University of Southampton

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Social Statistics and Demography

Journey to the West: The Role of Face, Suzhi and Guanxi in Chinese Students' Motivations and Experiences of UK Higher Education

by

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Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

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UK university student populations are becoming increasingly Chinese. In the last five years alone, the percentage of international students in UK universities that came from mainland China has increased from 20% to 24% on account of an extra 19,000 Chinese international students studying in UK higher education institutions (Higher Education Statistics Agency, 2019). In comparison, while in 2017/2018 there were 107,000 Chinese students enrolled in UK universities, no other international student population from any other country exceeded 20,000 (Higher Education Statistics Agency, 2019), implicating the increasing financial importance of Chinese students to UK universities. Yet as China's university-aged population declines and the global higher education sector becomes more competitive, the need to understand Chinese students more deeply grows. While there has been much scholarly interest in Chinese international students in the last five years, there has been a relative lack of research into how Chinese culture affects their decision to study in the UK. This thesis therefore addresses this important gap.

The thesis begins by using aggregate data analysis to describe the personal characteristics of Chinese international students in the UK. It then uses the qualitative analysis of 27 in-depth interviews to examine how key Chinese cultural concepts motivate Chinese students to study in the UK. The thesis finds that master's students, especially female master's students, are largely responsible for the rapid increase in Chinese international student mobility. The qualitative analysis provides evidence illustrating the variability within the Chinese international student population relating to their motivations to study in the UK, leading to the development of a typology of three groups of Chinese international student: the traditional student (for whom increasing job prospects is often the primarily motivation to study in the UK), the individualistic student (largely motivated to come to the UK through a desire to broaden their horizons and improve themselves) and the academic student (motivated by their passion for their chosen subject). Moreover, this thesis draws attention to three fundamental Chinese cultural aspects that shape the motivations and experiences of Chinese international students in the UK: face, *suzhi* (becoming a higher quality person) and *guanxi* (developing mutually beneficial relationships), and explains how these concepts affect the diverse Chinese international student population. The thesis ends by considering important implications for university policy.

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Research Thesis: Declaration of Authorship

Print name:	Ian David Forbes

Title of thesis:	Journey to the West: the Role of Face, *Suzhi* and *Guanxi* in Chinese students' Motivations and Experiences in the UK

I declare that this thesis and the work presented in it are my own and has been generated by me as the result of my own original research.

I confirm that:

1. This work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
2. Where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;
3. Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
4. Where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;
5. I have acknowledged all main sources of help;
6. Where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;
7. None of this work has been published before submission.

Signature:		Date:	

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Definitions and Abbreviations

CSSA: Chinese Student and Scholars Association

HE: Higher Education

HESA: Higher Education Statistics Agency

UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

UIS: UNESCO Institute of Statistics

Gaokao: Chinese National Entrance Examination

Guanxi: Interdependent relationships

Hukou: Registered address in China

Mianzi: Face

Renqing: Duty of reciprocal human kindness

Suzhi: Essence of human quality

Chapter 1 Introduction

"Walking ten thousand miles is better than reading ten thousand books [读万卷书不如行万里路]*"*

Chinese proverb

What motivates Chinese students to leave their families, friends and familiar environments, and go to the UK to study? What is more important for contemporary Chinese students in the UK: experience (walking ten thousand miles), learning (reading ten thousand books) or something else, such as improving employment prospects? Alternatively, if there is not a consensus on a most important motivation, are there any observable patterns among those with similar motivations?

China's 18-22 year-old population is expected to decline from 120 million in 2011 to a UN projection of 80 million in 2024 (British Council, 2013). Meanwhile, China's higher education sector is growing and the growth in China's global outbound student mobility rate is slowing, leading to a potential future reduction in the demand for UK higher education among Chinese students (British Council, 2018). This is a concern, as Chinese students are crucial for the financial health of UK university institutions (Y. Yu & Moskal, 2018). In light of this concern, this thesis seeks a deeper understanding of the motivations and experiences of Chinese students for two related purposes. The first purpose of this thesis is to benefit UK universities: one-eighth of the UK higher education sector's income comes from the tuition fees of international students (Universities UK, 2014), of whom almost one in four now come from China (Higher Education Statistics Agency, 2019). Student mobility is now "driven by market forces of supply and demand" (Beech, 2017, page 14). In an environment where there is increasingly intense competition in the global Higher Education market, the potential for a loss of EU funding as a result of Brexit and a planned reduction in the cap of UK undergraduate tuition fees (Jack, 2019), there is a growing financial need for UK universities to maintain overseas demand in their services, a theme that is well established in the literature (Choudaha, 2017; Russell Group, 2010; Walker, 2014). Increasingly, UK universities rely on international student fees for this funding: in 2012-2013, 12.1% (£3.2 billion) of the UK higher education sector's total income came from non-EU student fees (up from 8% in 2007-2008), leading to calls from Universities UK for the UK government to launch an international student growth strategy whilst making greater efforts to communicate a

