limited to, attending career fairs, attending company presentations, searching for job information on companies' official websites, looking up job information on any bbs or blogs, visiting job information websites and contacting the university for their career advisory service. In the first-round interviews, only one participant searched for employment information, and not on full-time jobs. Aside from this interviewee, none of the others were involved in any job proactivity, understandably, as they were all new to the UK and still in the process of adaptation. After 6 months of adaptation, during the second-round interviews, the majority were proactive in the pre-application stage, while less than half had reached the application stage. Reasons for not applying for work were varied, including time limitations, study burdens, perception of discrimination and laziness.

For the third-round interviews, the pre-application stage involved participating in career fairs, attending company presentations, searching companies' official websites, visiting job information websites, contacting the university for the career advisory service, and attending career workshops such as the *** Award Workshop held by the university. Very few interviewees had looked up job information on any bbs or blogs. Interviewees were generally satisfied with their experience of seeking employment in the UK. They expressed that the main function of the pre-application stage was to learn more information about the jobs such as salary, position, and promotion opportunities.

The application stage for most interviewees who tried to find employment in the UK only involved sending CVs, and most did not make it into the next round. Some interviewees made it to the next round and undertook several tests. After the testing process, no one made it to the next round except for one girl, who was the only interviewee who managed to find a full-time job at Oxford. She credits her success in getting the post to luck. She did not have much experience in the selection process, and had only completed one interview before getting the job. She said at that time the vacancy urgently needed to be filled and there were few candidates. As she got the job information from an employment agent, she recommended that current or prospective students who were willing to seek employment in the UK try professional job agencies, as her own experiences suggest.

No interviewee was given clear reasons as to why they had failed in their employment applications. Interviewees perceived that the reasons included the UK's visa policies, insufficient work experience, insufficient employability, and racial discrimination. Most interviewees did not have full-time work experience in China before coming to the UK, and had no working experience in Britain at all. Employability, which respondents thought needed to be worked on, included language competence, academic knowledge, and communication skills. Whether the interviewees were truly not capable of working in the UK or they underestimated their employability cannot be proved in this study.

In terms of feedback on the applications, interviewees who did not find a job claimed that they did not learn anything from the applications as no recruiters gave any clear reasons as to why they had failed; nor did they provide any suggestions for further improvement.

For interviewees who sent in their CVs for job applications, they used only the Pinyin format of their Chinese names instead of their English names on their CVs. They thought there was no need to use their English names when seeking employment in the UK.

Based on their own experiences and perceptions, most interviewees stated that they would encourage current or new Chinese female students to apply for employment in the UK. In terms of advice, most of them would encourage these Chinese female students to try to seize any opportunity to build up overseas working experiences which

are considered useful for seeking employment in China in a future career. Almost every interviewee stated that they would not mention discrimination to current or new Chinese female students for two reasons. The first reason was that discrimination was not the main barrier preventing Chinese from being employed in the UK. The second reason was that current or new Chinese female students would already be aware of the existence of discrimination in the UK without it being mentioned by the interviewees.

4.3.4 Employment intention

This section discusses issues around the employment intention perceived by interviewees through three rounds of interviews. This section will first depict the initial employment intention within the first month of the academic year, and then will illustrate any changes in employment intention across the three sets of interviews. An important part in this section is the analysis of possible factors that influence employment intention, seven of which have been identified through longitudinal interviews. The factors encompass employment visa policy, differences between the economies of China and the UK, employment proactivity, living experience difficulties, geographical concerns and perception of cultural differences.

4.3.4.1 Initial employment intention

Most interviewees were hoping to find employment in the UK during the first-round interviews. Four interviewees did not hope to seek employment in Britain due to homesickness, family responsibilities and perceived discrimination. The initial employment intention for each interviewee has been summarised in the table below. I have put their employment intentions in different codes, representing their willingness to work at any time, their willingness to work during their study, their willingness to work after completing their degree and their unwillingness to work at any time, respectively.

Table 16. Interviewee intention to work in the UK (first round).

I01	I02	I03	I04	I05	I06	I07	I08	I09	I10	I11	I12	I13	I14	I15	I16	I17	I18	I19	I20	I21	I22	I23	I24
I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	0	0	I	0	I	I	I	I	I	I	0
D	0	0	D	D	0	0	D	D	D	D	D	D	0	0	D	0	D	D	D	D	0	D	0
A	A	A	0	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	0	0	A	0	0	A	A	A	A	A	0

Codes: I=willing to work in the UK
      D=willing to work in the UK during study
      A=willing to work in the UK after study;
      0=not willing to work in the UK at any time.

As can be seen from the table, 20 out of 24 interviewees (83.3%) had the intention to work in the UK in general. Specifically, 15 out of 24 interviewees (62.5%) wished to find employment during their studies, and 18 out of 24 (75%) hoped to find employment in the UK after finishing their studies. The details of the types of jobs that interviewees intended to apply for will be illustrated in section 4.3.4.1.2.

4.3.4.1.1 Reasons to find employment in the UK

Reasons to seek employment in the UK were mentioned in the first-round interviews before respondents began any employment proactivity. The motivators included gaining overseas working experience, earning a salary, practising what they learned in university, and improving employability.

Gaining work experience was particularly the case when jobs related to the subject of study were sought. For example, when asked one interviewee said,

> Interviewer: What kind of job?
>
> CL: Maybe some job related to my major. HR Assistant?
>
> Interviewer: So the purpose of having that job is…
>
> CL: To help me gain more practical experience.
>
> Interviewer: Working experience?
>
> CL: Yes.

Improving their competency in the new domain with work experience drove interviewees to apply for jobs in the UK. This was especially the case for students who changed their subject of study at postgraduate level. One interviewee who changed her subject of study from Law to Financial Management wanted to get into the finance industry for her future career. She expressed,

> I want to find some part-time jobs which can help me to get into this area –
> financial area. (GS)

Similarly, another interviewee who changed her subject of study from English to Financial Management was concerned about the insufficient knowledge she had in the finance area. She worried,

> The fact is that I don't have an academic background. That always troubles me. I always feel it's a shortcoming. (LXD)

Earning a salary was another factor that was perceived to encourage interviewees to apply for employment in the UK. As one interviewee said,

> If I can handle it, I definitely want to earn more money for living expenses. (ZYY)

This factor could be one solution to the literature's suggestion that financial problems are experienced by the majority of overseas students (Li and Kaye, 1998; Poyrazli and Grahame, 2007; Roberts *et al.*, 1999).

Practising what is learned in the university in real society was also a concern for interviewees. Interviewees who intended to find employment in the UK wanted to work in industries relevant to their subjects of study; this was to practise what they had learned from the university and build on their work experience for a future career.

Improving employability for the purpose of finding employment in the UK was frequently mentioned by interviewees. One interviewee spoke of the self-improvement through learning from a new environment. She said,

> I expect a stable job and I can get a chance to improve myself, I can learn something useful and I can get some self-achievement, and also salary will be a factor. (SQR)

Learning advanced management knowledge from the companies in this advanced, developed country was mentioned in this research. One interviewee expressed her purpose of seeking employment in the UK was,

> To learn from the good practices, from some very famous companies. …
> But if I can't learn anything, I don't think it's worthwhile to work here.
> (LXD)

Reasons for not finding employment in the UK were also raised by interviewees in this research. Reasons were mentioned for certain types of employment. For example, one interviewee spoke about why she was not willing to do part-time work in the UK. She said,

> During my study, I don't want to. It will disturb my study. Because I tried part-time job in China. In China the university study load is not so heavy, and I tried. I thought I can handle it, but it turns out I can't handle it. I had to rush to the restaurant and rush to my class. (ZYY)

The reason for this interviewee not finding employment was her worry about not being able to cope with work and study at the same time. Her previous part-time experience told her taking part-time work disturbs study and she did not want this happen again. An interesting point she raised in this quotation was the difference in education between the two countries. She perceived the study load in British universities to be heavier than that of Chinese universities.

Aside from the difficulty in coping with study in the UK universities, there was concern about difficulty in coping with life generally. One interviewee was concerned about the time spent on coping with many issues when living in a foreign country. She said,

> For me, I don't have any plan to stay here to seek for a part-time job, because there are a lot of tasks for us to do. (FF)

Another reason for not seeking employment in the UK was the concern with the economic situation of the UK and the EU. One interviewee raised this concern about the economy by saying,

> After graduation, I think I will come back to China, because the UK or EU body are experiencing retrieve [recession], and I think it is very difficult for us to find any job opportunities. Even though we find it, we cannot get a very good self-betterment. (FF)

She was concerned about the economic decline in the UK and the EU, which she believed lead to a limitation on job opportunities. She was also afraid the economic situation would affect career advancement.

4.3.4.1.2 Types of employment sought

In terms of types of job, for interviewees who hoped to find employment during their studies, internships were the most popular employment type, followed by part-time jobs. For those who hoped to find a job after their studies in the UK, full-time jobs were the common preference.

In terms of the **level of employment**, all interviewees who hoped to find employment in the UK during the first interview stated they would seek employment in basic positions. For example, when asked what level of job an interviewee hoped to start, she answered,

> Assistant. At first I cannot work as manager. (ZYY)

She positioned herself at a junior level for employment. She further explained the reason for such positioning was due to her work experience. She admitted she only had internship work experience in China and had no work experience in the UK. She perceived her experience would not meet the requirements for medium or high level job posts in the UK. This level of previous work experience was quite common among interviewees. The interviewees' work experience in China was limited to internships and part-time work, with the exception of one interviewee who had full-time experience in China before coming to the UK. None of them had any work experience in the UK. Such a background of work experience seemed to put interviewees in a low position for employment hunting.

In terms of **industries**, most interviewees who hoped to find a job in Britain wished to seek employment in industries relevant to their subjects of study. Some interviewees did not care which industry they worked for. The quotation below expressed a common reason why the industry was not a concern for interviewees, except for one interviewee who said she would take any legal job as long as she could stay in the UK.

> I really don't care about the industry, but I want to work in the HR department. (SQR)

One reason interpreted here is that students focus on the profession related to their subject of study rather than its application in one particular industry.

4.3.4.1.3 Perceived barriers to seeking employment in the UK

Barriers that interviewees perceived they would face in trying to gain employment in the UK included language barriers, visa restrictions, cultural differences, working style differences, different mindsets, academic knowledge, personality, group work skills, networking, work experience, communication skills and ethnic discrimination. Some of the perceived barriers were internal and could be improved through study and practice, and some of them were external, and seemed to be out of the reach of the individuals. The internal barriers included insufficient language ability, cultural adaptation, group working, networking and communication, insufficient academic and cultural knowledge, working style difference, different mindsets, previous work experience and personality, while the external barriers were visa restriction and discrimination. The following section will discuss the internal barriers and the external barriers, respectively.

One interviewee was concerned her **English language ability** was not enough for a junior job position in the UK. She said,

> CL: You know our oral English still can't get the fluent level, so I think it's a big problem.
>
> Interviewer: So you want to start from the HR Assistant position?
>
> CL: HR Assistant also need your language.
>
> Interviewer: Within the HRM field, HR Assistant is a beginning position.
>
> CL: Yes, I know it's a beginning job, but it's also hard for you to find.

One reason for the difficulty in cultural adaption was raised by one interviewee. She said,

> Because we'll only get here for 1 year, so it's very hard for us to adapt in all kinds of ways. (SQR)

The short length of stay was regarded as a reason for Chinese students not having enough time to get to know the local culture and then to cope with the cultural differences.

Insufficient cultural knowledge included organisational culture within businesses and local culture. One interviewee raised the issue of organisational culture, which was perceived as difficult for Chinese students to understand and to adapt to. She said,

> Maybe it's very hard for us to understand their organisational culture and to find it easy to involve in them. (SQR)

Personality was identified as a barrier to seeking employment in the UK in different ways. Some regarded their personality problems in a general way, while others saw certain parts of their personality as a barrier.

Being silent or shy was perceived as a shortcoming for Chinese students looking to gain employment in the UK. For example, one interviewee pointed out the barriers for finding employment she perceived as:

> Different culture. Maybe I'm too silent, in a group of local people. Group work skills. Discrimination. I think there is discrimination here. (ZYY)

This quotation shows that being silent was perceived as a barrier to gaining employment. This was put in a context of group work, particularly working in a group with local people. Not being good at group work added to a quiet personality might have a dual effect. The factor of discrimination will be discussed separately later.

Insufficient previous **work experience** was also discussed by interviewees. One interviewee pointed out that even if she were an employer in the UK she would not hire Chinese students due to the lack of working experience. She said,

> Even I think from the HR perspective, it's very hard to hire some employees like us, because we rarely have some working experience even though we have some internship. And the way of thinking is totally different from us and the company. (SQR)

She was not only concerned with the insufficient work experience, the different mindset was also pointed out by her. In her view, the work experience of an internship was not enough to be granted a job in the UK.

Discrimination was also discussed by participants. This included discrimination generally and ethnic discrimination. The term 'discrimination' was expressed more as a perception than a real experience. Although none of the interviewees had experienced any discrimination in employment as none of them had any job proactivity at the time of the first-round interview, they believed discrimination existed in the UK labour market. When asked what, if any, challenges she would face in trying to gain employment in the UK, one interviewee raised the issue of perceived discrimination unprompted. She said,

> ZYY: Discrimination. I think there is discrimination here.
>
> Interviewer: Against Chinese?
>
> ZYY: Yes. Maybe some discrimination, but I didn't experience some. But in my mind, I think there is discrimination.

Although she admitted not having experienced discrimination yet, the interviewee believed that discrimination existed. This belief in the existence of discrimination, particularly ethnic discrimination, was perceived as a barrier to gaining employment in the UK.

One interviewee was not concerned much about discrimination in terms of getting a job. She believed there was not much difference for Chinese students in the UK, whether discriminated against or not; Chinese students had to work harder than their western counterparts to gain employment. She said,

> Because I know I have to work harder and harder if I want to compete with Western country students, and I should make more effort. (CL)

Aside from the general discrimination, discrimination against certain social groups was raised as a barrier to Chinese students finding employment in the UK. The social groups mentioned by interviewees were international students in general and the Chinese specifically. One interviewee spoke about the issue for all non-Chinese students:

> Not because we are Chinese or Asian, but just because we are not the local people, because we don't really understand their culture and we have some practical issues like the visa. (SQR)

She explained the reason behind such discrimination towards non-Chinese was due to practical issues such as visa application. She said,

> Because if two people also have the equal experience and equal competitive [competent] and one is foreigner one is local they will choose the local people because they are very easy to get into their organisation and they don't have to solve his visa. It's very practical. (SQR)

An additional point to note is that many interviewees seemed to have **no clear career plan**. This lack of clarity about their future career included vague job application dates and unspecified employment industry and level of job. In terms of the job application dates, some interviewees seemed to be unfamiliar with the recruitment dates of the UK companies.

One interviewee was in a better position in the understanding of recruitment dates of the UK companies but was still not specific enough. When asked when she would start to apply for employment in the UK, the interviewee answered, "Maybe October, November" (CL).

In terms of the level of employment, some interviewees seemed to have no idea which level of job they would eligible to apply for. For example, one interviewee said,

> Interviewer: You will start from the beginning level?
>
> CL: En. I don't know, should I just apply…?
>
> Interviewer: Do you have any working experience?
>
> CL: No, just internship.
>
> Interviewer: Then probably from the beginning level.
>
> CL: En.

She seemed to be indecisive about the level of job she would apply for.

4.3.4.2 Employment intention change

The third-round interviews were divided into four sub-groups (see Figure 16), encompassing a) interviewees who remained in the UK and tried to find employment in

the UK, b) interviewees who remained in the UK and did not try to find employment in the UK, c) interviewees who were back in China and had tried to find employment in the UK, and d) interviewees who were back in China and had not tried to find employment in the UK.

Figure 16. Flowchart of four subgroups for the third-round interview
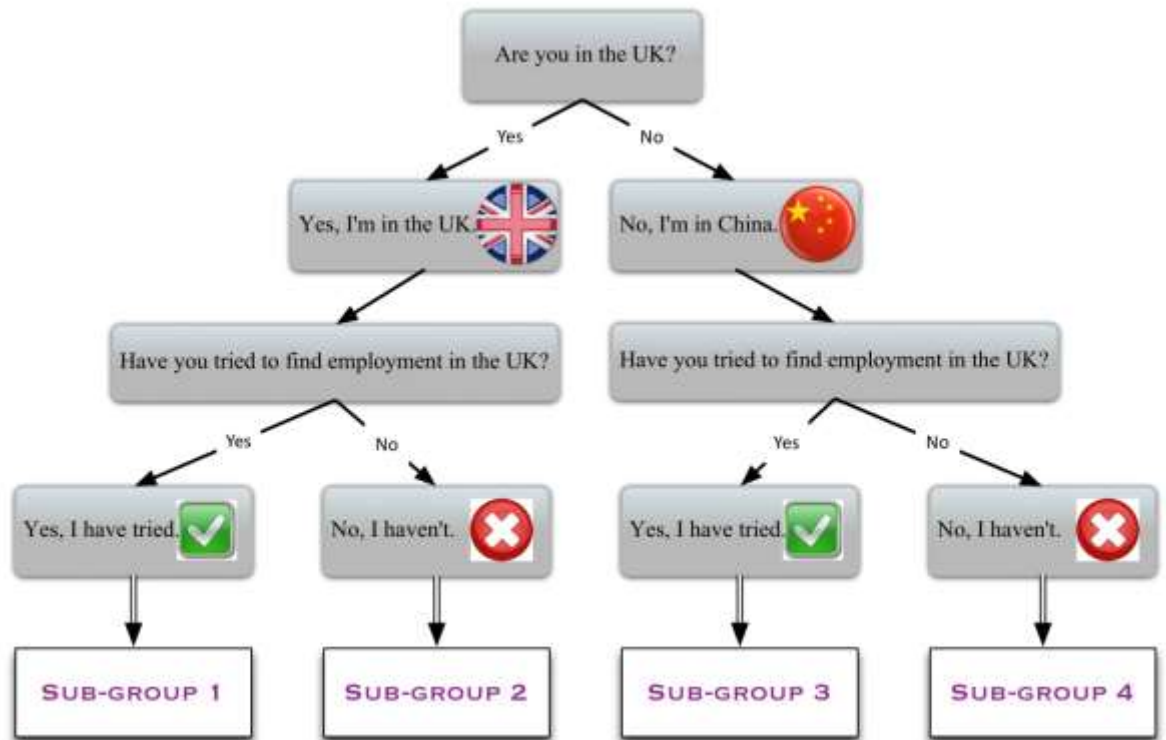
Note: Subgroup 1: Yes tried to find employment in the UK – in the UK now
Subgroup 2: Not tried to find employment in the UK – in the UK now
Subgroup 3: Yes tried to find employment in the UK – in China now
Subgroup 4: Did not seek employment in the UK – in China now

Table 17. Longitudinal change of employment intention in the UK (including full-time, part-time, and internship).

Interviewees		Subgroup 1			Subgroup 2	Subgroup 3					Subgroup 4							
		SQR	ZYY	FF	HYH	SB	GS	CL	LXD	WYQ	MY	HY	WY	HD	CZ	CY	WJ	SL
1 Round	During study	√	√	X	X	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	X	√	√
	After study	√	√	√	√	X	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	X	√	X
2 Round	During study	↘	X	O	√	↘	√	√	√	√	√	↘	√	√	√	X	√	√
	After study	↘	√	↘	√	X	√	√	X	↘	X	↘	√	X	√	X	√	X
3 Round	Now	√	√	√	↗	√	√	X	X	√	X	X	√	X	√	√	√	√
	In future	√	√	√	√	X	O	X	√	√	X	X	√	√	√	√	√	X

Code: √   Yes, willing to

X   No, no intention

O   Didn't mention

↗   Willingness increased

↘   Willingness decreased but not none

4.3.4.3 Factors influencing employment intention

There are various factors that may influence the employment intention in the UK for female Chinese students. Based on information generated from the three sets of interviews, the main factors identified are employment visa policy, economy status difference between China and the UK, employability, living experience difficulties and cultural differences.

4.3.4.3.1 Employment visa policy

Employment visa policy restriction, influencing both employment intention and employment proactivity, was mentioned across the three waves of interviews. It was regarded as one of the challenges that Chinese students would face when seeking employment in the UK in the first set of interviews, and as the key factor preventing interviewees from working in the UK in the third-round interviews.

Every interviewee felt that the work visa policy in the UK was substantially strict. They felt that the UK does not welcome migrants, although they could understand the need to protect employment for the natives. One interviewee who claimed "I don't like it" said the government just wanted to make money from international students and the education quality was unsatisfactory considering the high tuition fees.

Most interviewees felt that the current employment visa system reflected a discriminatory attitude on the part of the British government. Visa barriers were reported as the key factor preventing interviewees from remaining in the UK. One interviewee claimed that she had considered the US rather than the UK for overseas employment. She said the US was a more liberal country that could attract other nationalities, and that the UK was a conservative country that did not welcome outsiders. She claimed that British people are arrogant and they blindly believe in their culture. The intention of remaining and working in the UK for most respondents decreased because of the discriminatory employment visa policy, and they perceived the visa barrier had discouraged international skilled labours in general from working in the UK.

The only graduate who finally took up full-time employment in Britain was allowed to do so because of her dependent visa. She found a full-time job 3 months after her student visa expired, when the dependent visa allowed her to stay and to seek employment in the UK. Even after she managed to find a full-time administrative job at Oxford University, she claimed that she could not get a normal work visa but had to depend on the dependent visa granted because of her husband. A detailed account of her case will be seen in Sunny's individual case study later.

4.3.4.3.2 Economy status difference between China and the UK

The economy in China has been booming during the last three decades. Interviewees who went back to China were concerned about the economic situation and the employment rate in the UK. In comparing the two countries, both the economic situation and the employment rate in China are better than those in Britain. This contributed to graduates going back to China after finishing their studies in the UK.

4.3.4.3.3 Impact of Employment proactivity

The main reason for seeking employment in the UK was to gain work experience in an advanced country; it was believed this could help with a future career back in China.

The following table shows employment proactivity (both pre-application and application stages and for both full-time and part-time employment) and its impact on employment intention in the UK, based on information generated from interviews

longitudinally. This table summarises information from only those who participated in all three sets of interviews to better illustrate the longitudinal changes.

Table 18. Longitudinal change of relationship between employment proactivity and employment intention in the UK (including full-time, part-time, and internship).

		Subgroup 1 — Applied job in UK & in UK at last												Subgroup 2 — Not applied job in UK &				Subgroup 3 — Applied job in UK & in China at last																					Subgroup 4 — Not applied job & in China at last																													
		SQR				ZYY				FF				HYH				SB				GS				CL				LXD				WYQ				MY				HY				WY				HD				CZ				CY				WJ				SL			
Interviewees		JI	P	A	IO	JI	P	A	IO	JI	P	A	IO	JI	P	A	IO	JI	P	A	IO	JI	P	A	IO	JI	P	A	IO	JI	P	A	IO	JI	P	A	IO	JI	P	A	IO	JI	P	A	IO	JI	P	A	IO	JI	P	A	IO	JI	P	A	IO	JI	P	A	IO	JI	P	A	IO	JI	P	A	IO
1st Round	During study	v	X	X	N	v	X	X	N	X	X	X	N	X	X	X	N	v	X	X	N	v	v	X	v	v	X	X	N	v	X	X	N	v	X	X	N	v	X	X	N	v	X	X	N	v	X	X	N	v	X	X	N	v	X	X	N	X	X	X	N	v	v	v	X	v	X	X	N
	After study	v	X	X	N	v	X	X	N	v	X	X	N	v	X	X	N	X	X	X	N	v	X	X	N	v	X	X	N	v	X	X	N	v	X	X	N	v	X	X	N	v	X	X	N	v	X	X	N	v	X	X	N	v	X	X	N	X	X	X	N	v	X	X	N	X	X	X	N
2nd Round	During study	↘	v	v	v	X	X	X	N	O	O	O	N	v	v	X	X	↘	v	X	v	v	v	v	v	↘	v	v	X	↘	v	v	v	v	v	X	v	v	v	X	N	↘	v	X	v	v	v	v	X	v	v	v	X	v	v	X	X	X	X	X	N	↘	X	X	N	v	X	X	N
	After study	↘	v	v	v	v	v	X	X	↘	v	X	X	v	X	X	N	X	X	X	N	↘	v	v	v	↘	v	v	X	X	X	X	N	↘	v	X	v	X	X	X	N	↘	v	X	v	v	v	X	X	X	X	X	N	v	X	X	N	X	X	X	N	↘	X	X	N	X	X	X	N
3rd Round	Since 2 round	↘	v	v	v	v	v	v	X	v	v	v	X	↗	X	X	N	↗	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	X	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	X	X	X	X	N	X	X	X	N	v	X	X	N	X	X	X	N	v	X	X	N	v	X	X	N	v	X	X	N	v	X	X	N
	Short time work in future	↘	X	X	N	v	X	X	N	↘	X	X	N	v	X	X	N	X	X	X	N	O	O	O	N	X	X	X	N	v	X	X	N	v	X	X	N	X	X	X	N	X	X	X	N	v	X	X	N	v	X	X	N	v	X	X	N	v	X	X	N	v	X	X	N	X	X	X	N
	Long time work in future	↘	X	X	N	X	X	X	N	X	X	X	N	v	X	X	N	X	X	X	N	O	O	O	N	X	X	X	N	X	X	X	N	X	X	X	N	X	X	X	N	X	X	X	N	v	X	X	N	X	X	X	N	X	X	X	N	X	X	X	N	X	X	X	N	X	X	X	N

Code:

JI	Job Intention in UK
JP	Job Proactivity
P	Pre-application activity
A	Application activity
IO	JP Impact on Intention

√	Yes
X	No
O	Didn't mention
↗	Willingness increased
↘	Willingness decreased but not none
N	Not Applicable

There are at least two levels of information that can be interpreted from the above table: 1) for those who claimed they intended to find employment in the UK, whether they undertook any job proactivity, and how and why; 2) for those who had undertaken job proactivity, whether their job proactivity impacted on their employment intention, and how and why.

4.3.4.3.4 Educational experience

Educational experiences influenced the employment intentions of the respondents. This was particularly the case during the second round when interviewees had just finished all the courses which involved class interactions. Both classroom interactions and group working for seminars gave them opportunities to communicate and work with local students and other international students. The atmosphere of working with local students as part of a team evoked both positive and negative feelings, depending on how well they cooperated with the natives. Problems encountered by the interviewees during team work for seminars made them realise that there were potential problem for team-working with colleagues in the UK employment environment in the future.

In comparison, after the third-round interviews, interviewees had less opportunity to interact with local students as their focus was on their individual dissertations and seeking employment afterwards. Less interaction may lead to less time spent on giving thought to their impressions of the UK, both positively and negatively.

4.3.4.3.5 Living experience

There were changes in the impact of living experiences in the UK on intentions to work in the UK between the second and third round. The influences were easier to detect in the second round than in the third round. In the second round, both positive and negative influences were mentioned frequently, whilst in the third round, answers were more focused on the positive. The negative influence seemed to disappear, and the impact on employment intention also seemed weaker. The reasons for the differences in the influences between the second and third round may be related to the change of living environment at the different interview times. When the second-round interviews took place, respondents were living in the UK, where any difficulty occurring in life in the UK would affect them immediately. When the third-round interviews took place,

most respondents were in China and were no longer experiencing living difficulties in the UK.

4.3.4.3.6 Discrimination

Many interviewees believed racial discrimination played a more significant role in the UK than gender discrimination. In particular, one interviewee provided a ranking list for races which she felt reflected British people's beliefs, namely UK nationals are better than European are better than Indian are better than Chinese.
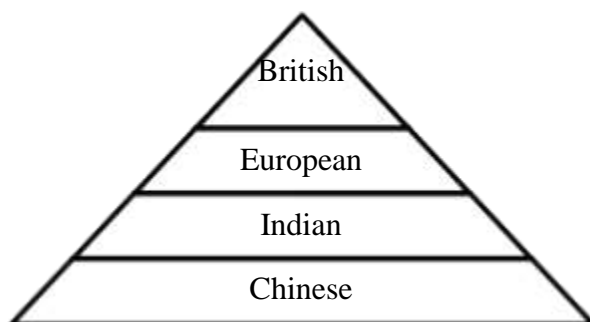
One reason that discrimination in Britain would not influence the willingness to work in the UK is because interviewees had perceived the existence of discrimination even before they came to the UK.

In terms of gender discrimination, every interviewee thought that gender discrimination in China was worse than gender discrimination in Britain, but this was not a strong enough reason for them to continue seeking employment in the UK.

All interviewees perceived male Chinese students in the UK would face the same degree of difficulties when seeking employment in the UK. Ethnic discrimination was the reason claimed for such a perception. Interviewees felt that the main problem lay in the nationality differences rather than the gender differences. Some interviewees even perceived Chinese male students would face more difficulties than Chinese females would. Female students were considered more active in class, and males as not working as hard as females.

All interviewees thought it would be easier for Chinese women to find employment from Chinese employers in the UK. In relation to the question of whether Chinese employers would discriminate against Chinese employees in the UK, more interviewees

believed Chinese employers would not discriminate against their own nationals. One interviewee thought it depended on the size of the company and on whether the customers were mainly White British. Reasons for believing Chinese employers would discriminate against Chinese employees included insufficient English-language skills of Chinese employees, and communication barriers if the customers were mainly White British and the colleagues were mainly White British.

4.3.4.3.7 Geographical concerns

The sociocultural difference between North East England and London was also discussed by participants in the third-round interviews. In the third-round interviews, most interviewees had gone to China after their 1-year taught masters' studies in the UK. Only four participants were still in the UK. Of the four, three were studying and only one had managed to find a full-time job at Oxford. Of the three students, two were doing PhD studies in the North East, and one was pursuing another masters degree in London.

People in London were considered to be indifferent. The interviewee who was studying in London claimed that everyone in London seemed only to take care of themselves, while in the North East people turned out to be more warm-hearted. However, London was regarded as a convenient place to live with lots of activities, while shops in the North East closed too early, thus were inconvenient. Nevertheless, with a number of activities taking place in London, this metropolitan city is noisier than the city in the North East and life in the North East is more peaceful.

Although people in the North East were believed to be nicer than people in London and Oxford, there were less employment opportunities in the North East. According to the interviewee who was studying in London, London was not only better for employment opportunities but also more diversified and thus had less discrimination than in the North East. Both the interviewee in London and the interviewee in Oxford perceived that London and Oxford had less discrimination due to the multicultural environment and was more open compared with the North East. They felt that the North East was quieter and had more locals, and that people in the North East were conservative.

Reasons for choosing London to continue her study were mentioned by the interviewee studying there. First she considered London because of her subject of study: Finance in London was much more developed than in the North East. Accordingly, employment opportunities in the Finance field were relatively greater in London. With a diversified working environment, London provided comparably more opportunities in employment for international employees. Another factor that motivated her to choose London was the networking opportunity, which was considered vital to her for either seeking employment in the UK or working in a multinational enterprise in China for her future career.

4.3.4.3.8 Cultural differences in the perception of women

For those who had gone back to China, the majority were working as full-time employees, with a few still seeking full-time employment in China. None of the girls wished to take part-time jobs, take a gap year or be full-time housewives and unemployed.

The different perceptions of females between the two countries contributed to shaping the interviewees' decisions. Family responsibility along with pressure from family and society were reported to be significant when deciding to return to the home country after graduation in the UK.

Among the 23 interviewees, three girls married after graduating from the UK HE institution. The three married interviewees are staying in the city with their husbands. Females who are in their late 20s or older and unmarried are considered as *Sheng nü* in China. Chinese parents frequently push their children to get married before their children become a *Sheng nü*. In addition, the parents of all interviewees are in China, and most friends of the interviewees are also in China. In Chinese culture, girls are supposed to stay close to family members and are responsible for taking care of the elderly when needed. The One-Child Policy in China has made the responsibility for taking care of the elderly greater for the children, as there are no more sisters or brothers to share the responsibility. Therefore, most interviewees claimed that they had to or should go back to China due to such responsibility.

4.3.4.4 Future career planning

In terms of future career planning, three aspirations were most frequently mentioned by interviewees. The first career aspiration was to accumulate working experience, followed by promotion. The third career aspiration was to find a job that the interviewee liked. Most interviewees had found a job in the industry related to their subject of study, but thought their jobs were either too low position or required them to stay for a long time (such as a 5-year contract as a cashier in a bank in China). Some interviewees who had found jobs as trainees felt stressed because they had not been definitively allocated to a specific department yet. One trainee complained that they had to work harder or even work at weekends in order not to be seen as weaker or lazier than other trainees, particularly in front of the senior workers. Some interviewees had found a job unrelated to what they had learned at university, so they considered changing back to the original track when given a suitable opportunity.

When asked whether they were willing to travel in the UK, all interviewees gave a positive answer. In relation to working in the UK, answers were varied. Most interviewees hoped to work in the UK even for a short time, but they thought the opportunities for doing so were scarce. Visa barriers and family responsibilities were the main factors preventing them from working in the UK.

4.4 Stereotypes of the Chinese in the UK

4.4.1 Perception of British people's views towards Chinese students in Britain

Other views towards the Chinese in the UK were discussed by the interviewees. Discussion on this topic is in two parts. The first part is interviewees' responses to an open-ended question of "Generally in the UK, how do you think others view the Chinese/Chinese students?" and the second is based on Turner's (2006) 'model' Chinese student. The open-ended answers include hardworking, good memory, good cooking skills, friendly, good at designing PowerPoint slides, speaking good English, being smart and highly intelligent, good at Maths, minimising trouble-making, high level of trust in each other, collaborative, collective, independent, conservative, uptight, indirect, staying within the Chinese group and isolated from non-Chinese, industrious, unwillingness to leave one's comfort zone, not speaking out, enjoying speaking in Chinese in public and in group discussions, too shy, laziness and cheating. For example, one interviewee perceived others viewed the Chinese students as conservative. She held

that by keeping silent, Chinese students were thought to be conservative. She gave an example of a Chinese student who was quiet in class:

> For example, the guy I know who achieved 3 or 4 highest score in all exams, the Chinese boy is always silent. He usually does not interact with the lecturer or the tutor. But he can achieve the highest mark. So perhaps I think the others will regard us as very conservative, very silent, and a little bit shy, but very hardworking, but in a very quiet way. (CZ)

The Chinese student in this example showed the joint characteristics of being hardworking, silent and not interactive in classroom activities. This reflected Durkin's (2004) findings that classroom interaction and argumentativeness are rarely seen in a Chinese class.

One interviewee thought Chinese students may be perceived as poorly educated in terms of manners. She saw a sign on a toilet wall saying, "Don't throw the towel into the toilet" in Chinese. After seeing this sign, she realised the Chinese had become a group that had been singled out. She said, "Why ain't [don't] people write in Japanese, in other language, but [just] in Chinese?" The Chinese students in her case were stereotyped as people who were poorly educated in terms of following social disciplines. Her impression of why Chinese students were singled out in the toilet sign was,

> It's a kind of discrimination, because how do you know it is Chinese who do that. How do you know? … Perhaps it is the Chinese who really do this kind of thing. Or perhaps it's just a kind of imagination that you Chinese throw this. It's kind of prejudice. (HY)

Turner (2006) conducted research on stereotypes with a group of Chinese students. He interviewed Chinese students enrolled in a 1-year taught masters programme at Newcastle University. In his study, he drew archetypes of 'model' Chinese students. Interview questions under this theme involve both open-ended and closed questions. Respondents were first asked an open question on what they thought of others' views towards the Chinese in the UK. After providing open answers on their perceptions, interviewees were asked their opinions on a set of closed questions. The closed questions on this theme were designed based on Turner's model (2006). The following table (Table 19) shows each interviewee's views towards Turner's archetypes.

Table 19. Perceptions of how others view Chinese students (First Round).

	Hard working	Passive-receptive learner	Highly competitive with others in cohort, strives to be the 'best'	Combines intellectual capability and 'good' moral behaviour - a good citizen	Responds to teacher direction obediently and adopts both structure and substance of the study according to teacher direction	Does not question accepted norms and ideas in the classroom	Learns within defined disciplinary rules and boundaries and lacks creativity
I01	D	A	A	A	A	A	DnK
I02	D	A	D	DnM	A	A	A
I03	A	A	A	DnM	A	A	A
I04	A	A	A	D	DnM	DnM	DnM
I05	A	A	A	D	A	A	A
I06	A	A	A	A	A	A	A
I07	A	DnK	DnK	D	D	D	A
I08	D	A	D	A	D	D	A
I09	A	A	A	DnK	A	A	A
I10	D	A	D	DnM	DnM	DnM	DnM
I11	DnK	A	DnK	DnK	DnK	DnK	DnK
I12	A	D	A	A	D	A	A

I13	A	A	D	A	A	A	DnK
I14	A	D	D	D	A	D	A
I15	A	A	A	A	A	A	A
I16	A	A	A	A	A	A	A
I17	A	A	D	A	A	A	D
I18	A	A	D	A	A	A	D
I19	D	A	A	A	A	A	**A =** to learn within rules, and **D =** lacks creativity
I20	A	A	A	A	A	D	A
I21	D	A	D	A	A	A	A
I22	A	A	A	A	A	A	A
I23	A	D	D	D	DnK	A	D
I24	D	A	**A** in scores, and **D** in class participation	A	A	D	A

Codes: A=Agree; D=Disagree; DnK=Did not know; DnM=Did not mention

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The above data can be summarised in the following more integrated information.

	Hard working	Passive-receptive learner	Highly competitive with others in cohort, strives to be the 'best'	Combines intellectual capability and 'good' moral behaviour - a good citizen	Responds to teacher direction obediently and adopts both structure and substance of the study according to teacher direction	Does not question accepted norms and ideas in the classroom	Learns within defined disciplinary rules and boundaries and lacks creativity
A	16	20	13	14	17	16	15.5
D	7	3	9	5	3	5	3.5
DnK	1	1	2	2	2	1	3
DnM	0	0	0	3	2	2	2
Total	24	24	24	24	24	24	24

Codes: A=Agree; D=Disagree; DnK=Did not know; DnM=Did not mention

As can be seen in the above table, among the seven categories, the perception of "passive-receptive learner" was the view most agreed on, followed by "responds to teacher's direction obediently", "hard working" and "does not question accepted norms" in the first-round interviews.

The perceptions in the first set of interviews were the perceptions that existed in interviewees' minds without first-hand evidence. Having had contact with the British students through classroom observation and social activities, some interviewees changed their perceptions. The answers from the first two rounds of interviews are summarised in Table 20.

Table 20. Perceptions of how others view Chinese students (first round & second round).

	Hardworking		Passive-receptive learner		Highly competitive with others in cohort, strives to be the 'best'		Combines intellectual capability and 'good' moral behaviour - a good citizen		Responds to teacher direction obediently and adopts both structure and substance of the study according to teacher direction		Does not question accepted norms and ideas in the classroom		Learns within defined disciplinary rules and boundaries and lacks creativity	
I01	D	D	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	DnK	A
I02	D	A	A	D	D	N	DnM	A	A	A	A	A	A	D
I03	A	A	A	A	A	A | A	DnM	D	A	A	A	A	A	A | A
I04	A	A	A	A	A	A	D	A	DnM	A	DnM	D	DnM	A | D
I05	A	A	A	A	A	A	D	A	A	A	A	A	A	A
I06	A	D	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	DnM
I07	A	D	DnK	A	DnK	D	D	D	D	D | A	D	D	A	A | D
I08	D	D	A	A	D	D	A	A	D	A	D	D	A	A
I09	A	A	A	A	A	D	DnK	A	A	A	A	A	A	A
I10	D	A	A	N	D	N	DnM	N	DnM	N	DnM	A	DnM	A
I11	DnK	D	A	A	DnK	D	DnK	Dnk(D)	DnK	DnK	DnK	A	DnK	A
I12	A		D		A		A		D		A		A	
I13	A	A	A	A	D	AA	A	A	A	A	A	A	DnK	A(D)
I14	A	D	D	A	D	D	D	D	A	D	D	A	A	A(D)
I15	A	A	A	N	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A | D
I16	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	N	A	A	A	A
I17	A	A	A	D	D	A	A	D	A	A	A	A	D	A
I18	A	A	A	A	D	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	D	A
I19	D	A	A	A	A	D	A	A	A	A	A	A	A | D	A | D
I20	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	D	A	A	A(D)
I21	D	D	A	D	D	N	A	A	A	D	A	D	A	D
I22	A	A	A	D	A	D	A	A	A	N	A	A	A	D
I23	A	A	D	A	D	A	D	A	DnK	N	A	D	D	D
I24	D	N	A	A	A/D	DnK	A	A	A	A	D	D	A	A

Codes: A=Agree; D=Disagree; N=Neutral; DnK=Did not know; DnM=Did not mention; ()=how respondent viewed Chinese students

Table 20 shows both the continuity of and changes in interviewees' perceptions of how others view the Chinese from the first-round interviews to the second-round interviews. The blue shaded columns are answers from the second round of interviews. Compared with the first-round interviews, the 'Did not know' answers decreased significantly, owing to the new experiences and perceptions added after the first round of interviews.

The values of conducting a second round of interviews on the perceptions of how others view the Chinese included 1) most of the 'Did not know' and 'Did not mention' answers in the first-round interviews changed to an educated answer; 2) the judgement of 'neutral' was newly added in the second round of interviews as interviewees had observed new classroom activities that moved their opinions from Agree to Neutral or Disagree to Neutral; 3) in the first-round interviews only one interviewee separated one term of perception into two parts (e.g. separated the term "learns within defined disciplinary rules and boundaries and lacks creativity" to two terms: "learns within defined disciplinary rules and boundaries" and "lacks creativity"), while in the second-round interviews this situation increasingly occurred. Reasons for the changes in perceptions of how others view Chinese students included interviewees' new experiences between the first and the second round of interviews.

Most respondents in the second-round interviews still perceived that others viewed Chinese students as hard working. Respondents also addressed the fact that the Chinese students were not working harder than the other students.