consistent message that helps international students feel welcome in the UK (Universities UK, 2014). Of course, creating a hospitable environment for students is not only important for financial reasons, but also increases the diversity of UK higher education institutions and benefits other countries by increasing access to higher education globally (Walker, 2014). The second purpose is to benefit Chinese students themselves. The problems that harm the well-being of Chinese students while they study in the West are well documented, including mental health issues (J. Chen, Liu, Zhao, & Yeung, 2015; Gu & Maley, 2008; Y. Yu & Moskal, 2018), perceived discrimination, prejudice, stereotypes and racism (Cao, Zhu, & Meng, 2016; Xue & Huybers, 2015; Ye & Edwards, 2015) and academic culture-shock, which (if unaddressed) can lead to lower grades and higher stress (Iannelli & Huang, 2014; Tian & Lowe, 2012; Wu, 2015; Y. Yu & Moskal, 2018). It is not unexpected, then, that some Chinese international students are dissatisfied with their study experience in the UK (Bamber, 2014). A deeper understanding of the aspects of Chinese culture that shape and underlie Chinese students' motivations and experiences can therefore help universities address some of these challenges through informing policies aimed at assisting Chinese students, thus enhancing both the well-being of Chinese students as well as their experience in the UK. Therefore, sustaining the attraction of Chinese students through informed policies catering for specific Chinese student interests is imperative for UK universities. This ultimately not only benefits the students themselves, but also benefits the reputation of UK higher education institutions (that can be harmed by adverse student experiences, potentially reducing demand among prospective students).

Recent years have seen a rapid increase in studies relating to Chinese students, much of which has focussed on students' motivations (Bamber, 2014; Bodycott & Lai, 2012; Cebolla-boado, Hu, & Nuho, 2018; Chao, Hegarty, Lu, & Angelidis, 2017; Fang & Wang, 2014; Hung, 2010; Z. Li, 2013; Ma, 2014; Martin, 2017; Wu, 2014; Xiang & Shen, 2009; Xue & Huybers, 2015) or experiences (Bodycott, 2012; Gu & Schweisfurth, 2015; Hail, 2015; Heng, 2018; R. Huang & Turner, 2018; Schartner, 2015; Spencer-Oatey, Lifei, Dauber, & Jing, 2017; Su & Harrison, 2016; Y. Wang, Harding, & Mai, 2012; Ye & Edwards, 2015; Y. Yu & Moskal, 2018). However, this research within the field of international student mobility tends to overlook the structure of Chinese society and relevant aspects of Chinese culture that shape Chinese international student mobility. Therefore, in this thesis, I will make the case for incorporating relevant Chinese concepts into a framework that provides a deeper understanding of the motivations and experiences of Chinese international students. Consequently, this thesis

uses a suitable and culturally relevant framework to obtain a deeper and more nuanced understanding of Chinese students, which will be used to inform policies that can both enhance the quality of Chinese international student experiences and enable UK universities to continue to attract different types of Chinese students.

1.1 Background

There are around five million internationally mobile students in tertiary education worldwide (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organziation (UNESCO), 2018b). China is the world's biggest sender of these international students (UNESCO, 2018b); in 2016 there were 850,000 students from China studying abroad (17.5% of the internationally mobile students globally), around 11% of whom went to the UK (UNESCO, 2018b), suggesting that students from China have formed the backbone of the expansion and development of international education and played an important role in the global migration system (Brooks & Waters, 2013). As a consequence, international students, including Chinese international students, are a coveted asset for higher education institutions. Indeed, international students contributed a net total of over £20bn to the UK economy in 2015/2016 through tuition fees and other forms of expenditure (Conlon, Halterbeck, & Julius, 2018). Host countries may also benefit by building social, cultural and political relationships with sending countries through the alumni that previously studied in the host country (Mellors-Bourne, Humfrey, Kemp, & Woodfield, 2013). Institutions can benefit through gaining an international and cosmopolitan reputation as well as through a greater diversity of curriculums and student bodies, which can provide a valuable international perspective for local students (Brooks & Waters, 2013). Furthermore, there can be benefits for the international students themselves (and through them their countries of origin) through improvements to their career prospects, linguistic ability, cosmopolitan skills and intercultural sensitivity, personal growth and intercultural social networks (Mellors-Bourne *et al.*, 2013).