The majority of respondents reported that Chinese students were not active in class. They did not ask questions or raise any issues with the teacher. Some respondents associated this quietness in class with passive-receptive learning and others did not. One interviewee explained why she did not associate being silent in class with passive-receptive learning:

> I think passive and active, we distinguish it from how we think about question, not how you perform. You are active not because you like to answer the questions and you like to respond to teacher. Just because you are active in your mind. So I don't think we are passive-receptive learner. We have many opinions in our mind. (JY)

A frequently reported reason for not striving to be the best was that interviewees believed most Chinese students just wanted a pass. A reason for some students being

highly competitive was the effect of Chinese education before coming to the UK. Interviewee FF said, "Because we are grown in an environment of fierce competition, and when we come here, we bring that kind of spirit."

Respondents believed Chinese students were viewed as good citizens based on what they observed in daily life such as following social rules and not committed any crime. For example, one interviewee said,

> After we Chinese cooked in the kitchen, we will wash all the dishes. So I think we are good citizens. (CN)

Reasons for being a good citizen were discussed by some interviewees. One reason reported by interviewee JY was that Chinese students in the UK were guests and guests should follow what the host country asks. Another interviewee regarded the good citizen behaviour as the influence of Chinese customs. She explained,

> Because we are assigned to do this or to do that from when we are very young. I mean in primary school or in kindergarten. Because we have to obey some rules. If you didn't do the homework, you will be punished. So I think it's a custom, a habit. (WY)

Some respondents perceived that others viewed Chinese students were not good citizens. For example,

> We don't like to participate in the election of all the things. We don't like to vote for anything … We are not good citizen …. I feel guilty … For the order of rubbish [recycling], I didn't put it correctly… I feel impolite. (JY)

One explanation as to why Chinese students respond to teachers' directions obediently was a perceived link between obeying the teacher and gaining high marks. One interviewee (JY) said, "We just do what the teacher said to get a high mark or to not fail in the exam." Another reason for responding to teachers' directions obediently was due to the Chinese custom. One interviewee said,

> Compared with the foreigners, we sometimes are very shy. Our parents always told us that we should be very good, very humble. We should respect teachers, respect classmates. …. We should obey them. So it's also a custom. (WY)

She introduced one characteristic of Chinese people as being shy. She explained that not being extroverted was influenced by parents. Chinese students were told by parents to respect teachers by obeying their orders. This interviewee adopted an Eastern perspective of Chinese students in the UK – that the Chinese students still followed the norms of Chinese education even in an international education context. This was in contrast to Durkin's (2008) model, which suggested postgraduate international students took the 'Middle Way' in their academic studies.

More often than not, Durkin's (2008) 'Middle Way' approach can be seen in Chinese students in the UK. Several interviewees held that instead of criticising a teacher directly in class, Chinese students were more likely to ask a teacher questions after class such as by email. As Durkin (2008) claimed in the 'Middle Way' approach, East Asian postgraduate students in the UK adopt a gentler way of critiquing, rather than freely expressing themselves as Western students do.

Reasons for not questioning norms and ideas in the classroom were due to the Chinese learning style and not understanding the course content. The Chinese learning style was described as listening to the teacher without independent thought during class, and after class digesting and reflecting on what was covered in class. Not understanding the course content was due to insufficient preparation, the language barrier, and the demands of the course. In terms of the insufficient preparation, two interviewees said,

> Our Chinese people don't prepare for the lecture before we have lectures, don't even read articles before we started to write the summative. So we are usually accustomed to the teachers ask you to do this or do that. (WY)

> You didn't prepare very well and when you attend the lecture, you can't understand all the things from the lecturer, and the element of language, so most of them would do the study by themselves at home or at library. (HD)

Both interviewees regarded being poorly prepared before class as the reason that Chinese students did not ask questions in class. Instead of learning in class, the main process of learning for Chinese students, as interviewee (HD) suggested, was independent study after class. This echoes the literature on the Chinese way of independent study, which states that the knowledge is first input and understanding comes later through times of reflective practices (see Jin and Cortazzi, 2006; Watkins and Biggs, 2001).

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One explanation given for not questioning during class but after class was that Chinese students only raised questions and critiques after fully listening and understanding the teacher's points. This reflects Thayer-Bacon's (1993) argument that Eastern students value others in a sensitive way by listening to others' views carefully until they are fully understood before making any criticism.

Another explanation for not questioning the teacher in class was based on the different views on the relationship between teachers and students. One interviewee brought up the point that the status of teacher was regarded as higher than that of the students in China. She said,

> It's like something we will tend to think like we are not equal. Students and teachers are not equal. If you question your teacher, that means you don't respect them. (SL)

Several interviewees held that Chinese students were thought of as lacking creativity by others, but they believed Chinese students were not lacking creativity. One reason for seeming to lack creativity but actually not was due to not being expressive.

Chinese students were described as "not act out" [not extroverted] and "not show out" [showing off]. Reasons for not showing off were due to being shy and unconfident about their English language skills. Respondent FF said Chinese students were afraid that the teacher may not understand them, which made them think they would lose face.

Another reason for not being creative, only argued by one interviewee, was due to their level of academic achievement. This interviewee thought both master and undergraduate level students could not be creative because they know little about their study field. She explained,

> For creativity, I think to be creative needs time. People only can be creative after they thoroughly understand the stuff they are studying. If you just know a little bit about it, how can you be creative? … (HY)

In the existing literature, researchers share the view that Chinese students are shaped by the basic rule of respect for authorities and their superiors, and loyalty to superiors and family such as filial piety, and that the Chinese identity has emerged from

Confucianism (Chan, 1999; Woodrow & Sham, 2001). Characteristics of Chinese students as learners identified by Nakarama (cited in Redding, 1990) include the concern for reconciliation, harmony and balance and the emphasis on the notion of tangible evidence. The Chinese way of learning has been analysed as a traditional didactic model by Friere (1972, cited in Liu 2009), which sees students as empty vessels and teachers having the responsibility to fill them up with knowledge. The knowledge here is focused on scientific and practical knowledge rather than critical judgement and creative ideas. Confucianism sees learning and knowledge as the same, and learning focuses on practical knowledge such as mathematical calculations (e.g. Lee, 1996). Chinese learning approaches concentrate on repetitive and memory-based learning (Mok *et al.*, 2001). This may explain why Chinese students are seen as good at memorising. The theoretical base of being hardworking starts from Confucianism's perception which equates learning with labour. Repetitive hard work is a vehicle for effective deeper learning, and requires significant physical input (Zhaowu, 1998). An individual's cognitive ability is not considered, the focus instead is on memorising difficult material. At the same time, disciplined concentration is emphasised for conducting the repetitive memorising work. Meanwhile, critical engagement is not recommended as meditative memorisation is the central activity of learning (Mok *et al.*, 2001), therefore Chinese students are lacking in practice on critical thinking.

4.4.2 Respondents' views towards Chinese students in Britain

Aside from the perceptions of the non-Chinese views towards Chinese students, several interviewees expressed their own understanding of Chinese students in the UK. One interviewee (CZ) divided the Chinese students in the UK into four types, including hard worker, culture-addicts, domesticated and lazy. The first type, hard workers, represent those students who try their best to get high scores. According to this interviewee,

> The first one is the hard working. You can find them in the library, sitting in the front row of the classroom, and asking questions to the professor whenever the class is dismissed. They are just spare no effort to get the best in class, and perhaps for the scholarship to further their study here. They want to make full use of their tuition and expenses in order to become educated. They are doing very good. (CZ)

The second type, culture-addicts, represent students who are interested in being involved in British life. They are more likely to attend social activities like formal dinners and various parties. The third type, domesticated, represent those who spend

more of their spare time keeping in contact with domestic friends or family in China. The fourth type, lazy, are students who are too lazy to study hard in class or to participate in social activities and interact with British people. These four types can be seen either individually or combined. This interviewee (CZ) categorised herself as lazy.

In one of the first-round interviews, one interviewee pointed out that the Chinese students were less motivated than their local counterparts.

> I think the foreign students choose to get a master degree because they're really interested in this field. They have the motivation. But for our Chinese students, they maybe just want a degree, they don't have so strong motivation to study hard. (CL)

Study attitude is affected by the weak motivation to study. Another interviewee pointed out the reason behind the difference in study motivation between Chinese students and local students. She explained,

> Actually the local people are … they often have working experiences when they come to study for the master degree. Because they really figured out what they want to do, they really interested in this kind of things; but in China we do a lot of things not because we are interested but because we have to do it. Under the social pressure, we just want a stable job. So we are never interested in this kind of things, compared with local people. (SQR)

In terms of gender difference, almost no interviewees brought up the differences in stereotypes between Chinese women and Chinese men. Only one interviewee (SQR) was concerned about the difference between males and females in terms of work ethic. She commented,

> I think there's maybe difference between male and female in terms of the hardworking. Because some of my female friends are just like to pass the exam and get a master degree. Because females tend to have satisfied with stable life and they can have stable family and stable job, they will be very satisfied; but male may not. So in terms of the master degree, they may not want a very high score. (SQR)

This interviewee perceived female Chinese students to be more easily satisfied with their scores as long as they could pass the exams and get the degree, compared with male Chinese students. The interviewee proposed that a stable life with stable family

and a stable job could satisfy Chinese females, while males may want high performance in life and work.

In terms of the reactions towards the stereotypical views, interviewees chose to acknowledge the labels which they believed were positive and reject those labels considered negative. A few interviewees held that they just ignore the labels which are given to the Chinese in Britain, and they try to be themselves.

In terms of the impact of the perceptions, most interviewees felt that the perceptions impacted on the chances of Chinese students gaining employment in the UK. The most positive influence was being hardworking; interviewees believed that employers liked to hire hardworking employees, therefore increasing the chances of Chinese people gaining employment in the UK. Another positive perception for employment was obedience. Always obeying the rules is considered preferential to employers. The negative influence lay in the lack of creativity, which is also identified by Philo (2007). Interviewees believed Chinese students lacked creative ability, which is a drawback in employment competitions. One interviewee argued that the perceptions had no influence on the chances of Chinese students gaining employment in Britain, because UK employers prefer Western countries' graduates due to language and visa issues, whereas Chinese stereotypes have little impact.

4.4.3 Respondents' views towards female Chinese workers in the UK

Compared with the Chinese women in China, Chinese women in the UK are perceived to be more independent, harder working and more open.

Most interviewees perceived that female Chinese workers in the UK faced gender discrimination in general. In detail, no interviewee believed that female Chinese workers in the UK may be denied maternity leave. Almost every interviewee thought female Chinese workers in the UK may be moved to a slow track with fewer promotion opportunities. Most interviewees felt that female Chinese workers in Britain would not be propositioned, as Chinese females are not sexy enough and Chinese girls are not open enough. Interviewees who believed female Chinese workers in the UK would be propositioned held that the local people were interested in Chinese girls and Chinese girls are generally shy and may not dare to say no. Most interviewees perceived the boundaries between work and family applied across countries, including the UK and

China. In relation to whether female Chinese workers in the UK are seen as inferior or subordinate, responses were varied and there was no majority answer for this question. The same situation arose on the question of whether female Chinese workers in the UK are measured by male-generated standards.

All interviewees believed that female Chinese workers in the UK share similar values and attitudes, though the specific values and attitudes were perceived differently. The similar perceptions interviewees held on the attitudes and values of female Chinese workers in the UK were that they are independent and hardworking. Some interviewees thought female Chinese workers in Britain were humble, shy and conservative, while others perceived female Chinese workers in the UK to be open and enjoy socialising with the locals. The attitudes towards work were also varied. Chinese women who pay more attention to their husband and children were considered as not sharing similar values to themselves and as living a comfortable life. Chinese women who regard work as substantially important were perceived to work extremely hard. In terms of English-language skills, some interviewees claimed that female Chinese in the UK speak fluent English, while others held that they don't express themselves. The reasons for this lack of expressiveness included language barriers, differences in the way of thinking and characteristic differences.

The reasons for being isolated were considered to involve self-protection and being comfortable. Overseas Chinese women would isolate themselves from other groups to protect themselves from being bullied by non-Chinese people. Keeping isolated from other social groups while connecting within the Chinese group can make life easier, in a comfort zone, with fewer challenges.

Female Chinese workers were considered to be more hardworking than male Chinese workers, as females needed to work harder to earn equal rights.

Almost all interviewees except one perceived that female Chinese workers in the UK reframe themselves to change others' attitudes towards them. Only one respondent disagreed with claims that female Chinese workers in Britain were just being themselves without reframing anything.

4.5 Concluding remarks

This chapter has illustrated the aggregated findings of this research, based on data collected from three waves of interviews. The findings were structured in themes generated from data coding. The first theme was on motivators for choosing an international education destination, from both a country perspective and an institutional perspective. The next theme was the impression of the UK and its longitudinal changes. The theme on perceptions of the Chinese in the UK was then discussed. The intention to work in the UK also changed across the three sets of interviews, and such changes were caused by various factors such as employment visa policy in the UK, economy status difference between the UK and China, unsatisfactory employability, employment proactivity, living experience difficulties and cultural differences. Since this chapter presented the findings in sections of themes, it is difficult to give the reader a whole picture of the experiences of female Chinese students. The next chapter, therefore, will present the detailed experiences of the chosen individuals from when they entered the UK until 6 months after finishing their master's study.

Chapter Five: Case Study Discussions

After the aggregated findings, it is useful to present several individual case studies to give the reader a more in-depth understanding of the transition of experiences and perceptions. The individual cases not only present more detail on the themes discussed in the aggregated findings, but also illustrate the transitional experiences and perceptions more vividly. Individual cases give a better understanding of the longitudinal changes across the three stages. This chapter will discuss two case studies from the beginning of the overseas study journey until 6 months after finishing the 1-year taught postgraduate course. Sunny's case was chosen because she was the only respondent who managed to gain full-time employment in the UK. Cherry's case was selected because she reported most on the discrimination experience and she was the only respondent who did not have any intention to work in the UK when she was studying in the UK.

5.1 Case One: Sunny's Story

5.1.1 First-round interview

Sunny came to the UK for her pre-sessional English training 1 month before her taught postgraduate course commenced. In common with the majority of respondents, the most important things that attracted her to the UK were the 1-year length of the course and the traditional culture of Britain. In choosing the particular HE institution, she made her choice based on the traditionality and long history of the institution, the nature and human culture of the country, and a friend's influence. She believed "the culture here is better." When she talked about "culture", she meant "the way people live and the way people there think."

Although she regarded herself as an adaptable person, Sunny was still in the adapting phase when the first interview occurred. She saw a lot of things were different between China and the UK and she had a "totally new experience every day." Since experiencing new things was her expectation before coming, she enjoyed adapting.

Her first impression of the university was that institutional buildings and facilities were separated and distributed across different parts of the city. Sunny had a small problem when interacting with one of her European classmates. Sunny seemed to find it hard to distinguish the British from other Europeans; she mixed up westerners of different ethnicities. When she said she would talk about her experience of interaction with the locals, she actually told a story of her interaction with an Italian classmate. She had casually chatted with the Italian classmate about a film that the teacher suggested students watch. The Italian classmate took the chat seriously and proposed meeting to watch the film together and then have a group discussion. Sunny felt "embarrassed" as she perceived film watching was only for pleasure. She did not watch the film with the Italian classmate and did not do the group discussion.

Sunny also experienced difficulties in her academic study. Her subject of study was different from when she was an undergraduate, therefore she found the academic knowledge was difficult for her to learn. She said, "It's very hard for me to learn the business, because I don't have the business background so it's very hard for me to learn so much totally new knowledge." Another challenge in her academic life was the difficulty in understanding what the teachers were saying. She explained the reasons as,

> Because there is language difficulty, and also the way of thinking I think is totally different. Even if they say [speak in] Chinese but the way of teaching is different from China and here.

This echoes the literature on Chinese students' academic obstacles in Chapter Three. Due to cultural differences, people in different cultures think differently. One possible explanation is that Chinese students are unfamiliar with the norms of British academia. British academia emphasises logic and reasoning, which is much influenced by Socrates and Aristotle. In addition, cultures unfamiliar with the notion of critical thinking may lead to an incapacity to engage in critical thinking in education.

Before coming to the UK, Sunny expected to gain academic knowledge in her new subject and to experience British culture. Sunny's first impression of the country was its "beautiful scenery" and nice people. Before entering the country, she imagined the UK as an old-fashioned and historical country, and the British people to be very conservative and not open-minded towards foreign people. After arrival, she changed her mind, in that she now felt British people were nice to foreigners. On the day of her

arrival, a stranger offered to help take photos for her when she needed. She spoke highly of British people being respectful of others' opinions. Sunny viewed the locals as a nice group of people, both within and outside the university. Her interactions with college staff were also pleasant. For example, on the first day she came to the UK she forgot her address. One of the college staff brought her with their own mobile phone to help her find her address. People outside of the university were also friendly towards her. She asked shop staff for various information such as "Where can I get the cheapest things?" Shop staff always smiled at her when talking to her. She appreciated the Tesco staff being friendly to her and they chatted with her when she paid for food. This made her feel comfortable. She also got help from local residents. A local lady told her what to do when her bus happened to break down. A train passenger provided her with advice on how to take a train in the UK when she took a wrong train due to a lack of knowledge of the train system.

Sunny, however, had several unpleasant experiences when she interacted with local people. She felt some British people were not interested in talking with her and stayed in their own ethnic groups. She blamed the difficulty in interacting with the British on a thinking pattern difference rather than a language difference. Sunny encountered difficulty in understanding the transport system. When taking a train journey which required a change at York station, she got on the wrong train after changing. She did not know that the advanced train tickets were only allowed to get on a certain train instead of any train. As a result, she had to pay extra money for not taking the required train.

During this time in the UK Sunny did not directly experience racial discrimination. She reported racial discrimination experienced by her classmate. Her classmate who queued was refused entry onto a bus, while a White person who had not queued was allowed to get on by the bus driver.

Although she had unpleasant interactions and had been charged extra money on train tickets due to insufficient knowledge of the transport system, Sunny held a positive general impression of the UK, stating, "I like it and enjoy the life here."

Sunny had her English name several years before she came to the UK. She chose this English name because a) it was the same name of her favourite singer, and b) she liked the letter 'S'. The reason she liked the letter 'S' was because her Chinese surname

begins with the letter 'S'. When introducing herself to a non-Chinese speaker she preferred using her English name. The reason she preferred using the English name was because she perceived pronouncing her Chinese name to be very difficult for non-Chinese speakers. She did not have any intention of hiding her real name when using her English name. Having an English name made her feel a little more British and she used it as a way to adapt easily. Her experience during the pre-sessional course made her decide to use her English name with non-Chinese speakers. In her first class, her teacher called her by her Chinese name, and she could not recognise her Chinese name with an English accent. From then all of her classmates decided to use her English name instead of her Chinese name.

Sunny thought that British people might have misunderstandings about the Chinese, but in a good way. She thought the British overvalued the Chinese, in that Chinese people were perceived to have a higher level of trust with other Chinese and were collaborative rather than individualistic. These stereotypes were not the case in China, claimed Sunny. Regarding how others view Chinese students, Sunny viewed them as hardworking, lacking creativity, very good at memorising, less interactive or silent in class, highly competitive with others in their cohort in terms of scores, obediently responsive to teacher direction, not questioning accepted norms and ideas in class, and learning within defined disciplinary rules and boundaries. These views were based on her observations in class.

Sunny differentiated between females and males in terms of work ethic. She viewed that females tended to be more easily satisfied with a stable life, stable family and stable job, while male were less easily satisfied. Her female friends were satisfied with a pass rather than a high score for their master's degree. She saw another difference between the Chinese students and the British students in terms of motivation for a master's degree. She perceived that the British students had work experience and had figured out what they wanted and their interests before starting a master's degree. In comparison Chinese students were "never interested" in studying for their master's but did so under social pressure for a stable job.

These stereotypes towards the Chinese were perceived to have some impact on the chances of Chinese students gaining employment in the UK. The stereotypes and the misunderstandings made it hard for Westerners to understand the way in which Chinese

people think. This led to a difficult situation for Chinese students trying to gain employment in the UK.

Sunny had intended to seek employment in the UK, although she was not confident of the result. She "definitely" wanted a full-time job after her study and "maybe" would do an internship during her study. She perceived that finding a part-time job was harder than finding an internship. Regarding the preference of industry for her intended job, she did not "care" about the industry as long as she could work in the HR department. She hoped to start at the first level. Her purpose for working during her study was to gain work experience and to combine theoretical learning with practical implementation. Her expectation for full-time employment after her study was to get a stable job, to learn useful skills, to experience self-achievement and to earn a salary. Potential challenges she expected when trying to gain employment in the UK were language difficulties, a different mindset, lack of work experience, cultural adaptation difficulties and racial discrimination. Her view on racial discrimination from employers in the UK was that it was not only against Chinese students but against all non-British people. She perceived such discrimination was due to a lack of understanding of other cultures and the burden of sponsoring work visas for international employees.

Sunny's story in the first interview links to the experiences and perceptions of many other participants. Similar to Sunny, the majority of respondents in the first round of interviews had employment intentions; no respondents had any employment proactivity; all respondents had positive general impressions of the UK; the general impression positively influenced most participants' intention to work in the UK; the majority of participants found it difficult to interact with the British; the majority experienced difficulties in life; more than half of the participants perceived racial discrimination when living in the UK; no one had either experienced or perceived gender discrimination; more than half of the participants perceived stereotypes of the Chinese would negatively impact on the chances of Chinese students gaining employment in the UK; and none of them used an English name with the purpose of hiding their real name.

Unlike Sunny, less than half of the participants in the first round of interviews had actively interacted with the British; a small number of participants had perceived gender discrimination in the employment context; less than half of the participants felt discrimination influenced their employment intention; a small number of participants

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reported visa policies as discriminatory; a quarter of participants saw visa policies as a barrier to employment; less than half of the participants preferred using an English rather than a Chinese name; a small number felt using an English name made them more British; and around half of the participants considered their Chinese name to be part of their identity.

5.1.2 Second-round interview

When she entered the UK, Sunny was impressed by the beautiful scenery of the UK. Six months later Sunny's impression of the UK was affected by the weather. She considered the weather in winter to be "terrible" and the daytime was too short, with very long nights. She did not like the fact that she could not see the sun often. At times she felt depressed. Her impression of the weather did not change her view that the British people were nice and helpful. Her impression of the university was that it was "great" for holding a lot of social activities and academic seminars. The only thing that bothered her was that the department was far away from the city centre and other colleges. Her impression of her programme of study was that she "liked" it, as sources for learning were various; she learned not only directly from the teacher but also from other teacher-guided platforms.

Sunny's transition process at this stage was described as "boring" compared with her initial experience. When she started her life in the UK everything was new, and she did not expect life would be boring. Her boredom came from the lack of entertainment at night time. She blamed this on shops in winter closing soon after 5 o'clock, which left her with nothing to do afterwards.

Sunny's interaction with the college staff was limited as she stayed outside of the college. Although she did not participate much, her impression of the college staff was positive; she regarded them as enthusiastic and helpful. This perspective was consistent after she entered the UK. She felt warmth when she received an unexpected birthday card from the college. She was happy with the service from the department staff, who she thought were nice, helpful and great. Her interaction with shop staff in the city centre was also positive. Shop staff talked with her about shopping and beyond (such as the weather), which made her feel warm.

During the first interview, Sunny regarded herself as a person who adapted easily and did not feel any difficulty in the adaption process. Since then she had experienced considerable difficulty in sociocultural adaptation. For social adaptation, she did not "like" the traffic system. She could not understand why a bus did not stop for her when she was waiting at a bus stop. At the time another bus had stopped before the one she wanted to get on, and the later one did not stop so she missed her bus. She could not figure out the exact reason for the driver not stopping for her. She said, "I think maybe there was some discrimination. Or the driver was not in a good mood that day. I tend not to regard it as discrimination." She did not report this issue to the officer in charge. Most of her social interactions, such as having dinner together, were limited to Chinese co-nationals rather than non-Chinese. One minor difficulty in her life was the limitation in the categories of food in the UK; there were not enough types for her to choose from. This made her felt somewhat homesick.

In terms of cultural adaption, she felt a cultural discrepancy after her leg was broken. In hospital, she was not allowed to have visitors for more than 2 hours per day, even when she needed friends to keep her company. This made her feel alone and afraid. She also commented, "The doctors here only know how to FIX the bones, but they don't know how to GROW the bones." The doctors she met performed surgery to fix her bones and then sent her home. They did not tell her what to do and what to eat to absorb the needed nutrition to compensate for the injury, whilst doctors in China would normally give this information. This may have been due to the different perceptions of a doctor's duty in the two countries. The doctor helped her to fix the bones but ignored her need for aftercare guidance, in her view. She did not think she could manage the necessary aftercare. She had a perception that the British doctors might find Chinese patients were too vulnerable or too sensitive. Another thing that bothered her was the inconsistency of judgement regarding recovery length. She was told she could recover in 4 to 6 weeks at the beginning. Three months later she was told she might not be fully recovered in the future. There were different statements during the whole process. She viewed this inconsistency as being due to a lack of communication between the patient and the doctor. In order to communicate with her doctor, she had to make an appointment. The appointment duration was too short for her to communicate fully with the doctor, and she would need to wait for another month for the next appointment.

Sunny continued to experience difficulties in study, as she had in the first interview. When her course started she was more troubled by the lack of background academic knowledge in her new subject. As time went by, her primary difficulty in study shifted to academic essay writing. To write an academic essay was new to her in terms of writing patterns compared with those in China. She perceived that there was insufficient interaction between the Western students and Asian students. In class, students communicated with each other only when they had a "purpose" and "not naturally". Reasons for the lack of communication were perceived as unfamiliarity and the lack of common topics of interest. In seminars, Chinese students were not as active in participation as the Westerners. When a teacher asked a question, Western students would respond frequently and Chinese students would choose to be silent. Chinese students liked to stay with their co-nationals as this made them feel safe. This was also beneficial in helping each other solve study questions.

Sunny had not started any group work during the first interview. Now she had finished all of her seminar group work. She claimed she enjoyed her experience of group work. She saw group working as a great opportunity to hone her skills, such as her cooperation and communication skills. She found an interesting phenomenon in group work. If all the group members were Chinese, they worked together to solve the problems. If the majority of the group members were Westerners, the Chinese students felt like outsiders, and vice versa. She saw this as a gap in understanding that needed to be addressed and fixed so that there would be no gap in understanding in the future. Further to Chinese students' willingness to mix with other nationalities in the context of group work, she observed the following phenomenon. If the distribution of group members was made by the department, Chinese students would definitely mix with other nationalities. If the distribution right was given to students, Chinese students formed groups with their co-nationals. For group leaders, she did not find any particular nationality that usually played the role of group leader. The outcomes of the group work experiences were mostly positive. This included the final results and communication for problem solving. There had been problems occasionally during group work. She experienced situations when tasks could not be equally distributed among members. Some members finished most of the tasks and one or two members did not participate at all. On most occasions, group members ignored the members who did not participate and finished the group tasks without the "lazy" ones. On one occasion, she heard a lot of complaints from a Thai member. The complaints from the Thai member did not have

any effect as the inactive member remained inactive. On another occasion, the only British member in a group wanted to finish all the tasks himself and ignored the strong willingness to participate from the other three Chinese female group members. She regarded these group work difficulties as a matter of cultural difference among group members. The British male who finished all of the work may have had a different mindset. He may not have had enough confidence in the Chinese group members' language ability for communication and so chose not to talk. She perceived that the British students might regard the Chinese students as not being good team members as they think in very different ways.

In terms of discrimination, Sunny had had consistent perceptions of racial discrimination from the British since entering the UK. She could not tell whether some discrimination-like experiences were real discrimination or not, such as the bus issue she experienced. She could not point out what exactly made her feel racially discriminated against, but had a feeling that had grown stronger since the time of the first interview. She did not feel gender discrimination in the UK. She perceived the gender discrimination in China was more serious than it was in the UK, therefore this did not influence her action of applying for jobs in the UK.

All her experiences to date had made Sunny view the UK as a traditional, old-fashioned country with a long history. This perspective had been consistent since first arriving in the country. People in the country were very protective of themselves, she felt. She said,

> People here are very… they want to protect themselves. They may
> sometimes not be a fan of international students or not a fan of international
> people, because they want to protect themselves.

Additionally she commented on the gentle manner of British people, and the way they would behave in a gentle way even when trying to refuse others.

After at least 5 months in the UK, Sunny's view on how others viewed Chinese students did not change in terms of work ethic. She perceived that Chinese students had clear study goals and worked very hard to fulfil these goals. However, this time she did not differentiate between the genders as she had in the first interview. She perceived Chinese students were not active enough in classes and in seminars. This perspective was consistent with the previous interview; they were receptive learners. She no longer

thought that Chinese students were highly competitive in cohorts, because she found the Chinese did not do well in both scores and general performance. This was contrary to what she had thought the last time. She perceived Chinese students to be good citizens who behaved with good morals. She observed that Chinese students responded to teacher direction obediently and adopted both the structure and substance of the study according to the teacher's directions. She also perceived Chinese students did not question accepted norms and ideas in the classroom. She observed that Chinese students learned within defined disciplinary rules and boundaries and lacked creativity. In her mind, an assignment for Chinese students was just a task to finish. What the Chinese students considered important was how to achieve a high mark rather than what knowledge the assignment would bring. In one of her assignments which required students to design a marketing communication campaign, most Chinese students chose to work on a hypothetical communication. They chose an easy way to accomplish the task without gaining much knowledge and improving real abilities. Many of the Chinese students left the assignment until 1 or 2 days before the deadline. She perceived this way of finishing the assignment would not improve the level of knowledge.

Regarding finding employment in the UK, after 6 months Sunny's intention decreased for all types of employment, including full-time, part-time and internship. She now started to think about finding a job in China, in contrast to her strong desire to stay at the beginning. She had not made any moves to seek employment at the time of the previous interview. In comparison, she had rich job proactivity at this stage. Her employment proactivity included attending career fairs, attending career workshops, searching for job information on companies' official websites, looking up job information on bbs, visiting job information websites (targetjobs), and sending her CV online. Through her job information searching process, she learned job descriptions and job requirements. Overall she was satisfied with her employment proactivity experience, as there was a wealth of job information.

At the same time, she felt less confident about gaining employment in the UK compared with when she had first arrived. She perceived gaining employment in the UK as difficult from the start. As time went by, she realised there were more barriers that would prevent her from gaining employment in the UK. Barriers increased from work ability, language ability and cultural adaptation to simply not considering international

students. The change in confidence was caused by her job-seeking experiences. Her job application process was not pleasant. She said,

> Well, sometimes I sent them a CV and they call me back and they tell me that they only recruit European people and they don't consider international students. Nothing happened [afterwards].

She regarded this discrimination as causing her to feel less confident. This made her feel it was too difficult to gain employment in the UK. She perceived that even if she found a job, she might still have difficulties in communication and adapting socially with colleagues.

Her experiences had influenced her desire to work in the UK in a negative way since the time of the first interview. Aside from the above direct discriminatory experience, another factor that lessened her confidence was that she heard that British employers preferred international students with a British bachelor's degree than international students with an international master's degree in the UK. One of her male Chinese friends who graduated from Manchester University with a bachelor's degree found a job related to his subject of study, but felt lonely due to communication difficulties with his colleagues. Next she planned to use the university career advisory service to learn what was expected from her CV for specific employment and how her future job direction could be justified.

From the second stage interview, I could see the life transition Sunny had experienced. New experiences such as racial discrimination, group working, a broken leg and employment proactivity brought her new thoughts and feelings. In addition, a familiar and deepening relationship between myself and Sunny had emerged since the first interview, therefore facilitating a discussion of apparently more mundane but personally significant life experiences such as food, hospital treatment and isolation. The change of time and the enrichment of her experience shifted some of her initial views. This was particularly the case in her intention to seek employment in the UK. Her initial desires to work in the UK were reversed in the face of mounting difficulties and a growing sense of discrimination. This has shown the value of undertaking interviews more than once. Longitudinal interviews allowed greater time to explore details of the transitional life experiences of the interviewees.

5.1.3 Third-round interview

Sunny recently started her full-time employment at a reputable British university as an administrative assistant. After finishing at *** University, she visited relatives in China and came back to the UK. After 3 months of job-hunting, she found her current job.

Her general impression of the UK was still positive. The working environment was good, but the weather was terrible. This perception of the weather was consistent with her previous two interviews. Her impression of the UK had changed some, as the process of searching for employment gave her a greater understanding of the UK. This time she saw the difficulty in gaining employment in the UK in terms of choice of study subject. She perceived that studying different subjects would influence in different ways the possibility of gaining employment in the UK. She talked in more detail about this perspective later. Her negative impression of prejudice in terms of study subject (although she perceived her study subject to be disadvantageous) did not change her decision to stay in the UK.

Her 1-year master's study positively influenced her decision, as she "had a great experience" both in university and outside. The circumstance that allowed her to remain in the UK was having a dependent visa. After graduation she got married and her husband worked in the UK. She and her husband lived in a small town where they were the only Chinese residents. The town did not even have a Chinese supermarket. She liked living there and found it peaceful. She chose this particular area because her husband had found a job there. Compared with the North East of England where she lived with more Whites, her current town was near London, with a more diversified population. She perceived her current area had less discrimination compared with the North East of England. The Northern region in her mind was more conservative and traditional, and the London area was more open, with more diverse people.

Having been in the UK for more than 12 months, Sunny still perceived that the British did not know much about Chinese people and would like to know more. She perceived that the British viewed the Chinese as hardworking, smart, making friends with co-nationals, and speaking good English, due to the British having low expectations in this regard. She considered herself as more hardworking than the British people. Compared with the Chinese people in China, she saw the Chinese in the UK as more independent, as they were far away from family and had to deal with everything on their own. She

felt she became more independent, particularly after leaving university. Compared with British females, she saw the Chinese females in the UK as more independent. Compared with British females, she saw the Chinese females in the UK as more independent, saying:

> If you really have that strong mind, you need to be very independent. You need to be very confident about yourself to live alone, to start a whole new life here.

Compared with Chinese males in the UK, she saw that Chinese females in the UK were more willing to get involved in British life, as females needed more friends and placed more value on a social life. Compared with Chinese females in China, she saw Chinese females in the UK knew how to enjoy life and were more open-minded.

Sunny held that female Chinese workers in the UK shared similar values and attitudes. This viewpoint was newly added in this interview. The similar values and attitudes included being independent, being confident about themselves, having their own thoughts, being open minded, and wanting to make friends due to loneliness. She found being a worker was far different from her student experience. When she was a student, she made friends easily as she had many classmates and several roommates. Her work environment was more complicated and she found rare opportunities to make friends.

Sunny felt gender discrimination in the UK was rare. Her impression of gender discrimination was consistent across all her interviews. She felt that the British admired female workers who had strong working abilities no matter the nationality. She also felt that female workers may have an issue with work/life balance. She perceived women had to have much more of a focus on family. There was some gender-like discrimination. Gender-like discrimination refers to discrimination against females not due to their gender but due to discrimination against the subjects female students tend to study. She said,

> I think it doesn't depend on female or male. It depends on the majors they study. If they study something [technical] related to techniques or computer, it's much easier to find a job with a sponsor.

Sunny perceived that most Chinese females liked to study social sciences or art-related subjects, while males liked to study science-related subjects such as computing and

technology. She regarded the subject being studied as an important factor that prevented Chinese females gaining employment in the UK. It was seen as difficult to gain a job in the UK in art-related subjects, and much easier to secure a job in engineering-related subjects. Her experience enhanced her belief in the effect of studying different subjects. Her husband is a Chinese male who studied engineering in the same university as her. Her husband found a full-time job with work visa sponsorship even before they finished their studies, while Sunny found her job much later and her job could not be sponsored with a work visa. Sunny regarded the only difference between her and her husband in terms of employability was the difference in their subject of study. In her mind, employers would also have concerns about language ability, cultural differences, and the ability to handle the work, when considering a Chinese applicant. From her own experience, these work-related abilities were not as important as the subject of study. No matter how good a student she was in her subject, HR-related or administrative jobs were categorised as low-skill jobs in the UK, hence these jobs would not be sponsored with a work visa.

Sunny felt racial discrimination during her employment applications. Experiencing racial discrimination was not new for her, but experiencing racial discrimination in job application was new at this stage. The racial discrimination led to her using her English name rather than her Chinese name. She perceived using an English name would make it easier for her to obtain a job, as she thought that using an English name might give the impression that she had been in the UK for a long time and knew the British work environment. The degree of racial discrimination she felt had increased compared with the last interview. She claimed such a change was due to her job proactivity.

In terms of gender discrimination, she perceived the situation would be rare because administrative jobs suit female characteristics. The degree of gender discrimination, she felt, remained low. Additionally, she experienced discrimination from Chinese employers towards Chinese employees. She was granted an interview with a Chinese employer. The Chinese employer turned her down because she did not have permanent British residency and might have to leave the UK one day.

Sunny's view on the political talk on immigration in the UK was that it was "very conservative." This reflected her previous impressions of the country in the first two interviews – that it was "old fashioned" and "traditional". She understood the British

immigration policy was to protect the interests of the British workforce, given the context that many British people were unemployed. At the same time, she considered British immigration policy as discriminating against foreigners. She spoke with several locals and found these locals perceived Chinese people had stolen their jobs because they saw a lot of Chinese people in the country. Her attitude towards the UK visa system was that she did "not like", and it was "too conservative", and reflected a discriminatory attitude on the part of the British government. Her current full-time job in a Russell university could not grant her a work visa because administrative work was categorised as a low-skill job that she could not get a sponsor for. She saw her case as a special one in that she had a husband to depend on, but most other Chinese postgraduates in the UK would not be so lucky. She thought the number of job opportunities for foreigners would increase.

Sunny would not encourage prospective Chinese students to apply for employment in the UK, because she found gaining employment and obtaining a work visa were extremely difficult, particularly for a female Chinese student. Most female Chinese students in the UK were unmarried, not studying engineering or technology-related subjects, and did not have previous full-time work experience. She had thought about giving up and becoming a housewife before she found a job.

Sunny sought employment in the UK because a) she wanted to be independent and away from China; and b) she liked the natural and social environment in the UK. Her reasons for seeking employment in the UK were consistent across her interviews. Her employment proactivity consisted of a pre-application stage and application stage. Her pre-application experiences included searching for job information on companies' official websites, looking up job information on Weibo (a Chinese Twitter website), visiting job information websites (including CWJobs, Targetjobs, Monster, Reed, Plus One Personnel, Totaljobs, and Hays), and using the university career advisory service to modify her CV. She found that her job information searching process through websites was not useful, and she did not feel satisfied with her pre-application experience with the online resources. Instead, she benefited greatly from local agencies. She got several interview opportunities through local agencies and she found her current job through a local agency.

During Sunny's application process, she sent CVs to HR recruiters and agencies, undertook several telephone interviews and face-to-face interviews, and attended a test through an agency to test her ability on Microsoft Office software. The location of jobs she targeted was in the county where her husband worked. Jobs she wanted were HR related, but she applied for general administrative jobs. The change of focus was due to the advice from local agencies. She was told that cultural differences did matter for HR jobs. She did two volunteer jobs before she found her current job. She found her volunteering work helped her to get the current job. The selection process in agencies included CV scanning, Microsoft Office skills test, and interview. Following this, the employer held another interview. She claimed the reason she got shortlisted was due to luck because the post was an urgent one and they wanted someone onboard immediately. There were only a few candidates due to the time shortage. She was asked to start work the day after her interview. She repeatedly emphasised the importance of using agencies to find employment. She believed employers trusted the agencies.

Sunny tried to immerse herself in the British culture. She had continuously put effort into this since entering the country. After beginning her employment in the UK, she listened carefully to what her British colleagues said but still could not understand. Even when she knew the meaning of each word, she could not get the point or the logic behind it. She regarded this as a cultural difference. She was willing to reframe herself to fit into the culture, but not too quickly; she wanted to experience the process of reframing. She did not agree with the point that female Chinese workers need to change themselves. In her mind, female Chinese workers did not need to change themselves and did not need to change the British, but needed to find ways to communicate to let each side understand the other. She said,

> I think we can try our best to listen to other people to find out what they are interested in and their way of thinking and what they like to talk to each other [about]. After we understand them more, we can show [more] about ourselves. It's a step of understanding each other.

Her suggested strategies for making the British better understand the Chinese were to actively show a positive attitude and respect and to practise her communication skills. Chinese workers were perceived to be "lacking the ability of trying to make other people understand" and therefore were suggested as being brave to go out or to talk with others in a public area.

A career plan for the next 5 years was a new perspective at this stage. In terms of career aspirations, Sunny did not see herself as an ambitious working woman; she would be satisfied as long as she found a HR-related job in the UK. She did not have a goal for the level of job position. She claimed the reason for her working was to avoid boredom at home and to make life interesting. She considered remaining in the UK as long as she could. Barriers she perceived that might prevent the realisation of her career hopes included cultural differences, racial discrimination, and HR-related practical knowledge.

The most obvious change from the first two interviews was the change of status. Sunny changed from a student in the first interview to a full-time employee in the UK in the third interview. Accordingly, in the third interview, a lot more experience of employment proactivity was discussed, while the first interview did not have any job proactivity and the second interview had rather limited employment application experience. Undertaking the third-round interviews led to significant data on employment proactivity and on factors that influenced any change of employment intention. Sunny had strong intentions to gain employment in the UK in the first stage. Her intention decreased in the middle stage as her employment proactivity reflected a discriminatory attitude from employers in the UK. This decrease in intention continued until she finally found her current job. Sunny's general impression of the UK was mostly positive, with a continuous slight decrease since the first interview. This decrease was caused by the accumulated experiences of living in the UK. The transition of her life went from quickly absorbing a new environment full of curiosity at the first stage, to feeling "boring [bored]" at the middle stage, to actively trying to blend into a new work environment at the final stage.