For internationally mobile Chinese students, the UK is the fourth most common destination, behind the United States, Japan and Australia, while China is the most common source of international students in the UK (UNESCO, 2018b). The flows of Chinese students to the UK have increased significantly since the British government begun their long-term worldwide education campaign in 1999, with the numbers of Chinese students studying in the UK rising from a then record level of 25,000 in 2003 to 60,000 in 2007 (Gu, 2009). By

2017, there were almost 107,000 Chinese students enrolled in UK universities (Higher Education Statistics Agency, 2019). This rapid change in the numbers of internationally mobile Chinese students makes research in this field relevant and timely (Brooks & Waters, 2013). In particular, understanding more about the motivations, aspirations and experiences of Chinese students will provide important empirical context for university policy makers interested in continuing to attract and recruit Chinese students. Understanding more about the experiences of Chinese students will also provide important empirical context for promoting their educational achievement and wellbeing, which is not only important for students themselves, but also fundamental to enhancing their experiences and therefore for the reputation of the universities they attend.

1.2 Focus and research questions

This thesis contributes to three aspects of Chinese international student mobility that have been overlooked in the literature. The first relates to the numbers of particular cohorts of Chinese students that come to the UK. Descriptions of the population of Chinese international students in the UK is lacking: Findlay's (2011) study into the macro-level factors affecting international student mobility towards the UK appears to be the most recent example. This study will rectify this by examining the characteristics of Chinese students such as gender and education level (undergraduate, postgraduate taught or postgraduate research). This will show which categories of Chinese students are particularly interested in studying in the UK. Secondly, a similar aspect that has been neglected in the literature is the different types of students that come to the UK, the only exception being Cebolla-boado's *et al.* (2018) article, in which they argue for studies into Chinese student motivations to go beyond a solely employability framework. In contrast to categories of Chinese student, the different types (or subsets) of students are less visible as they are harder to measure. This study identifies different subsets (defined in terms of apparent values and primary motivations) of Chinese international students and explores the differences between these subsets. These oversights are important to study as Chinese students are not homogeneous, hence different types are likely to differ in their behaviours and aspirations. Thus, gaining a more detailed understanding of the subsets of Chinese international students will also give a clearer understanding of the various motivations that propel them to study in the UK. The third aspect that has been generally unheeded is the lack of Chinese concepts that are critical to Chinese culture and the decision-making of Chinese students, in particular, the concepts of

face, *suzhi* and *guanxi*, which this study will take into account, as is detailed in the next section. These overlooked aspects contribute to the development of four specific research questions, which are presented in table 1.1.

Table 1.1 Overview of research questions, sub-questions and methods of this thesis

Research Questions	Sub-questions	Methods Used to Answer
1. *Who are the Chinese students that come to the UK?*	What are the trends in higher education mobility of Chinese international students to the UK over the last ten years? (How) do the numbers of Chinese international students studying in the UK vary according to education level and gender?	Aggregate data analysis of secondary data of Chinese students in the UK
2. How do Chinese students in the UK differ from each other?	(How) do the motivations of Chinese international students in the UK vary by gender and level of study? (How) do the values and motivations of Chinese students vary within the Chinese international student population in the UK?	Qualitative interviews with approximately 30 Chinese students
3. How can we best conceptualise the motivations and experiences of Chinese international students?	(How) do the Chinese concepts of face, *suzhi* and *guanxi* affect the decision of Chinese international students to study in the UK and their experiences while in the UK? (How) do these Chinese concepts add to our understanding of motivations compared to established theoretical frameworks (such as cultural capital, social capital and Western perspectives of face)?	Emerging themes from qualitative interviews with approximately 30 Chinese students
4. *How do these findings shape university policy?*	How can UK universities continue to recruit students from China? How can UK universities improve and enhance the experiences of students from China while they are in the UK?	Emerging themes from qualitative interviews with Chinese students within the University of Southampton

This thesis uses two modes of data collection to answer these research questions. The first is a quantitative stage, where I analyse secondary data on the trends and numbers (according to various characteristics) of Chinese students in the UK. The insights from the first stage shape the second stage: qualitative interviews with Chinese students currently studying at a UK higher education institution. The second stage investigates the types of Chinese students that come to the UK, and examines the role of the Chinese concepts face, *suzhi* and *guanxi* in shaping the motivations and experiences of Chinese international students.

The answers to these research questions reveal the underlying motivations of Chinese students and their experiences and thus enables a deeper understanding of Chinese students and their motivations for studying in the UK than exists in the current literature. This provides valuable insight into how universities can continue to attract Chinese students to the UK and into how the experiences of Chinese students studying in the UK can be enhanced.

1.2.1 First research question: Who are the Chinese students that come to the UK?

The first research question seeks to build a detailed description of the complete Chinese student population in the UK, including the numbers at gender and education level, as the second sub-question proposes. However, in order to better answer this second sub-question, context is needed by exploring how these variables change over time, hence the first sub-question seeks to explore the trends of Chinese students (split by gender and education level) coming to study in UK higher education institutions over the last ten years. Thus, this first research question, using the first stage of research, explores and describes the overall Chinese international student population in the UK, laying the foundations for the second stage of research.

1.2.2 Second research question: How do these Chinese students differ from each other?

Having established differences in the numbers of Chinese students according to different characteristics, the next research question investigates what effect (if any) these differences have on the motivations of Chinese students, hence the first sub-question. This will give insight not only regarding why such differences exist, but also if these differences in numbers help explain potential differences in motivations of Chinese international students. Similarly,

investigating whether different types of Chinese international students exist through considering patterns in the values and motivations of Chinese students (the second sub-question) will also provide a deeper understanding of how the motivations of Chinese students vary. These first two research questions therefore provide much-needed context to help understand the overall picture of why Chinese students come to the UK to study[1].

1.2.3 Third research question: How to best conceptualise the motivations and experiences of Chinese students?

Previous studies have tended to use Western theories and Western concepts to explain the motivations international student mobility of Chinese students, for instance, one of the most common theories used in this field is Bourdieu's theory of capital (1986), which was developed in the West using Western cultures and society structures. As I argue in depth in the second chapter, the distinct social structures and culture of Chinese society means such approaches are imperfect and incomplete tools to understand Chinese society; Qi (2017) similarly argues that applying theories and concepts from a North American and European socio-context and meaningfully applying them to a Chinese socio-cultural context is limited and produces flawed descriptions. Within an international student mobility context, there is evidence that Western theoretical frameworks are not capturing a complete understanding of Chinese students. For example, Cebolla-boado *et al.* (2018) argue that the desire for Chinese students to study in a prestigious university is and end in itself, and therefore is not suitable to be theorised as a means to some other end. Therefore, there is evidence that perspectives such as Bourdieu are limited, and there is a need to consider both the structure of Chinese society as well as relevant Chinese concepts to achieve a deeper understanding of Chinese students and their motivations. Consequently, this study will focus on three Chinese concepts that play important roles in Chinese culture and in the structure of Chinese society, namely: face, *suzhi* and *guanxi*. These concepts deeply affect contemporary Chinese culture, and therefore can shape the lives, aspirations and experiences of students from China, which is why I argue they are needed as the basis of a theoretical framework to explain the

[1] It should be noted that the decision to study at a UK university is split into three stages: the decision to study outside China, the decision to study in the UK, and then the decision to study in the particular university (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002). These stages are not mutually exclusive, but affect each other, and thus, while all three stages will be considered simultaneously, the main focus is what motivates a Chinese international student to choose the UK.

motivations of Chinese students who chose to study in the UK. Answering this research question will also enhance global sociology through the development of concepts and theories from outside Europe and North America (Qi, 2017).