5.1.4 Concluding remarks

Sunny was the only interviewee who managed to find a full-time job under permanent contract. Although her employment intention decreased in the second and third interviews, influenced by her job proactivity experience, she did not lose her desire for employment and finally found a job in the UK. The longitudinal method is particularly valuable in her case in terms of exploring changes in employment intention, enrichment of job proactivity across time, changes in general impressions of the UK, increased perception of racial discrimination, and her adaptation to the UK both in work and in

study. Her case may provide an example of female Chinese students' experience of continuously undertaking job proactivity in the UK.

5.2 Case Two: Cherry's Story

5.2.1 First-round interview

Cherry came to the UK just before her 1-year master's course started. She was not required to attend the pre-sessional language course. In common with the majority of the research participants, the qualities that attracted her to the UK were the 1-year length of the course and the supposed tranquillity of life. Unlike Sunny, Cherry was not attracted by British culture, she was a fan of American culture. The qualities that attracted her to choose the particular UK HE institution she did were the ranking of the institution and its relatively long history. Similar to most respondents, Cherry considered the university's ranking as the most important driver. Her expectations before entering the country were to learn the new culture, to practise her English and to acquire academic knowledge.

Cherry's initial impression of the UK was that it was tranquil and quiet. She was impressed by the beautiful natural environment. Her initial impression of the British people was that they were friendly. This impression came from the smile from the masters office staff and local restaurant workers. She said, "They always wear a smiling face." But she also criticised, "When they are doing their work, it's a little bit slow and inefficient." Her initial impression of the university was not entirely satisfactory. She praised the beautiful buildings in the university but was concerned about the isolated location. She held that, "I think it's a little bit deserted. It's not in London city centre – no well-developed commercial centres."

Difficulties Cherry experienced included language difficulty and cultural differences. Her language difficulty related to the local accent. Although her English-language competency was good enough to enrol on her master's programme, she had difficulty in understanding English during induction week. She could not follow the university staff when they were introducing the course, the university, where to access help, what to do in college and how to enjoy life in college. Her difficulty in cultural differences related to the differences in food supply. She commented, "Every time when I went to Tesco,

the range I can choose from is narrow: only tomatoes, mushrooms and potatoes. Few vegetables or few kinds of meat are available on the shelf." The range of food for her was not enough.

In terms of interaction with local people, she "didn't even ask for help [once]" and "had no experience." It was not a lack of willingness to communicate, she said, but a lack of courage to interact. Every time she faced local people, she felt afraid of speaking. She explained her fear was caused by insufficient knowledge of how to break into a conversation, and the local accent. Her understanding of "interaction" with local people only included proper conversations rather than short, practical questions.

Her interactions with college staff were generally positive. She found college staff tried to be helpful. When the door system of her college flat was broken, the college staff tried hard to fix her door. Every time she reported this problem to the college, maintenance would try to fix the problem. She had reported it to the college three times at that stage, and the door system in her flat was still down. She commented, "They want to help, but they can't actually help." The departmental support staff were also helpful, she felt. But if what she asked for was complicated, they refused her. She once asked the departmental support staff to help change her seminar group and was refused. She saw the reason for the rejection as being due to complicated administrative procedures for changing seminar groups. She thought they would not process the complicated task at just one student's request. Such a request from her seemed unreasonable.

In terms of interaction with students, Cherry found it easy to interact with Indian students and difficult to interact with British students. She perceived that the British students would not speak to her if she interacted with them. Her interaction with the British students was limited to basic greetings or only a smile. She found the British students were only willing to speak in basic sentences or even only words, and they would not continue the conversation if she stopped. The sentences used were at greeting level such as "How are you doing today?" and "How was your weekend?" She categorised them as "very official and superficial" conversations. She did not place the responsibility entirely on the others; she admitted she was not trying to communicate from her side either. She said, "Every time we just gave a smile face and shut the door."

Cherry felt she would adapt to life in the UK but that it would not be considered a very comfortable life, based on the cultural differences and the different way of doing things. This was one reason for her unwillingness to work in the UK.

Cherry claimed she experienced ethnic discrimination during class. In her in-sessional English language course, the lecturer asked students to state their country of origin. The lecturer responded and showed respect to students from Russia, Brazil and India. When it came to Chinese students, the lecturer did not respond and kept quiet. She observed this attitude difference from the lecturer towards the Chinese and perceived this experience as a discriminatory one against the Chinese. Cherry did not either experience or perceive gender discrimination in the UK.

Cherry had an English name before she entered the UK and it was not 'Cherry'. Her first English name was based on the meaning of her Chinese name. Later she found others chose English names based on the pronunciation of their Chinese name. She then adopted a new name, 'Cherry', before she came. Aside from the pronunciation similarity, another reason for choosing this English name was that she likes cherry, the fruit. When she introduced herself, she used both her Chinese name and her English name every time; she did not have a preference for using either name. She used her English name because she found it easier for non-Chinese speakers to remember or to pronounce. Using the English name did not make her feel more British or feel less Chinese. Her English name was purely practical.

In Cherry's eyes, others viewed Chinese students as hardworking, obedient to teacher direction and lacking creativity. The reason she perceived Chinese students as hardworking was because she thought Chinese students always got high marks. Unlike Sunny, Cherry perceived Chinese students always reached a high level academically. This may be due to subject difference. For finance-related exams, it is usual to see Chinese students reach 70% or even 80% for modules containing high levels of mathematical calculation, while in HRM assignments, fewer Chinese students get a distinction mark. The reason for the perception of Chinese students as obedient was based on Cherry's observations in class. She observed Chinese students printed out slides before class and listened to what the teacher said without raising any questions during class. She interpreted these behaviours of Chinese students as being obedient to teachers' directions.

For Cherry, the stereotyping of Chinese students was perceived to impact the chances of Chinese students gaining employment in the UK both positively and negatively, whereas Sunny only saw the negative impact. Cherry's perception of the positive impact came from being hardworking. Cherry regarded being hardworking as the first impression of the Chinese by employers in the UK. By working hard, the Chinese could perform more and give more effort to companies. Her perception of the negative impact came from the lack of initiative. Cherry believed employers in the UK wanted their employees to be creative and Cherry felt that Chinese people were not creative.

Cherry did not want to find employment in the UK. She perceived that the only thing different for workers between the two countries was the social welfare; the social welfare is better in the UK. However, working in the UK would not bring her more money. She was attracted by China's potential market and opportunities. She wanted to transfer new ideas to China and build new business in China. She perceived the existence of ethnic discrimination against the Chinese in the British labour market, and she was afraid of this potential ethnic discrimination. This influenced her intention to work in the UK. Cherry said she did not believe there was gender discrimination in employment in the UK, but this advantage of the British labour market was not considered by Cherry, therefore it did not made her want to work in the UK.

In contrast to the majority of the research respondents, Cherry was the only one who did not have employment intention in the UK. The most pleasant experience, said Cherry, was that she met her boyfriend after moving to the UK. She was the only interviewee who found a boyfriend in such a short time. This supported her claim later in the third interview that she was more of a family person than a career person. This may have influenced her job proactivity.

5.2.2 Second-round interview

After 6 months in the UK, Cherry's clearest impression of the UK related to its tranquil and beautiful nature. This impression was consistent since entering the country. She added a new impression that it was not good for job seeking because of the small jobs market.

Cherry's impression of the university was that there was an imbalance in the attention paid to different departments by the institution. This was a new perspective in her attitude towards the institution. Cherry perceived that the university paid more attention to subjects such as English Literature, yet relatively "ignored" the Business School. The Business School had many international students and contributed considerable funds to the university; the university did not give the cash back to the Business School. She thought the university should use the cash to review and to improve the Business School, such as by buying new machines and new books.

Cherry felt the programme of study was well constructed. She felt she gained a lot of knowledge. Since Cherry changed her subject of study, all knowledge gained in the current programme was new. She learned of many new concepts in the new area. However, the teaching style of some teachers was complained about by most of the Chinese students and some international students, said Cherry. She stated,

> I don't like the way the teacher told [teaches] us. Some of the teachers always recite the slides, and some others just teaching as the way they preferred. They do not consider the students' feelings, and it's too hard like Econometrics II.

The result of such a teaching method was that she felt like she had not taken the course and did not know where to start to write the summative assignments. Cherry's method of trying to solve the problem of not understanding what teachers taught in class was not to raise questions during class but to ask after class. She only asked once and was not satisfactorily answered, and then she stopped asking the teachers questions.

In the first interview Cherry said she may adapt to the life in the UK but it would not be comfortable. Having stayed in the UK for 6 months, she felt she had adapted to the life. Her emotional bond with the local city became stronger. When travelling back from another place, she felt *** was a comfortable place to live. She also found *** was a suitable place for retired people to live, as it was not commercialised. Cherry's experiences with shop staff were pleasant; they were friendly to her. She perceived that such friendliness was required as she was a customer.

Cherry's interaction with college staff was almost only with the porters, which was the same in the last interview. Porters were still friendly to her and helped her fix facilities

such as a washing basin. A new experience with the porters was that the porters told her jokes. A new perception of the porters was that their work efficiency was higher than other members of staff. Cherry had one unpleasant experience with college staff. Her boyfriend sent her a gift to her college address but put his name on it. He used his student card to collect the parcel at the college reception. Staff in her college suspected that Cherry had kept someone in her room. One day two ladies who claimed to be college staff members checked Cherry's room without warning and did not show identification. They did not catch anyone suspicious. Cherry regarded their behaviour as unfair. She believed they had no right to check her bathroom. Cherry's interaction with departmental staff was limited to smile greetings.

Cherry had difficulty in her studies. The second term courses were too difficult for her, particularly when the teaching method was not appropriate and the teachers were reading out the slides. She tried to seek help from a module teacher when she found difficult questions she could not solve. The teacher said she would respond to her in two days but did not. Cherry sent an email to remind the teacher but still did not receive any response. She gave up asking this teacher questions. She did not report this and did not bother any more about this. Instead she turned to other Chinese nationals to solve her study difficulties.

In terms of classroom dynamics, one of Cherry's teachers designed a lot of classroom interactions. This teacher was European. The teacher did not use slides in class and constantly gave feedback to students. Cherry's attitude towards the classroom interaction was neither positive nor negative but neutral. She commented, "I just get used [to it]." She had no judgemental feelings toward the classroom interaction.

Cherry began her group work after the first interview was undertaken. Now she had finished all of her group work for seminars. In contrast to Sunny, Cherry's impression of group work was unpleasant. Cherry seemed to have stereotyped students from different areas. She said group members from European countries such as Italy always thought their idea was right and other members should obey their ideas and should follow their proposed way to present. Group members from the Middle East such as Iran and Syria made no contribution to the group presentation. Group members from China just read the notes instead of presenting during the group presentation. The only group work experience she found satisfying was with an American male and an African

female student. Both the American male and the African female student were very hardworking. They had four group presentations in total and every group presentation was granted a distinction by the seminar tutor.

Cherry also found that when students were given the right to form seminar groups, Chinese students chose to group with their co-nationals. This observation was the same as Sunny's. In Cherry's seminar groups, no one played the role of group leader. The interactions in her seminar groups began with emails. The emails were to set up a time and a location for group meetings. After the meetings were set, group members met and talked about things related to seminar group tasks. There was no more interaction after this. Problems occurring during her group work were caused by an Italian male student who always thought his feeling was right and his idea was superior. The solution for the group members was to ignore this Italian male student's opinion. Difficulties encountered in group working included communication difficulty. She perceived the communication difficulty was caused by cultural differences such as differences in study background and ways of thinking. She felt the thinking perspectives between members were different. She said, "The students from some European countries will totally see one question from another or the opposite side."

Cherry had experienced racial discrimination several times. Twice when she was walking along a street, people inside cars yelled at her. Another time when she visited Liverpool and got lost, she stood by the side of a road and used her phone to search maps. A British man went straight to her and yelled at her. When she realised what had happened, the man had already left her and was laughing with his friends. She was shocked and thought the man's behaviour was not funny. She felt this British man was rude and "rubbish". She did not want to continue talking about her discriminatory experience and said, "Some unpleasant experiences I don't want to remember." Her experience made her feel she "won't stay in the UK," saying, "I don't like" the country.

In terms of gender discrimination, Cherry's view was the same as all other respondents in that she did not experience any gender discrimination. One view different from other participants was that Sunny linked gender discrimination only to employment rather than in a wider context.

All of Cherry's experiences in the 6 months of staying in the UK made her dislike the country as a whole. She perceived the British as unsociable. She and her other Chinese friends found that when they lived with a British flatmate, this flatmate would not say more than "Hello" and "Bye". This indifferent attitude from the British flatmates was found not only with Chinese students but with the international students. Most of her friends complained about this indifferent attitude. Cherry was moody when talking about the indifferent British people she met. She expressed, "Who do they think they are?! Shit!"

Cherry's experiences continuously influenced her employment intention in the UK from the first interview. This time, Cherry claimed that she was not willing to work in the UK at all. She perceived that the British were unfriendly towards international students in the context of employment. Cherry said that if two students graduated from a top British university, a British employer would choose the British graduate with a bachelor's degree instead of the international graduate, even with a doctorate. The British tried to protect British citizens and did not want to give opportunities to others; they tried to close their door to migrants. If they continued with this attitude, the British economy would be in recession forever, she said. She perceived the employment situation in the UK for students from European countries would be better. Comparatively, students from India, China and other Asian countries would be treated differently and inferiorly.

There were certain continuities since the first interview in Cherry's perception of how others viewed the Chinese students. Cherry still disagreed that Chinese students were "highly competitive with others in their cohort, strives to be the 'best'" and "combine intellectual capability and 'good' moral behaviour – a good citizen." In terms of striving to be the best in their cohort, Cherry held that Chinese students were not ambitious. She said, "Normally for the common Chinese students, they just want to get a degree. They don't want to get a distinction. We just want a pass. Cherry did not think Chinese students were good citizens. She commented,

> As I know the masters [students] studying in *** do not obey to the rules
> and principles at most of times. It's totally a different era now. Our Chinese
> students will participate in the party, going to the club, to the pub, and drink
> alcohol until [they] get drunk, and some private relationship is in a mess.

This round of interviews observed a series of shifts in perceptions of how others view the Chinese. Previously Cherry had said that the Chinese students were viewed as harder working, obedient to teacher direction and less creative, while this time she disagreed with the first two points and had a new opinion on the last point. In terms of working harder, she now perceived students from other countries such as the Middle East were more hardworking than the Chinese students. She heard of a Middle Eastern student getting up at 6am and studying in the library until 10pm, and then going to the gym before going to bed. She said this student was more ambitious than the Chinese students. In terms of being obedient to teacher direction, she now perceived Chinese students were not blindly obedient but would go to the teachers privately after class. She explained why Chinese students did not ask questions during class but after:

> Because every week we will take so many courses and we have no time for preparation for every course. And during the lecture, we just listening, and after that if we have questions, we then go back to the teachers privately after class.

She thought there was too much course content to learn, with limited time to prepare before class. Chinese students who were not used to this amount of learning material could not finish the course preparation before class and were unable to answer questions in class on unfamiliar material. In terms of creativity, she now perceived Chinese students to be more creative than other international students, in a context of poster designing. Chinese students were creative in designing the structure and displaying the content. However, in others' eyes, Chinese students looked less creative due to an inability to express themselves and insufficient oral English competency. She believed Chinese students had many ideas but could not express them. In addition, Chinese students were now perceived as receptive learners in this interview, while in the last round Cherry had disagreed with this. When the previous interview was taking place, Cherry did not have much class experience. After experiencing all the classroom activities, Cherry now thought that not only the Chinese students, but "almost all the students are receptive." She claimed the knowledge taught on the master's course was extensive and difficult to learn. A student's time and energy was only enough to acquire a limited amount of the extensive knowledge.

In addition, Cherry spoke of how she viewed Chinese students compared with the first interview. She added that Chinese students were good at cooking, always spoke in the

Chinese language and did not speak English. The same view that was consistent with the previous interview was that Chinese students liked to group together and rarely communicated with non-Chinese.

As stated, Cherry did not want to seek employment in the UK from the outset. She saw this unwillingness as being due to discrimination. She heard about Chinese students who graduated with a British master's degree and did not work in the area of their study. Instead they worked as online retailers, like eBay sellers. Some other Chinese graduates opened restaurants to make money. Compared with the employment opportunities in the UK, the opportunities in China were greater in quantity and in the range of industry choice available for Chinese graduates.

In this round of interviews, Cherry's perception of the characteristics of Chinese students changed considerably. She disagreed with most of her viewpoints in the first interview after her 6 months' experience. In addition, some of Cherry's experiences continued through the two interviews, such as her discriminatory experiences, lack of employment intention and lack of job proactivity. Aside from this continuity, Cherry also added new experiences and perceptions such as new group working experiences and new perceptions of Chinese students in the UK. Both the continuity and the newly added elements emphasised the value of taking research longitudinally to obtain a more vivid and complete picture rather than a single snapshot.

5.2.3 Third-round interview

Cherry had recently begun her full-time employment in China, in the industry related to her subject of study. She went back to China immediately after submitting her thesis and spent 3 months looking for employment there. After this she rested at home for 6 months before commencing her employment.

Cherry's general impression of the UK was consistent across the interviews. She viewed the UK as a beautiful country with old buildings and its own culture. British people lived in a decent way and most of them had good manners. To some extent they were friendly. This interview observed a tremendous change in Cherry. She changed from "I don't want to work in the UK at all" to "I really want to stay in the UK" for 1 or 2 years. The reason for this change may have been due to her experience of the competitive work environment in China. She perceived living in the UK was not as competitive as

in China. If she could find a job in the UK, she thought everything would not be tense but relaxed. Her 1 year's experience in the UK increased her desire to stay in the UK. Experiencing summertime living in the UK between the second and third interviews added weight to her willingness to stay in the UK. This may indicate that choice of data collection time may influence some of the research outcomes. Compared with the summer experience, the experiential data collected during British wintertime were rather negative in terms of impression.

Although willing to stay in the UK for a year or two, Cherry still left the UK. Reasons included not having a work visa to stay, the UK was not her home country, and her parents and friends were in China. The UK not being her home country meant the living style, the way people conducted things and the way people viewed the world were all different for her. If she were granted a visa, she would work in the UK for a year or two and would revisit the UK every year or two for a holiday.

After 12 months' experiencing the UK, Cherry's perceptions of how others viewed the Chinese were almost the same. She felt that Chinese people stuck together with their co-nationals; reasons for this included the language barrier and cultural differences that prevented the Chinese from communicating with the locals. In relation to the local people, they did not actively support communication or help to solve immigrants' problems. The perception of being hardworking reverted to that of the first interview, in which Chinese people were regarded as hardworking. She added a new perspective that Chinese people were considered smart, to some extent.

Cherry perceived there was almost no gender discrimination in the UK. She felt that people in developed countries such as the UK would value females and males almost the same. She perceived the female Chinese workers a) would not be denied maternity leave, b) would be moved to a position with poorer promotional opportunities due to racial discrimination, c) would not be propositioned because Chinese females were not sexy or open minded, d) would not be thought less of if they contributed, e) would have support to balance work and family well, and f) would be measured by the same standards as males. She said women nowadays are able to balance work and family well for two reasons. The first one is the change in society's attitude towards women: women no longer have to take care of the family as much as they used to; men and women take care of the family together. The second reason is the support from society. Social

resources such as kindergartens relieve the burden of childcare so that parents can concentrate on their work. Cherry perceived that gender discrimination in both the UK and China was at a low level, while gender discrimination in China was a little worse than in the UK. This difference was perceived as being due to the difference in levels of cultivation and education between the two countries. In Cherry's opinion there were many Chinese people who were not cultivated or didn't study to a higher educational level. They may still hold the traditional view that females should stay at home or have an uncompetitive but steady job that enables them to spend more time taking care of children. Although gender discrimination in China was perceived to be worse, this did not influence Cherry's willingness to remain in the UK. She claimed that she was cultivated, with a higher degree, and so would not be affected by gender discrimination.

Cherry's perceptions of female Chinese workers in the UK were newly added in this interview. She perceived that female Chinese workers in the UK were always hardworking and had inner beauty. The similar values and attitudes shared by female Chinese workers were that they did not want to have a very competitive life and wanted to live a secure, stable life. Cherry was not troubled by how others might view Chinese women; she only cared about what she thought of herself. She would behave well by doing what she regarded as right. She considered herself as representative of Chinese women, so she tried to make a good impression as a good Chinese woman. Cherry did not see the need to reframe herself if she continued to live in the UK. She felt that in some circumstances, such as socialising, female Chinese workers should reframe themselves to some degree. Strategies the female Chinese workers could use in order to reframe themselves included adopting a British mindset to improve communication. Practical things they could do included improving their oral English and learning about British people's religious beliefs. Using an English name was not regarded as a reframing strategy.

Cherry did not have any job proactivity in the UK across the three interviews. She claimed the visa barrier to be the most important factor. Other factors that impacted her decision of no employment proactivity were limited job-hunting time, ethnic discrimination and few job opportunities in the UK.

In terms of gender discrimination, Cherry perceived the degree remained low since the last interview. Overall her attitude towards gender discrimination did not change much.

Cherry perceived that male Chinese students would face the same degree of difficulty as female Chinese students when seeking employment in the UK, because ethnic discrimination was much more severe than gender discrimination.