Face is one of the most fundamental concepts in Chinese culture (St. André, 2013). Face, as the "harmony of individual behaviour with the judgement of the community" (M. Yu, 2003, p1685), is gained when acting according to the accepted social conventions, but is lost when acting contrary to these conventions. The concept of face encompasses *mianzi* (in Chinese "面子"), which refers to one's social standing in the community, and *lianzi* (in Chinese "脸子") which refers to one's moral character (Qi, 2011). A person (or group)'s face comes from how other people see them; their face embodies their social standing and reputation (Qi, 2011). A person or family can be given face through their achievements or actions that receive affirmation bestowed upon them by others. A person or a family can also lose face through their own actions or inactions (for example, failing an exam or neglecting filial duties) or the actions or inactions of someone they are associated with (for example, a publically disgraced relative) (Bedford & Hwang, 2003). If one loses face, for instance if one fails in their duty or does not meet expectations, then that person or group will experience shame. If one loses *mianzi*, they feel they lose their dignity and their social respectability. An illustration of this relevant to international student mobility could be a student failing to pass, or failing to achieve a sufficiently high grade through their university studies. If one loses *lianzi*, then they feel they have lost the trust others place in them. A student could lose *lianzi* if they are discovered to have conducted themselves poorly while at university (such as if it was found that they cheated in their exams or plagiarised their coursework), or if their parent's investment in their education is deemed to not be sufficiently repaid. It is of particular note that there are distinctions between the Chinese concept of face, and the Western concept of face (M. Yu, 2003). The concept of face originated in China thousands of years ago, but was introduced to the English language in the nineteenth century through British colonists who had spent time in China (St. André, 2013). In the second half of the twentieth century, Western sociologists such as Erving Goffman and Western linguists such as Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson, seeking to create a universal concept of face, divorced face from its Chinese origins and applied them to Western, individualised models (St. André, 2013), leading to these substantial differences between the two concepts. Brown and Levinson's (1987) concept of face concerns an individual's self-image and their desire for social approval, while

the Chinese concept of *mianzi* concerns the reputation of a group and the concept of *lianzi* concerns an individual's moral character determined by the group (M. Yu, 2003). Thus, both *mianzi* and *lianzi* affect Chinese society more deeply than Western concepts of face affect Western society (M. Yu, 2003), as is argued in more detail in the next chapter. In this thesis, therefore, "face" will refer to either the Chinese concept of *mianzi* or the Chinese concept of *lianzi*, rather than Western concepts of self-image. This is in line with Qi (2011), who decides to use the word "face" rather than *mianzi* or *lianzi* as she argues that in contemporary Chinese language there is sufficient overlap between these two concepts to be used interchangeably in many cases without reducing clarity (Qi, 2011).

The next Chinese concept to be examined in this thesis is the concept of *suzhi* (in Chinese, "素质"; literally "essence of character"). The concept of *suzhi* refers to one's personal qualities (Anagnost, 2004; Kipnis, 2006; Z. Li, 2013). More specifically, *suzhi* is used to "judge the value of a human being according to his or her knowledge, skills, morality and manners" (Z. Li, 2013, p488). *Suzhi* therefore has a wide applicability across employability, social and personal contexts, and encompasses many aspects of one's personal development (Z. Li, 2013). Understanding *suzhi* is important to understanding Chinese people, as *suzhi* is the medium through which Chinese people view a person's character and define proper behaviour (Upton-McLaughlin, 2014). Indeed, in contemporary Chinese culture, *suzhi* has connotations with both personal value and social class distinction (Z. Li, 2013), and therefore is a particularly important concept to consider for this thesis.

Guanxi (in Chinese 关系; literally "shut connections") refers to interdependent, long-term relations between two individuals or groups built on trust, mutual obligation and reciprocity (Qi, 2013). The Western concept of "networking" does not correspond to the concept of *guanxi* as *guanxi* contains elements of trust and mutual obligation that "networking" does not contain; both giving and receiving assistance is expected for all persons whom are connected by *guanxi*. Furthermore, networking generally just applies to professional life, while *guanxi* permeates all areas of life: professional, social and personal. Building *guanxi* networks is a lifelong process for every Chinese person, and even these days is crucial for obtaining respectable jobs, even for those with the highest qualifications (Tsang, 2013). These three concepts, and their applicability within a Chinese international student mobility context, are discussed more comprehensively in the next chapter.