Cherry's view on the political talk about immigration was that it was strict in terms of rules and regulations. The UK government set more limitations on immigration and was stricter in immigration policy compared to other countries such as America, Australia and Canada. The UK had a higher density of population, compared with America, Australia and Canada. Cherry regarded the UK visa system as reflecting a discriminatory attitude. The reason for the strict visa policy was to protect the free medical services and other social welfare. She said, "If they don't set the limitation, I think people from the developing countries will come to their country, and that will be a really big problem."

Cherry perceived that Chinese employers in the UK would discriminate against Chinese applicants when in a large company. They preferred the British because of their language proficiency and knowledge of local culture. Chinese employers would not discriminate against Chinese applicants when in a small business or Chinese-related business. This was because Chinese employees would expect lower salaries or fewer bonuses, or were familiar with Chinese customers.

Cherry would encourage prospective Chinese students to apply for employment in the UK, if they could adapt to the British culture. The advice she would give to prospective Chinese students was to engage in more community activities or to follow the religious beliefs since most Chinese people do not have religious beliefs. She would not tell the prospective Chinese students about discrimination as it might increase the pressure on them.

Cherry's follow-up career plans were to gain employability and to start her own business after 5 years. She considered staying in the UK for holidays, particularly during the summer time. She wanted to come to the UK to go shopping and visit friends. Her ideal life would be spending 8 months a year working in the UK, spending 2 months taking holidays in the UK, and spending 2 months in China. Barriers that would prevent the realisation of her career plan in China were her laziness, a lack of self-confidence in a competitive work environment, and an unwillingness to devote much

energy to a career. She perceived being female as an advantage rather than discriminated against. She felt superior being female when interacting with male bosses or male customers. Barriers that would prevent the realisation of her career plan in the UK included the visa system and ethnic discrimination.

In this interview, Cherry's employment intention changed totally from no desire at all to "really wanting". This round of interviews was essential for a longitudinal study. If this round of interviews had not been undertaken, such a tremendous shift in her employment intention, and knowing in what context the shift happened, would not have been disclosed. For other interviewees, the third wave of interviews was vital in terms of collecting sufficient data on employment proactivity, particularly on job application experiences in the UK.

5.2.4 Concluding remarks

Cherry was the only interviewee who did not want to find employment in the UK when she first entered the UK. Her employment intention changed the most. Her experiences of racial discrimination were the greatest among the participants. She was also the only respondent who swore during interview when she talked about British people being indifferent and unwelcoming to international students.

Cherry and Sunny were very different in terms of employment intention, job proactivity, attitude towards interaction with the locals, views on what others think of the Chinese, and whether one feels more British by using an English name. Nonetheless, there is one significant thing in common: Cherry and Sunny were the top two in terms of discriminatory experience, and both of their employment intentions were affected by their discriminatory experiences.

By presenting these two cases, a variety of different experiences and perceptions of female Chinese students are vividly displayed in a longitudinal manner. Further discussions and thoughts on the experiences and attitudes of all respondents will be shown in the next chapter.

Chapter Six: Conclusions

6.1 Introduction

This chapter will further discuss the themes discovered in the findings chapter by linking the themes. The analysis will be structured to answer the three research questions. After the analysis of the findings, the methodological and conceptual contribution will be stated and substantiated. Implications for policy makers and practitioners will be outlined. Finally, I will present my reflection on conducting this PhD project.

The research objective for this study was to explore the challenges and experiences of Chinese women in the UK. It included the aims of exploring the educational adjustment, sociocultural adaptation and employment intention and proactivity of female Chinese international students in the UK. The research question of this study included the following three aspects:

What are the main **experiences** and **challenges** faced by female Chinese master's students in the UK?

How do the **general impressions** of the UK perceived by female Chinese students change before, during, and after their taught postgraduate course?

How do their **employment intentions** in the UK change throughout their 1-year studies?

This research adopted a relativist ontological perspective, a constructivist epistemological perspective, and an interpretive hermeneutics theoretical perspective research philosophy. In order to answer the research questions, three waves of semi-structured interviews were conducted over 18 months to collect longitudinal in-depth data from 24 Chinese students who joined a 1-year taught masters programme in a UK-based Russell Group institution. Using a longitudinal methodology was a novel aspect of this research as there is minimal research in management conducted using a qualitative longitudinal approach.

The time period of this longitudinal research was 18 months, throughout the 1-year master's courses plus 6 months after dissertations were submitted. The first wave of

interviews were conducted at the beginning of the 1-year master's studies. The second wave of interviews were conducted 6 months after their courses started. The third round of interviews was conducted after all of their students visas had expired.

6.2 Answers to the Research Questions

What are the main experiences and challenges faced by female Chinese master's students in the UK?

Many Chinese students were motivated to study in the UK by experiencing life in the UK. They expected to experience knowledge acquisition through an intensive, highly reputable education system and a new culture. This has expanded Habu's (2000) finding that Chinese students' motivation lies in principally academic concerns to a mixed context of academia and culture. The cultural aspects are largely covered in the currently research. A reason for the expansion might be the change in China's economic status. To experience a new culture is suggested as the main international education motivation for students from economically rich countries (Goldsmith & Shawcross, 1985) such as Japan (Habu, 2000; Matsui, 1991), and to learn academic knowledge is suggested as the main international education motivation for students from less wealthy countries such as China (Habu, 2000; Matsui, 1991). However, Chinese students in the current research show strong interest in both experiencing culture and gaining academic knowledge, reflecting China's increasingly prosperous economy.

Before coming to the UK, Chinese students expected to learn from the British education system, and during their stay in the UK they learned a lot from engaging in team work or group work in seminars. Although there was much participation in seminar groups, respondents did not interact with teachers and other students in lectures. Upton's (1989) comment that most Chinese students are "completely handicapped in classes" seems true for how respondents behave in lectures but not true in terms of how respondents behave in seminars in the current research.

About half of the interviewees reported they had interacted with British people in the first set of interviews and around one-third of interviewees said they had interacted with British people in the second round of interviews. The change was caused by the reaction from the British people after they tried to interact. They felt the British people were indifferent and that the mindsets between two cultures were different.

Many interviewees tried to seek employment in the UK, although only one succeeded in finding full-time employment and two succeeded in finding part-time employment. In the first-round interviews most respondents claimed an intention to work in the UK. After the first-round interviews, more than half of the respondents began to seek employment, focusing on part-time employment. After the second-round interviews, full-time employment proactivity began.

The main challenges identified by respondents included language challenges, educational challenges, practical challenges, sociocultural challenges, discrimination, personality issues, and employment application challenges. This is connected to and has expanded on Smith and Khawaja's (2011) five acculturative stressors for international students. Language difficulties experienced by interviewees included academic reading difficulty, listening difficulty and difficulty in understanding accents. Language proficiency was reported as a barrier to academic performance, and this has reinforced the argument made by a number of academics (see Poyrazli & Kavanaugh, 2006; Poyrazli et al., 2001; Zhang & Brunton, 2007). Listening difficulty arose when a native speaker spoke quickly and respondents could not keep up. Language challenges were addressed through all rounds of interviews.

Educational challenges experienced by respondents included the high volume of reading required, insufficient knowledge on how to write western style academic essays, difficult to understand accents of teachers, and insufficient support from some teachers. The academic reading problem was mainly caused by the difference in education between the two countries. This reflects literature on educational obstacles for international students. British HE requires much larger amounts of reading than in China. The educational difficulties in referencing and how to avoid plagiarism (as suggested by Block & Chi, 1995, Robinson, 1992 and Torkelson, 1992) and in methodology (as suggested by Cortazzi & Jin, 2001 and Jin & Cortazzi, 1996), were not addressed by respondents in the current research. Educational challenges were mostly addressed in the second set of interviews.

Practical challenges of adaptation were claimed most by interviewees. They included weather differences, grocery supply differences, differences in cooking habits, entertainment differences, ticket system differences, and insufficient road signs and

landmarks. Interviewees' solutions for practical difficulties involved psychological preparation, asking for help online and from friends and staying within their social group. Psychological preparation seemed to be the most effective for some interviewees. Checking online and asking friends for help is another way to adapt to a new culture. Staying within the social group is the least adventurous but safest way when moving to a new culture. Practical challenges were mostly reported in the first wave of interviews.

Socio-cultural adaptation was considered to be another significant challenge for interviewees, including the differences in mindset, working style differences, distribution of commercial facilities and fitting in with local people. The strategies for socio-cultural adaptation identified by interviewees were mainly around active communications, including improving oral English and joining social events. This echoes Wu and Hammond's (2011) suggestion that international students should participate socially with other international students for adaptation. Understanding and adapting to the British culture was also addressed. A small number of interviewees suggested that one adaptation strategy was to act in the opposite way to how others view the Chinese. Sociocultural challenges were addressed through the three waves of interviews.

Ethnic discrimination was experienced or perceived by respondents. About half of the respondents said they had experienced ethic discrimination in the first two rounds of interviews and about two-thirds said they had perceived the existence of ethnic discrimination in the first two rounds of interviews. Figures on ethnic discrimination dropped significantly in the third-round interview as most respondents were no longer living in the UK. No one said they had experienced gender discrimination in any of the interviews and only a few respondents perceived the existence of gender discrimination in the second round and third-round interviews.

Personality issues included shyness and inability to communicate with people. Personality issues were only reported by a few respondents in the three rounds of interviews. More advanced adaptation was required by a small number of respondents for their psychological needs such as overcoming homesickness and loneliness. Fortunately, most of the interviewees did not have strong psychological needs; this may have been due to their regular connection with co-nationals.

Challenges in employment application mentioned by interviewees included overly restrictive employment visa policy in the UK, insufficient work experience, insufficient transferrable skills, language barriers, insufficient professional knowledge, perceived ethnic discrimination in employment and the impact of the stereotypical view of Chinese students. Aside from the last one, all other challenges in employment application were mentioned in all three waves of interviews with different levels of emphasis.

Most interviewees did not think using an English name was an effective strategy for adaptation. Aside from one respondent, most respondents did not think using an English name on their CV would benefit them in finding a job in the UK. The respondents' perception of the impact of using an English name on job applications in the UK contradicts what Noon (1992) and Hoque and Noon (1998) suggest. The only function for English names was for ease of pronunciation and remembering when their Chinese names were hard to pronounce. They perceived English names as a "symbol" which could be any word, with no link to their identity, while a lot of them regarded their Chinese names as their Chinese identity.

Empirical data on the use of English names by Chinese students is one of the contributions of this research. All interviewees had at least one English name. The most popular reason for choosing a particular English name was the interviewee liking a character either from a film or a novel. Some interviewees used an English name because their Chinese names were difficult to pronounce for non-Chinese people. Interviewees chose their English names either for the similar pronunciation or the same initial as their Chinese name or because they liked the meaning of an English word. An interesting phenomenon is that some interviewees used an 'English word' such as 'Orange' as their English name rather than choosing a proper 'English name'. None of the interviewees used a Christian baptismal name as their English name.

How do the general impressions of the UK perceived by female Chinese students change before, during, and after their taught postgraduate course?

Impressions of the UK included the perceptions prior to arrival, the initial impressions upon arrival, and the impression changes throughout the 1-year's stay in the UK.

Pre-experiential perceptions largely lay in knowledge of the UK and expectations before arriving to the UK. These perceptions of the UK included a high-quality educational system, beautiful scenery, a traditional culture, and a safe country.

The initial impressions of the UK after arrival reported by interviewees were generally positive and satisfactory. Drawn from interviews, favourable impressions of the UK were summarised in several dimensions, namely local people, tradition, natural environment and social orderliness.

Interviewees viewed the British people as friendly, well-educated, gentle, patient, kind, warm-hearted, helpful, respectful and polite citizens. All these terms were mentioned unprompted by respondents. The result of such friendliness was not only that it gave a pleasant initial impression of the UK, but it also contributed to settling down to the UK smoothly.

Being traditional was another favourable impression that British people made on interviewees. In terms of tradition, interviewees were in favour of British history, British culture and the collegiate system. Several interviewees stated that they expected to experience traditional British culture. The actual experience after coming to the UK fulfilled the expectation of gentlemen-like culture, but not of the formal daily wear. The collegiate system was much appreciated by most interviewees.

The natural environment was also regarded as having made a favourable impression by interviewees, including beautiful scenery, architecture and fresh air. Beautiful scenery, particularly countryside scenery, was strongly appreciated by Chinese students in the UK. Most interviewees used the word "beautiful" to describe their first sight of the UK. Various styles of architecture in the UK were also described favourably, including the world heritage site of the Cathedral and Castle.

Another favourable initial impression was the social orderliness. Social orderliness means everything is in order, which makes society peaceful. Several interviewees mentioned the peacefulness of the UK, or the North East England in particular, but only one interviewee brought up a reason for the peacefulness, which was the social orderliness.

Although most of the initial impressions were positive, there were a few unfavourable impressions. Negative initial impressions of the UK included food and weather, boredom, dissatisfaction with modern colleges and interactions with teenagers.

Food and weather are different from China. Although many interviewees held that food in the UK was fresh and dairy products in the UK were delicious, some interviewees did not enjoy the cooking style of British food. In terms of the weather, interviewees who encountered rain on first arriving had a bad memory of the British weather. When it was sunny, their feelings improved.

The boredom was due to an insufficient number of commercial facilities and entertainment facilities, short opening hours and insufficient forms of entertainment aside from going to pubs. Many interviewees were unhappy with the opening hours of commercial facilities in the city centre. The shops closed earlier than interviewees expected. These interviewees found life in a small city in North East England was inconvenient and it took time to adapt to the local culture.

In terms of the small size of towns/cities in the UK, most interviewees viewed "small" as a neutral word but some saw the "small" as a disadvantage of living in the UK. This was particularly the case for those that came from big cities such as Shanghai in China.

Although the collegiate system was a significant attraction for interviewees, modern colleges were disliked by interviewees who were keen on experiencing the traditional collegiate culture. Most interviewees were allocated with a modern college, with only 25% being assigned to an old college. Nonetheless, there was only one interviewee who complained about her dislike of her modern college.

The distribution of the colleges was also a concern for one interviewee. The interviewee pointed out that colleges are separated from each other. Students communicate conveniently within a college but not with students from other colleges, and information is not easily disseminated across colleges.

Interaction with teenagers was a problem for interviewees and their friends. Although British people in general are viewed as polite and kind, teenagers in the UK are an exception. Screaming or throwing things at Chinese students was reported by

interviewees. Interviewees regarded the behaviour of such teenagers as racial discrimination. Such experiences have an impact. Some interviewees felt that such discriminatory experiences would to some extent influence their willingness to find employment in the UK.

Impressions of the UK changed at different phases of the interviews depending on what interviewees had experienced between the rounds of interviews. After the second round, general impressions had to some extent changed, although half of the interviewees retained their impressions of the UK. Among those who changed their general impression during the second round, most respondents' impressions declined, while a few interviewees had an improved view of the UK. Living experiences that caused a decline in the general impression included bad weather, discriminatory living experiences, cultural difference, boredom and friends' influence.

Interestingly, almost no respondents reported a decline in general impression of the UK during the third-round interviews. In the third-round interviews, most interviewees claimed that their general impressions of the UK basically remained the same. The main impressions were positive, including helpful and kind local people, beautiful natural environment, beautiful scenery, and a peaceful lifestyle.

Few negative impressions were due to boredom. Some interviewees complained that there were not many types of entertainment in the evening aside from drinking. The shops in the city centre closed too early from a Chinese perspective, therefore most evenings Chinese students had to stay inside, perhaps feeling bored. Other negative impressions of the UK were "terrible" weather and difficulty in finding a job.

The experience of studying in the UK reinforced the positive impression of the UK and therefore made the interviewees more willing to stay. However, the positive impressions were not strong enough to keep them in the UK. This research supports Kember's (2000) argument that Chinese students are largely extrinsically motivated. Indeed, the main reasons for most of the interviewees deciding to go back to China were external factors, including visa restriction, family and friend connections in China, and the economic situation and employment opportunities in China.

How do their employment intentions in the UK change throughout their 1-year studies?

Most interviewees were hoping to find employment in the UK during the first-round interviews. In terms of types of job, for interviewees who hoped to find employment during their studies, internships were the most popular employment type, followed by part-time jobs. For those who hoped to find a job after their studies in the UK, full-time jobs were the common preference. In terms of the level of employment, all interviewees who hoped to find employment in the UK during the first interview stated they would seek employment from junior positions. In terms of industries, most interviewees who aspired to find a job in Britain hoped to seek employment in industries which were relevant to their subjects of study.

Reasons to seek employment in the UK included gaining overseas work experience, earning a salary, practising what was learned in university, and improving employability for professional development. Reasons for not finding employment in the UK were also discussed by interviewees in this research. Reasons were given for certain types of employment. The reason identified for not being willing to do part-time work in the UK was the worry of not being able to cope with work and study at the same time. Aside from the difficulty of coping with study in the UK university, there was concern about difficulty in coping with life generally when living in a foreign country. Another reason for not seeking employment in the UK was the concern about the economic situation of the UK and the EU.

Barriers that interviewees perceived they would face in trying to gain employment in the UK included the language barrier, visa restrictions, cultural differences, working style differences, differences in mindset, academic knowledge, personality, group work skills, networking, work experience, communication skills and ethnic discrimination. Some of the perceived barriers were internal and could be improved through study and practice, and some of them were external, and seemed to be out of the reach of the individuals. The internal barriers included insufficient language ability, cultural adaptation, group working, networking and communication, insufficient academic and cultural knowledge, working style differences, different mindsets, previous work experience and personality, while the external barriers were visa restrictions and discrimination.

Employment intention changed over time. Factors that impacted on the change of employment intention identified through longitudinal interviews included employment visa policy, differences between the economies of China and the UK, employment proactivity, educational experience, living experience, geographical concerns, perception of cultural differences, and perceptions of how others view the Chinese.

The different perceptions of females between the two countries contributed to shaping the interviewees' decisions. Family responsibility along with pressure from family and society were reported as being significant when deciding to return to the home country after graduation in the UK. As suggested in the literature, parents are "extremely influential" (Bamber, 2014: 54) for Chinese females and bring much pressure on the Chinese females (e.g. Magistad, 2013; Pratten, 2013; Lovell, 2014). Females are supposed to stay close to family members and are responsible for taking care of the elderly in Chinese culture. The One-Child Policy in China has made the responsibility for taking care of the elderly greater for the children, as there are no more sisters or brothers to share the responsibility. Therefore, most interviewees claimed that they had to or should go back to China due to family responsibility and pressure from parents to quickly settle down.

6.3 Contributions of the Thesis

The strengths of this thesis include the longitudinal qualitative data collected, the identification of factors that influence employment intention, "after research experience" data collected, and the trust built between the interviewer and interviewee.

This thesis makes contributions to academic knowledge, to international education practitioners, and to prospective Chinese students considering study in the UK.

Contributions to academic knowledge include the enrichment of knowledge surrounding the motivation for choosing the UK as a destination for international education; the development of impressions of the UK; the connection of experiences to impressions of the UK; the connection of employment proactivity to employment intention; the expansion of stereotypes of Chinese students; and the expansion of students' educational and sociocultural experiences.

This thesis provides suggestions on foreign policy making for immigrants, particularly foreign students. A discussion on the interviewees' views on the UK's immigration policy indicated that the immigration policy was considered overly strict for overseas students. Meanwhile, Chinese students in the UK see the UK visa regulations as reflecting a discriminatory attitude on the part of the British government. This research offers advice and shares rich experience on international education, including living experience, study experience and employment intention and proactivity. This study makes an effort to give advice on improving university support teams in overseas student services, as Jou and Fukada (1995) discovered a positive connection between a good academic support system and Chinese students' adaptation. The effort made by support teams helps to improve the general satisfaction of overseas students while studying in a UK institution, thus contributing to the university's teaching quality and general ranking.

If the UK has an intention to increase its market share in international education, it needs to consider improvements in a series of policies and services to better support international students. Implications of this research can apply to multiple subjects. These include the individual students, the UK host HE institutions, the UK host cities and the UK as a country.

Implications for Individual Students
As an international student, it is better to learn what international education means to him or her and what challenges or difficulties he or she may face on the way to fulfil their goal of an international education. When met with a difficulty or unfair treatment (such as the "friendly warning" notice written in public in one particular foreign language), try to seek help or to report to the university since the voice from international communities are under heard. As a female international student particularly, pressure from family and the original culture on gender should be considered and plans made accordingly before, during and after the period of international education.

At an individual level, communication among cultures should be instigated by individuals from each culture. Since British students are reported to be indifferent to communicating with international students and international students tend to communicate with other international students, individuals on each side should play a

more active part. Both sides could communicate beyond their own ethnic/continental group and make a conversation with the other side beyond the greeting level. This reflects Tian and Lowe's (2009) point on the multi-party effort involved in intercultural communication, bearing in mind the limited communicative competence in English which international students have.

Implications for the UK Higher Education Institutions

The UK HE institutions which either plan to attract more international students or intend to improve international education are recommended to pay attention to the following aspects. Attention should be paid by HE institutions, teachers and supporting staff.

The majority of the participants did not engage much in activities organised by the university bodies. This echoes Tian and Lowe's (2009) finding that university-facilitated intercultural communications are not well-attended, despite some initial excitement. The internationalisation of education is supposed to benefit both sides: the host institution and the international students. For learning enrichment, host institutions are recommended to adopt knowledge and various teaching methods derived from international students. For intercultural communication, it is suggested that host institutions and cities should promote cross-cultural awareness and sharing (e.g. Summers & Volet, 2008) when organising activities such as group work (Tian & Lowe, 2009). As asserted by Tian and Lowe (2009), intercultural communication can only be achieved by efforts from both sides. On the one hand, activities to improve the English-language skills of the international students need to further develop to meet both the academic learning needs and the sociocultural communication needs. On the other hand, it is also recommended that activities to improve the understanding of international cultures are held. For example, British teachers and students could be made aware that international students are not necessarily passive learners if they don't ask questions in class. Instead, some international students tend to ask questions of their co-nationals or ask teachers after class. As many respondents brought up the concept of mindset difference between the British and international students', it is worth increasing awareness of and introducing the other party's way of thinking to each party, and not just provide English-language courses to the incomers.

Most interviewees held positive attitudes towards the college system in the university, apart from one who did not like the far distances between colleges. They appreciated the college system in terms of unique college culture and the tradition of the college system, although one interviewee strongly criticised the college she was assigned to, stating it was too modern. Based on the interviewees' opinions, the UK HE institutions are recommended to promote the unique culture their institution possesses.

For teachers, classroom interaction should be carefully designed. Certain international students may not used to classroom interaction. If teachers would like to design class activities, they need to make sure students can understand what the teacher says, as interviewees reported experiences of not understanding their teachers. Course content should be well designed, as some interviewees commented on the content repetition between two modules. When designing the syllabus, it is better to hold a joint meeting with other module leaders to avoid syllabus repetition. When conducting classes, teaching methods should allow for how much students can absorb, bearing in mind the different learning styles international students may have.

For support staff, it is recommended to organise activities for international students to help them adapt to the British academic culture and British social culture. Many interviewees reported they were willing to blend in but did not know how. University careers teams could offer services to improve the employability of international students. English-language competency, subject knowledge, communication skills and work experience can help international students obtain a job offer. Without these skills, it is not only difficult to be employed in Britain as a migrant, but also hard to obtain a job offer in China. Either way the graduate employment rate for the university will be affected. Lower employment rate of graduates may affect the ranking of an HE institution, which may affect prospective student recruitment. This is not a healthy circle for the international education market of the UK as international students may choose an alternative host country which devotes more effort to future career development. Therefore, it is suggested that the UK HE institutions pay significant attention to the improvement of student employability. To be specific, workshops or training courses around the English language, in particular language in the workplace environment and interpersonal communication, should be further developed. More internship and work placement opportunities are advised to be provided.

Implications for UK Cities

It is suggested that cities in the UK, cooperate with the host institutions and offer guidance on practical issues. Practical problems experienced by interviewees included how advanced-booked train tickets work, how buses operate, how report-and-fix (university accommodation operation) systems work, what the doctor's services include, the expected daily walking distance on campus, early closing hours of shops, conversation volume level expected on train, who to report to when issues occur, and how to react if discrimination occurs.

Implications for the UK as a Country

As per the purpose of enlarging the international education market in the UK, the country should emphasise aspects including the length of courses, British culture, the educational reputation, beautiful scenery and tranquillity and the country's safety. It is suggested that the length of the taught postgraduate course remains short, as the 1-year course length was the most popular attraction claimed by interviewees in this research. In terms of British culture, it is suggested that the UK maintains or improves its uniqueness or emphasises its differences from other cultures, as international students expected to experience a new culture when coming from overseas for education. The reputation of the quality of education in British HE institutions is highly regarded/valued, thus maintaining this high level of education is recommended. Beautiful scenery and tranquillity should also be maintained as they are highly valued in this research. The safe environment of the country was appreciated by interviewees, particularly when compared with the US, another popular host country. It is recommended that the country's policy makers and local government officers continue promoting this safe environment and reducing any discriminatory cases.

6.4 My Reflections on This Research

In this final section, I reflect on alternative methodologies that I could have employed in this research, how my work experiences contribute to my research, and recommendations for future research.

One possible alternative approach would have been to adopt an ethnographical approach. In similar fashion to my research it employs an inductive approach. However, it was decided not to adopt an ethnographical approach due to a number of constraints. Particular constraints that would have made an ethnography difficult would have

included gaining access from the HE institution and from the students, on-going trust, playing an appropriate role in the on-going process, and time concerns.

Gaining access is argued to be "one of the key and yet most difficult steps in ethnography" (Bryman and Bell, 2003: 317). In light of this research sitting in on lectures, seminars as well as non-academic situations would have been particularly difficult. It is also a moot point as to whether it would have added substance to the use of of semi-structured interviews. Observing individuals in situ could also have been problematic as it may have altered the 'natural' dynamic since people may act differently, for example, by ending conversations (Roethlisberger and Dickson, 1939) when a researcher is present, as it may be considered that "researchers are placed there to check up on them" (Bryman and Bell, 2003: 322). The students may have held such suspicions as I sat in their seminars or if I observed them out of the classroom setting. In part much of this could relate to degrees of trust.

Identifying an appropriate role for ethnographers and maintaining the role through the process is also not easy. The ethnographer has to consider the relationships in the field when deciding what role to adopt. For example, Gold (1958) classified four roles: complete participant, participant-as-observer, observer-as-participant, and complete observer. Even when one decides to be partially involved and detached, there can be circumstances where involvement is unavoidable (see for example Fine, 1996 and Holliday, 1995). No matter how much the ethnographer may be involved in the process, time is also always a concern both in relation to the duration of observations and for writing field notes. As ethnography emphasises 'in-person field study' (Ravitch and Carl, 2016: 21) through 'prolonged immersion' (Ravitch and Carl, 2016: 221), in my research it would not have been practical to observe 24 participants to capture their experiences over long periods of time due to the numbers involved.

A further problem with adapting an ethnographic approach would have related to the difficulties of capturing the students' experiences through ethnographic methods. For example, it has been argued that even when researchers film research subjects "the film will be no more than an illustration of the written field report and usually redundant" (Jarvie, 1983: 316). Further, as Jarvie (1983) notes, the issue of appearance and reality is a problem when using ethnographical method. Thus, even were the researcher to follow and observe the participants through the whole programme, it is still very

difficult to detect the impressions and perceptions which are under the surface and not amenable to observation.

An alternative may have been a less 'pure' but more ethnographically-focused study that could have involved shadowing a small sub-set of the students who made up the study. Shadowing involves following participants as they go about their normal activities. However, while I could have observed a sample, at the outset it would have been problematic to ensure that any sub-sample was representative of the experiences of the 24 students who finally made up the sample. Finally, such an approach may not have helped in relation to getting students to discuss gender issues. For example, there is the possibility that there may have been cultural issues that would have inhibited the students talking about gender since gender issues in China are often not spoken about openly as there are strong traditions whereby family structures take precedence. Similarly as students considered gender discrimination more apparent in China than the UK then perhaps gender issues were less likely to materialise.

My work experience is reflected in my research. The research topic was inspired by my work experience. My experience of working in a Chinese restaurant motivated me to begin this research project. Aside from the work in the Chinese restaurant, since coming to the UK, I have worked in a Chinese students and scholars association, departmental alumni team (focusing on Chinese alumni), departmental marketing office (focusing on the Chinese market), departmental careers team (focusing on Chinese students), a Chinese magazine for all Chinese students in the UK and an Oxfam shop, and I have worked as an English-Chinese interpreter, Chinese language lecturer in a UK sixth form college, alumni mentor for postgraduate students (most were Chinese), mentor for pre-sessional students (all were Asian), seminar tutor of an MA course, college livers out representative, university doctoral society vice president, and PhD student representative for Staff-Student Consultative Committee. Through undertaking part-time and voluntary work, I learned interpersonal communication skills. All the work I have done has had one thing in common, it has required personal interaction, and most of the jobs involved communicating with the Chinese students. Interpersonal communication skills were built up by undertaking these jobs, and I learned to talk with the Chinese in a polite and professional way. Such a way helped me to establish a trusting relation with my interviewees. Aside from the benefits these jobs brought to me,

I also need to acknowledge the time and energy they took that delayed the progress of my research.

This study provides a path to future research. This study focuses on a Chinese student group in the UK. Future research could be expanded to another host country for international education. Data may also be collected from native students and other international students to get a more comprehensive understanding of Chinese students. Future research could also be done to compare the experiences and perceptions of Chinese students in the UK with other ethnic groups. Similarities and differences in international education experiences would be discovered, and more comprehensive implications for teaching and counselling international students could be gained. The outcome of such research could ensure a continuing Chinese student presence in UK higher education and an improved experience for Chinese students studying in the UK and other non-Chinese countries.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Literature on Experiences of International Students

Author & Year	Methodology	Research Region	Perspective	Main Finding
Gibson (1991)			Cultural difference	Many problems related to international students' adjustment problems and coping strategies were affected by their cultural backgrounds. The greater the cultural contrast between the host country and the home country is, the more difficult the adjustment will be for the students. Culture shock appeared to be a common occurrence among international students.
Owens (2003)	interview data from 17 international students from 12 different countries	East Tennessee State University	Cultural difference	International students are reluctant to assimilate further. At the bottom of their hearts, these sojourners still feel inclined towards their home culture and native language. They feel more comfortable when they speak their own language, eat the food they have been accustomed to since they were very young, and enjoy their home culture. They understand that they will never be the same as native American people no matter how many years they stay in the United States.

Kung (2007)	two in-depth interviews with 18 international students	at the University of Oklahoma	Cultural difference	International students danced on the edge of disequilibrium and re-equilibrium in a foreign land. Their cross-cultural challenges included seizing opportunities to determine their destinies, confronting difficulties and disequilibrium, navigating between home and host cultures, and being and becoming authentic. The major elements that contributed to these participants' adjustment and success were their personal capacities, relationships with others, and their capabilities to engage in transformative learning.
Armstrong (2001)	Collected both quantitative and qualitative data from international graduate students	at Oklahoma State University i	Academic problems	The culturally distinct American learning environment created substantial adaptive difficulty to the processes of the classroom for international students.
Eland (2001)	interviewed 14 international graduate students from a variety of world regions and fields of study	at the University of Minnesota	Academic problems	The positive factors that affected international students in their academic experience included good relationships, campus programs and services, and their own behaviors and perspectives. The negative factors included communication and relationship differences, lack of certain types of assistance, and some of their own attitudes and behaviors. He also suggested that international graduate students can generally meet their educational goals in the U.S., but their experience could be less stressful and more meaningful if faculty members take

				into account their unique needs.
Smith (2001)	interviews with 12 faculty members	at Georgia State University	Academic problems	Problems of international students include language and communication difficulties, cultural effects on learning styles, technology-based difficulties, lack of acculturation, and different teacher/student expectations. Findings suggested the use of sound instructional strategies can mitigate many of the learning difficulties displayed by international students. Findings also suggested that faculty members need more access to alternative instructional strategies and more encouragement in their practical application.
Womujuni (2007)	collected interviewing and surveying data from graduate students	at Portland State University	Academic problems	Academic adjustment challenges came mainly from unfamiliarity with the new educational system and limited English proficiency
Wong (1991)	quantitative data gathered from 263 undergraduate and 266 graduate students from 75 different nationalities	at the University of Arkansas	Financial Difficulties	The most challenging areas identified were financial difficulties, followed by communication/language, social/cultural, housing/food, and health.
Lu (2001)	three research methodologies: document analysis, structured	at a public university in Northeastern	Financial Difficulties	In addition to difficulty in communication, financial difficulties are pervasive among international students by collecting data from 204 surveys completed by international students from six major world

	interviews, and a student survey	United States		geographical regions (Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America, Middle East, Canada, and Oceania).
Joo (2002)	collected data from 500 students from Asia, 227 from Europe, and 143 from Latin America	at Michigan State University	Financial Difficulties	Financial aid is one of the most frequently encountered problems for international students
Lu (2001)		at the State University of New York at Buffalo	Lack of Services	Student services are hampered by lack of manpower and motivation to serve the unique needs of international students
Joo (2002)			Lack of Services	The most striking finding is the lack of awareness of existing services among international students
Klieger (2005)	undergraduate international student experience	at Arcadia University	Lack of Services	International students depend more on friends and family for support during transition to campus life rather than school counseling services
Womujuni (2007)			Lack of Services	The lack of services for international students includes undeveloped infrastructure for on- going orientation, insufficient health services information, and unavailability of international student mentoring programs

Source: The Author, summarised from Shu (2008)

Appendix 2: Interviewee Information Rota

Name Code	Length (1-round)	Length (2-round)	Length (3-round)	Programme Title	Course Title	Department	Pre-sessional	Pre-sessional length	Interview Date (1-round)	Interview Date (2-round)	Interview Date (3-round)	Transcribed
SQR	01:15:50	00:58:07	01:45:33	MA	Human Resource Management	Business and Management	Yes	1 month	20111028	20120507	20130515	Y
ZYY	01:03:18	00:47:27	00:41:30	MA	Human Resource Management	Business and Management	No	N/A	20111031	20120328	20130602	Y
FF	00:41:46	00:37:44	01:49:12	MSc	Finance	Accounting & Finance and Economics	No	N/A	20111025	20120503	20130723	Y
HYH	00:46:46	00:57:31	00:57:11	MA	Translation	Modern Languages	No	N/A	20111027	20120401	20130606	Y
SB	00:44:59	01:12:38	01:12:42	MA	Education	Education	No	N/A	20111025	20120322	20130525	Y
GS	00:31:08	00:46:24	00:31:51 + 00:55:08	MA	Financial Management	Business and Management	Yes	1 month	20111028	20120326	20130521 + 20130825	Y
CL	01:15:50	00:46:35	00:49:41 + 00:09:29	MA	Human Resource Management	Business and Management	No	N/A	20111028	20120423	20130517	Y
LXD	00:53:18	00:54:08	00:32:53 + 01:16:08	MA	Financial Management	Business and Management	No	N/A	20111028	20120329	20130520 + 20130529	Y
WYQ	00:43:22	00:53:16	01:29:26	MA	Translation	Modern Languages	Yes	3 months	20111027	20120504	20130608	Y
MY	00:31:59	00:29:37	00:43:24	MSc	Accounting and Finance	Accounting & Finance and Economics	No	N/A	20111030	20120325	20130525	Y
HY	00:58:14	00:56:46	00:53:38	MA	Financial Management	Business and Management	No	N/A	20111102	20120323	20130512	Y
WY	00:50:46	01:19:07	01:39:30	MA	Human Resource Management	Business and Management	No	N/A	20111026	20120326	20130517	Y
HD	00:41:46	00:46:48	00:48:00	MSc	Finance	Accounting & Finance and Economics	No	N/A	20111025	20120503	20130612	Y
CZ	00:37:09	00:41:19	01:02:12	MSc	Finance and Investment	Accounting & Finance and Economics	No	N/A	20111029	20120506	20130520	Y
CY	00:27:04	00:35:21	00:56:36	MSc	Finance	Accounting & Finance and Economics	No	N/A	20111029	20120329	20130720	Y
WJ	00:48:37	00:46:14	01:03:30	MA	Financial Management	Business and Management	No	N/A	20111026	20120504	20130723	Y
SL	01:44:50	02:05:32	00:59:48	MSc	Finance	Accounting & Finance and Economics	No	N/A	20111030	20120508	20130511	Y
HZE	00:59:27	00:37:58	N/A	MA	Financial Management	Business and Management	No	N/A	20111030	20120328	N/A	Y
CQR	00:30:46	01:04:45	N/A	MSc	Corporate and International Finance	Accounting & Finance and Economics	Yes	2 months	20111025	20120630	N/A	Y
CN	00:52:15	01:23:44	N/A	MA	Financial Management	Business and Management	Yes	1 month	20111101	20120508	N/A	Y
ZHT	00:46:53	00:45:44	N/A	MSc	Finance	Accounting & Finance and Economics	No	N/A	20111101	20120508	N/A	Y
WQQ	00:40:44	N/A	N/A	MSc	Economics and Finance	Accounting & Finance and Economics	No	N/A	20111028	N/A	N/A	Y
JY	01:44:50	02:05:32	N/A	MSc	Finance and Investment	Accounting & Finance and Economics	Yes	2 months	20111030	20120508	N/A	Y
WT	00:43:23	00:35:36	N/A	MSc	Finance	Accounting & Finance and Economics	No	N/A	20111105	20120329	N/A	Y

Appendix 3: Interview Questions

First Round Interview Question

This group of interview aims to explore the general impression of coming to a new country. This will include the initial experience of coming to the UK, *** in particular, the reason for choosing to study in ***, the impression of the university, department, class and other students, challenging or difficult experiences, stereotypes/perception of Chinese, and participants' intentions to work in the UK.

A - Initial experience

What course do you study?

When did you come to the UK?

What attracted you to study in the UK? Why?

What were your initial impressions when you first came to the UK?

*Why did you choose ***University? What's your first impression about the university?*

What were your expectations before arriving in the UK?

B - Experiences of coming to a new country

*How do you find adapting to life in ***?*

*What if any difficulties have you experienced since coming to the UK/***? [Can you explain it more? Why do you find it difficult? How does that happen? Can you give me an example?]*

Have you found it easy to interact with others?

How do you find others treat you? E.g. college, department, or shops staff? How does that make you feel about the UK?

[If they say nothing on discrimination] Have you experienced any discrimination on the grounds of your RACE? On the grounds of your GENDER?

Have you adopted an English name? When did you decide? [E.g followed blogs before coming to Britain.]What does it mean? Why did you choose that one? [Is it easier for non-Chinese speakers to remember or to pronounce? Or you just do not want them addressing you by your real names?] Does adopting an English name make you feel

more British, or feel less Chinese? What advantages do you see of adopting an English name?

C - Perceptions of Chinese

Generally in the UK/***, how do you think others view the Chinese/Chinese students? [Hard working? Passive-receptive learner? Highly competitive with others in cohort, strives to be the 'best'? Combines intellectual capability and 'good' moral behaviour - a good citizen? Responds to teacher direction obediently and adopts both structures and substance of the study according to teacher direction? Does not question accepted norms and ideas in the classroom? Learns within defined disciplinary rules and boundaries and lacks creativity?]
Why do you think people think of the Chinese in these terms?

D - Intention to work in the UK

Do you think these impact on the chances of Chinese students gaining employment in the UK? [may play up to / play down to]
Do you hope to find employment in the UK? Following on from your degree will you be seeking employment in the UK [post-degree work intentions]? When will you apply for a job?
What type(s) of job do you hope to gain? Part-time, full-time or intern work? Why?[E.g. money / CV]
In what industry do you hope to find employment? At what level do you hope to start?
What, if any, challenges do you think you will face in trying to gain employment in the UK?Do you think discrimination will impact on your intention of working here?
Is there anything else you want to add?

Thank you very much!

Second Round Interview Question

This round of interview aims to track any change of intention on working in the UK and to explore any job application experience since the first round of interview. This will include any change on the general impression, the adaptation to life in ***, any new experience of treatment, and the job applying situation if started.

A - General impression

After more than 5 months in the UK, what are your impressions about the UK now? Have they changed? What influenced these changes?

After more than 5 months at *** University, what are your current impressions about the university? What are your current impressions of your programme of study?

B - Experiences of living in the UK

Since we spoke last, how are you finding life in ***?

Have you experienced any difficulties? If yes, what difficulties?

Looking back on the taught element of your master's degree:

What did you think of the classroom dynamics and interactions?

What were your experiences of group work?

How well did groups work?

What was the interaction between group members like?

Did you experience any difficulties?

If any difficulties, do you think they were a result of cultural differences between group members?

[May connect to the perceptions of Chinese]

[If they say nothing on discrimination] Have you experienced any discrimination on the grounds of your RACE so far? On the grounds of your GENDER?

How do all the above experiences make you feel about the UK now?

Do these experiences have any influence on your desire to remain and work in the UK? [Explain]

C - Perceptions of Chinese

After at least 5 months in the UK, what is your current view of how others view the Chinese/Chinese students?

[Hard working? Passive-receptive learner? Highly competitive with others in cohort, strives to be the 'best'? Combines intellectual capability and 'good' moral behaviour - a good citizen? Responds to teacher direction obediently and adopts both structures and substance of the study according to teacher direction? Does not question accepted norms and ideas in the classroom? Learns within defined disciplinary rules and boundaries and lacks creativity?]

Why do you hold this view?

D - Work in the UK

Do you hope to find employment in the UK now?

Have you applied for employment in the UK? If yes, tell me what this have involved? If not, why haven't started? When will you apply for a job?

[If they hope to find employment in the UK]

Have you attended any career fair?

Have you been to any company presentations?

Have you searched job information on companies' official websites?

Have you looked up job information on any bbs?

Have you visited any job information websites?e.g. www.***.ac.uk/careers

www.prospects.ac.uk

www.wikijob.co.uk/

www.efinancialcareers.co.uk/

http://targetjobs.co.uk

Have you contacted the university for the Career Advisory Service? e.g. to modify your CV

[Make sure to delve into any of the measures which they have taken to find employment especially in relation to HOW THEY FOUND THE EXPERIENCE etc.]

Have you felt any sense of discrimination when attempting to find a job?

Is there anything else you want to add?

Sub group 1: Yes tried – stay in the UK
These interviews aim to seek out the reasons why this subgroup chose to stay in the UK and to find out their strategies for seeking employment. This will include how and why these students remained in the UK.

Background Information

What are you currently doing? How have things been since finishing at *** University?

What are your general impressions of the UK? Are there any changes since the last

interview? Have your impressions influenced your desire to stay in the UK?

What are the circumstances that allowed you to remain in the UK?

Did the experiences on your Masters at *** influence your decision to remain in the UK?

What is it like living in London/Oxford as a Chinese woman? Why did you choose this

particular area? How does it differ to ***? Is there more/less discrimination? Do you

have any fears because you are a Chinese female?

Perceptions of Chinese and Women

Having been in the UK for more than 12 months, how do you now think others in the

UK view the Chinese?

Do you think gender discrimination influences the likelihood of Chinese females gaining

employment in the UK? Why?

[E.g. be denied with maternity leave; be moved to a 'slow track' with less interesting

work or poorer promotion opportunities; are not given enough opportunities; be

propositioned; be judged devalued or subordinated; have boundaries between family

and workplace; be measured with male-generated standards]

What, if any, are the typical characteristics of female Chinese workers in the UK? Do

you think they share similar values and attitudes? What are the values and attitudes?

How do others label the Chinese? [If they do] What does it mean to you to label

yourself as a Chinese woman in the UK?

To what extent do you think female Chinese workers in the UK have reframed

themselves to change other's attitudes toward them? What strategies do you think the

female Chinese workers have used in order to reframe themselves?

Employment strategy

Why did you decide to seek employment in the UK?

[pre-application stage]What did your pre-application job searching consist of?

e.g.

Have you attended any career fair?

Have you been to any company presentations?

Have you searched job information on companies' official websites?

Have you looked up job information on any bbs?

Have you visited any job information websites? e.g.

www.***.ac.uk/careers

www.prospects.ac.uk

www.wikijob.co.uk/

www.efinancialcareers.co.uk/

http://targetjobs.co.uk

Have you contacted the university for the Career Advisory Service? e.g. to modify your CV

[Make sure to delve into any of the measures which they have taken to find employment especially in relation to HOW THEY FOUND THE EXPERIENCE etc.]

[application stage]What the application process entail? Where did you apply? For what position? To whom did you send your CV to? What was the process like? Did you get shortlisted? Why/why not? Did you receive any feedback? [If shortlisted] what were your experiences of the selection process?

Have you used your English name (or both English and Chinese names) when finding employment in the UK, e.g. in CV?

[post-application stage] Why do you think you were not successful in gaining employment?

Have you felt any sense of ETHNIC discrimination when attempting to find a job? Have you felt any sense of GENDER discrimination when attempting to find a job? Do you think the degree of ETHNIC discrimination has increased, decreased or remained the same when seeking employment? Do you think the degree of GENDER discrimination has increased, decreased or remained when seeking for employment?

What do you think about the political discourse/talk about immigration?

What's your view of the current UK visa system? Do you think the visa system reflects a discriminatory attitude on the part of the British government? To what extent do you regard the visa regulations as a factor that may prevent you from remaining in the UK? [actual or perceptual]

Do you think male Chinese students would face the same degree of difficulties when seeking employment in the UK? Why?

Do you think it is easier for Chinese women to find employment from CHINESE employers in the UK? In the UK, do you think Chinese employers discriminate against Chinese employees in work? [ingroup bias]

Would you encourage current and new Chinese female students to apply for employment in the UK? What, if any, advice would you give them?

Career Plans

What are your career aspirations and hopes in the next five years? Have you considered continued remaining or working in the UK?

What barriers do you think might prevent the realisation of your career plan?

Is there anything else you want to add?

Thank you very much!

Sub group 2: Not tried – stay in the UK
This groups of interview aims to seek out the reason why this subgroup chose to stay in the UK without attempting to find for employment. This will include why these students chose to pursue another degree in the UK.

Background Information

What are you currently doing? How have things been since finishing at *** University?

What are your general impressions of the UK? Are there any changes since the last interview? Have your impressions influenced your desire to stay in the UK?

What are the circumstances that allowed you to remain in the UK?

Did the experiences on your Masters at *** influence your decision to remain in the UK?

What is it like living in London/Oxford as a Chinese woman? Why did you choose this particular area? How does it differ to ***? Is there more/less discrimination? Do you have any fears because you are a Chinese female?

Perceptions of Chinese and Women

Having been in the UK for more than 12 months, how do you now think others in the UK view the Chinese?

Do you think gender discrimination influences the likelihood of Chinese females gaining employment in the UK? Why?

[E.g. be denied with maternity leave; be moved to a 'slow track' with less interesting work or poorer promotion opportunities; are not given enough opportunities; be propositioned; be judged devalued or subordinated; have boundaries between family and workplace; be measured with male-generated standards]

What, if any, are the typical characteristics of female Chinese workers in the UK? Do you think they share similar values and attitudes? What are the values and attitudes?

How do others label the Chinese? [If they do] *What does it mean to you to label yourself as a Chinese woman in the UK?*

To what extent do you think female Chinese workers in the UK have reframed themselves to change other's attitudes toward them? What strategies do you think the female Chinese workers have used in order to reframe themselves?

Employment strategy

Why did you decide not to seek employment in the UK?

Why did you decide to continue studying in the UK?

Did the prospect of discrimination play a role in your decision not to seek employment in the UK? What, if any, discrimination did you think you might experience?

Do you think the degree of ETHNIC discrimination in living experiences in the UK has increased, decreased or remained? Do you think the degree of GENDER discrimination in living experiences in the UK has increased, decreased or remained?

What do you think about the political discourse/talk about immigration?

What's your view of the current UK visa system? Do you think the visa system reflects a discriminatory attitude on the part of the British government? To what extent do you regard the visa regulations as a factor that may prevent you from remaining in the UK? [actual or perceptual]

Do you think male Chinese students would face the same degree of difficulties when seeking employment in the UK? Why?

Do you think it is easier for Chinese women to find employment from CHINESE employers in the UK? In the UK, do you think Chinese employers discriminate against Chinese employees in work? [ingroup bias]

Would you encourage current and new Chinese female students to apply for employment in the UK? What, if any, advice would you give them?

Career Plans

What are your career aspirations and hopes in the next five years? Have you considered continued remaining or working in the UK?
What barriers do you think might prevent the realisation of your career plan?
Is there anything else you want to add?

Thank you very much!

Sub group 3: Yes tried – went back to China
This group of interview aims to find out the reason why this subgroup chose to go back to China after trying unsuccessfully to find employment in the UK. This will include any changes in their general impressions to the UK, the job application processes, the factors that influence their final decision, and why they thought they were unsuccessful in finding employment in the UK.

Background Information

What are you currently doing? How have things been since finishing at *** University?

What are your general impressions of the UK? Are there any changes since the last

interview? Have your impressions influenced your desire to stay in the UK?

Why did you decide to leave the UK?

Did the experiences on your Masters at *** influence your decision to remain in the UK?

Perceptions of Chinese and Women

Having been in the UK for more than 12 months, how do you now think others in the

UK view the Chinese?

Do you think gender discrimination influences the likelihood of Chinese females gaining

employment in the UK? Why?

[E.g. be denied with maternity leave; be moved to a 'slow track' with less interesting

work or poorer promotion opportunities; are not given enough opportunities; be

propositioned; be judged devalued or subordinated; have boundaries between family

and workplace; be measured with male-generated standards]

What, if any, are the typical characteristics of female Chinese workers in the UK? Do

you think they share similar values and attitudes? What are the values and attitudes?

How do others label the Chinese? [If they do] *What does it mean to you to label*

yourself as a Chinese woman in the UK?

To what extent do you think female Chinese workers in the UK have reframed

themselves to change other's attitudes toward them? What strategies do you think the

female Chinese workers have used in order to reframe themselves?

Employment strategy

Why did you decide to seek employment in the UK?

 [pre-application stage] *What did your pre-application job searching consist of?*

    e.g.

Have you attended any career fair?

Have you been to any company presentations?

Have you searched job information on companies' official websites?

Have you looked up job information on any bbs?

Have you visited any job information websites? e.g.

        www.***.ac.uk/careers

        www.prospects.ac.uk

        www.wikijob.co.uk/

        www.efinancialcareers.co.uk/

        http://targetjobs.co.uk

Have you contacted the university for the Career Advisory Service? e.g. to modify your CV

[Make sure to delve into any of the measures which they have taken to find employment especially in relation to HOW THEY FOUND THE EXPERIENCE etc.]

 [application stage] *What the application process entail? Where did you apply? For what position? To whom did you send your CV to? What was the process like? Did you get shortlisted? Why/why not? Did you receive any feedback?* [If shortlisted] *what were your experiences of the selection process?*

Have you used your English name (or both English and Chinese names) when finding employment in the UK, e.g. in CV?

[post-application stage] *Why do you think you were not successful in gaining employment?*

What do you think about the political discourse/talk about immigration?

Have you felt any sense of ETHNIC discrimination when attempting to find a job? Have you felt any sense of GENDER discrimination when attempting to find a job? Do you think the degree of ETHNIC discrimination has increased, decreased or remained the same when seeking employment? Do you think the degree of GENDER discrimination has increased, decreased or remained when seeking for employment?

What's your view of the current UK visa system? Do you think the visa system reflects a discriminatory attitude on the part of the British government? To what extent do you

regard the visa regulations as a factor that prevents you from remaining in the UK?
[actual or perceptual]

Do you think male Chinese students would face the same degree of difficulties when seeking employment in the UK? Why?

Do you think it is easier for Chinese women to find employment from CHINESE employers in the UK? In the UK, do you think Chinese employers discriminate against Chinese employees in work? [ingroup bias]

Would you encourage current and new Chinese female students to apply for employment in the UK? What, if any, advice would you give them?

Career Plans

What are your career aspirations and hopes in the next five years? Have you considered working or staying in the UK?

What barriers do you think might prevent the realisation of your career plan?

Is there anything else you want to add?

Thank you very much!

Sub group 4: Not tried – went back to China

This group of interview aims to find out the reason why this subgroup chose to go back to China without seeking employment in the UK. This will include any changes in their general impressions to the UK, any changes in their intentions to work in the UK, and the factors that influenced their final decision.

Background Information

What are you currently doing? How have things been since finishing at *** University?

What are your general impressions of the UK? Are there any changes since the last interview? Have your impressions influenced your desire to stay in the UK?

Why did you decide to leave the UK?

Did the experiences on your Masters at *** influence your decision to remain in the UK?

Perceptions of Chinese and Women

Having been in the UK for more than 12 months, how do you now think others in the UK view the Chinese?

Do you think gender discrimination influences the likelihood of Chinese females gaining employment in the UK? Why?

[E.g. be denied with maternity leave; be moved to a 'slow track' with less interesting work or poorer promotion opportunities; are not given enough opportunities; be propositioned; be judged devalued or subordinated; have boundaries between family and workplace; be measured with male-generated standards]

What, if any, are the typical characteristics of female Chinese workers in the UK? Do you think they share similar values and attitudes? What are the values and attitudes?

How do others label the Chinese? [If they do] *What does it mean to you to label yourself as a Chinese woman in the UK?*

To what extent do you think female Chinese workers in the UK have reframed themselves to change other's attitudes toward them? What strategies do you think the female Chinese workers have used in order to reframe themselves?

Employment strategy

Why did you decide not to seek employment in the UK?

Did the prospect of discrimination play a role in your decision not to seek employment in the UK? What, if any, discrimination did you think you might experience?

Do you think the degree of ETHNIC discrimination in living experiences in the UK has increased, decreased or remained? Do you think the degree of GENDER discrimination in living experiences in the UK has increased, decreased or remained?

What do you think about the political discourse/talk about immigration?

What's your view of the current UK visa system? Do you think the visa system reflects a discriminatory attitude on the part of the British government? To what extent do you regard the visa regulations as a factor that prevents you from remaining in the UK? [actual or perceptual]

Do you think male Chinese students would face the same degree of difficulties when seeking employment in the UK? Why?

Do you think it is easier for Chinese women to find employment from CHINESE employers in the UK? In the UK, do you think Chinese employers discriminate against Chinese employees in work? [ingroup bias]

Would you encourage current and new Chinese female students to apply for employment in the UK? What, if any, advice would you give them?

Career Plans

What are your career aspirations and hopes in the next five years? Have you considered working or staying in the UK?

What barriers do you think might prevent the realisation of your career plan?

Is there anything else you want to add?

Thank you very much!

Appendix 4: Longitudinal Codes among Themes

Interviewees		SQR	ZYY	FF	HYH	SB	GS	CL	LXD	WYQ	MY	HY	WY	HD	CZ	CY	WJ	SL	HZE	CQR	CN	ZHT	WQQ	JY	WT
Employment Intention (inc. all types)	1 Round	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	X	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	X
	2 Round	↘	√	↘	√	↘	↘	↘	↘	↘	√	↘	√	√	√	X	↘	√	√	√	√	√		X	√
	3 Round	↘	√	√	↗	↗	√	√	√	√	X	X	√	X	√	√	√	√							
Employment Intention (full-time only)	1 Round	√	√	√	√	X	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	X	√	X	√	√	√	√	√	X	X
	2 Round	↘	√	↘	√	X	↘	↘	X	↘	X	↘	√	X	√	X	↘	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
	3 Round	↘	√	√	↗	↗	√	√	√	√	X	X	√	X	√	√	√	√							
Job Proactivity (inc. pre-application) full-time only	1 Round	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	2 Round	√	X	√	X	X	√	√	X	√	X	√	√	X	√	X	X	X	√	√	√	X		X	√
	3 Round	√	√	√	X	√	√	√	√	√	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X							
Job Proactivity (not inc. pre-application) full-time only	1 Round	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	2 Round	√	X	X	X	X	√	√	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	√	X	X		X	X
	3 Round	√	√	√	X	√	√	√	√	√	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X							
JP Impact on Intention (full-time only)	1 Round	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
	2 Round	√	X	X	NA	NA	√	X	NA	√	NA	√	X	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	X	X	X	NA		NA	√
	3 Round	√	X	X	NA	√	√	X	√	X	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA							
Still remain in UK	3 Round	√	√	√	√	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
General Impression to UK	1 Round	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
	2 Round	↘	↘	↘	↗	↘	↗	↘	↘	↘	→	→	→	↘	→	→	→	→	↘	→	→	→		↘	↗
	3 Round	↘	↗	↗	→	↗	→	→	↗	↗	→	→	→	↗	→	→	→	→							
Gen. Impression impact job intention	1 Round	O	√P	√P	√P	O	O	O	X	O	X	√P	O	√P	O	√N	O	X	√P	√P	X	√P	√P	√P	√PN
	2 Round	√N	√N	√N	√P	√PN	√PN	√N	X	√N	X	√P	√P	√N	X	√N	X	√N	√PN	√PN	X	√P		√N	X

	3 Round	X	X	√P	√P	√P	√PN	√N	X	√P	X	√N	√P	X	X	X	X	√P						
Feel easy to adapt to UK	**1 Round**	√	√	√	√	X	√	O	X	√	√	√	√	√	√	X	√	√	X	O	√	√	X	√	√
	2 Round	↘	√	√	√	√	√	√	X	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√		√	√
	3 Round	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O						
Actively interact with local	**1 Round**	√	X	O	O	√	√	√	√	X	X	√	O	√	√	X	X	√	√	√	X	X	X	O	X
	2 Round	X	√	√	X	√	X	√	√	√	X	O	X	X	O	X	X	√	X	X	X	X		X	X
	3 Round	O	O	O	X	√	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O						
Easy to interact with local	**1 Round**	X	X	X	√	X	X	X	X	X	X	√	X	√	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	√	X	X
Easy to interact with Chinese		√	O	√	O	√	√	√	√	√	√	O	√	√	√	O	X	√	√	√	√	√	O	√	√
Living difficulty	**1 Round**	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	X	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
	2 Round	√	X	√	X	√	X	√	√	√	X	X	√	√	√	X	√	√	√	√	√	√		√	√
Racial discrim. experience (living)	**1 Round**	X	√	X	X	√	√	X	√	X	X	√	√	O	√	√	X	√	√	X	X	X	X	√	X
	2 Round	√	√	√	X	X	√	X	√	X	X	√	√	X	X	√	√	X	X	X	X	√		√	X
	3 Round	O	O	O	X	O	O	O	O	O	X	O	X	X	X	√	O	O						
Racial discrim. perception (living)	**1 Round**	√	√	X	√	√	√	√	√	√	X	√	√	O	√	√	√	√	√	√	X	X	√	√	X
	2 Round	√	√	√	√	X	√	√	√	X	X	√	√	X	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√		√	X
	3 Round	√	↘	O	√	O	O	O	O	O	X	√	√	X	√	√	√	√						
Gender discrim. experience (living)	**1 Round**	X	X	X	X	X	X	O	O	X	X	X	O	O	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	2 Round	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
	3 Round	O	O	O	X	O	O	O	O	O	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X						
Gender discrim. perception (living)	**1 Round**	X	X	X	X	X	O	O	O	O	X	X	O	O	X	X	O	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	2 Round	X	X	X	X	X	O	X	X	X	X	X	O	√	X	X	X	X	X	X	√	X		X	X

Item	Round																								
	3 Round	X	X	O	√	O	O	O	O	O	X	X	X	√	X	X	√	X							
Study difficulty	1 Round	√	√	√	O	O	O	√	√	√	O	O	√	√	O	O	O	X	O	O	√	O	O	√	√
	2 Round	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	X	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Active in class	2 Round	X	O	√	X	X	X	√	√	X	√	X	X	O	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X
Group work diffi.	2 Round	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	X	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√		√	X
UG study in UK		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	√	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Pre-sessional		√	X	X	X	X	√	X	X	√	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	√	√	X	X	X	X
Changed Major UG to PG		√	X	√	X	√	√	X	√	X	X	√	√	X	X	√	√	X	√	√	√	X	O	X	X
Racial discrim. experience (employment)	1 Round	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	√	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
	2 Round	√	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	√	√	X	O	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
	3 Round	√	O	X	X	X	X	√	√	↘	X	O	X	X	X	O	O	X							
Racial discrim. perception (employment)	1 Round	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	O	√	O	√	O	O	X	√	√	√	√	O	O	√	DnK	√	√
	2 Round	√	X	√	√	√	√	X	X	√	X	√	√	√	√	√	O	√	√	√	√	√		√	X
	3 Round	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	O	√	X	X	√	√	O							
Gender discrim. experience (employment)	1 Round	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
	2 Round	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	O	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
	3 Round	X	O	X	O	X	X	X	X	X	X	O	X	X	X	X	O	X							
Gender discrim. perception (employment)	1 Round	O	O	O	O	√	O	O	O	O	O	√	O	O	O	X	O	O	√	O	O	O	DnK	O	O
	2 Round	X	X	√	X	O	X	X	X	√	X	√	O	X	X	O	O	√	X	√	√	√		√	X
	3 Round	√	O	√	O	√	X	X	X	X	√	O	√	X	X	X	O	O							
Discrim. impact job intention	1 Round	√	√	X	O	√	√	√	X	√	O	O	X	O	X	√	√	√	X	X	X	X	O	√	√
	2 Round	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	X	O	X	√	O	X	X	√	X	O	√	X	X	X		√	X
	3 Round	√	√	O	X	O	√	√	√	√	X	X	√	X	X	√	X	X							

Visa as a discrim.	**1 Round**	√	O	O	O	O	√	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
	2 Round	O	O	O	O	O	√	X	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O		O	O
	3 Round	√	√	X	√	O	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	X	X							
Visa barrier for job	**1 Round**	√	O	O	O	O	√	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	√	O	O	√	√	√	O	O
	2 Round	O	O	O	O	√	√	√	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	√	√		O	O
	3 Round	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	X	√	√	√	NA	√	√	√							
Chinese stereotype impact job chance	**1 Round**	√N	√N	√N	X	√N	√N	X	√N	√PN	X	√N	√PN	√N	DnK	√PN	X	√PN	√PN	√P	√N	√PN	√PN	√P	√PN
prefer use ENG name or CHN name	**1 Round**	E	C	E	C	Both	E	E	C	E	C	C	Both	E	C	Both	Both	C	C	C	C	C	E	E	C
use ENG name	**1 Round**	√	√	√	X	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	X	√	√	X	X	√	√	X
use ENG name feel more British	**1 Round**	√	X	√	X	X	X	√	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
use ENG name to hide real name	**1 Round**	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
CHN name identity	**1 Round**	O	√	O	√	√	X	O	√	O	√	√	√	O	√	O	X	√	√	√	X	X	O	X	O

Code:
√   Yes
X   No
O   Not mention
DnK   Don't know
↗   Increased
↘   Decreased but not none
→   Not much change
NA   Not Applicable