Apart from looking at motivations, the other aspect of Chinese international student mobility that has received much scholarly attention is the experience of Chinese international students (Gu & Maley, 2008; Gu, 2009; Henze & Zhu, 2012; Jin & Cortazzi, 2006; Kwon, 2013; Lillyman & Bennett, 2014; Mathias, Bruce, & Newton, 2013; Mcmahon, 2011; Spencer-Oatey & Xiong, 2006; Tian & Lowe, 2012; Wu, 2015). These studies chiefly investigate the experiences of Chinese students within the higher education system, such as the pedagogical, linguistic, physiological and social challenges faced by Chinese international students while studying abroad. Yet, very few bridges seemed to have made between the literature relating to the motivations of Chinese international students and the literature relating to the experiences of Chinese international students; those seeking to understand why Chinese students come to a country like the UK seem to very rarely consider how students find studying in a country like the UK. Nonetheless, these two are linked; for the aspirations one might have for studying in the UK will have an effect on their experience within the UK (King & Raghuram, 2013). Furthermore, this link is important, as it is the experience of Chinese students both during their study and in their future life course (rather than their motivations), that will be used to evaluate whether the decision to study was worthwhile or not. Thus, the experience of current students shapes the motivation of future students and consequently, the experience of Chinese international students will be considered in addition to their motivations for studying in the UK. Therefore, how the concepts of face, *suzhi* and *guanxi* shape both the motivations and experiences of Chinese international students in the UK will also be investigated so that a broader, more culturally relevant and nuanced understanding of the reasons Chinese students come to the UK can be obtained.

1.2.4 Fourth research question: Recommendations of policies towards Chinese International Students

Finally, the last research question applies the findings of this thesis to UK university policy. Chinese international students are coming to the UK primarily to study, and therefore the responsibility for the welfare of Chinese students lies primarily with the higher education institutions hosting the students (Universities UK, 2015). Once a clearer insight into the decision-making processes of Chinese students has been obtained, university policies that can help overcome misunderstandings on both sides (as was observed in both Gu and Schweisfurth's (2015) and Yu and Moskal's (2018) studies) are recommended, thus enabling the experience of Chinese international students to be improved. This in turn can shape the

motivations of future Chinese international students who are considering whether to study in the UK. Recommendations will also be made regarding the process of marketing higher education to potential Chinese students, in order that universities can market effectively, while managing the expectations of potential applicants.

1.3 Overview of Thesis

The next chapter evaluates the existing literature on international student mobility and the theorisations used to understand international student mobility, with particular attention to Chinese international student mobility within the UK. Literature relating to China, Chinese culture and the Chinese concepts that shape the international mobility of Chinese students will also be critically reviewed. From the gaps in the existing literature, a Chinese-specific theoretical framework will be introduced that can be used to more clearly understand Chinese international students studying in the UK. The methodology of this thesis is discussed in the third chapter, which examines the methods used to order to answer the research questions, and why such methods were used. The fourth chapter focuses on the analysis of secondary data about international student mobility, addressing the first research question. In this chapter, I argue that UK higher education is particularly popular among female Chinese students, and that master's degrees are of greater interest to Chinese students than undergraduate or PhD degrees. Using the data collected from interviews, the second research question is answered through the fifth chapter where I construe and describe the different types of Chinese students that come to the UK. I argue in this chapter that there are three different types of Chinese students: traditionally-orientated students motivated to study in the UK primarily to enhance job prospects, individualistically-orientated students motivated to study primarily by acquiring and enjoying foreign experiences, and academically-orientated students who are primarily motivated to come to the UK to deepen their knowledge. The third research question is addressed through the same interview data in chapters six, seven and eight, which focus on the Chinese concepts of face, *suzhi* and *guanxi* respectively. These chapters investigate the students' reflections on these three concepts, and explore how these concepts affect students' motivations and experiences in the UK. In these chapters, I argue that Western conceptual frameworks are insufficient to understand the motivations and experiences of Chinese students, and instead propose an innovative framework for the motivations Chinese students based on the Chinese concepts of face, *suzhi* and *guanxi* that I argue is more appropriate for understanding Chinese students.

The fourth research question is addressed in the final chapter, along with a summary of the key findings. The final chapter will also revise the conceptual framework proposed in the second chapter, describe the limitations of this study and suggest areas for further work. Within this chapter, I use the findings from the data and suggestions from those I interviewed to recommend polices aimed both at recruiting Chinese students in UK higher education institutions, as well as policies aimed enhancing Chinese student experience, including policies aimed at improving social integration with non-Chinese students, at student safety during their time in the UK, and at improving their education experience within UK universities. Should the policies I recommend be implemented, then UK universities should be able to recruit Chinese students more effectively and the experience of the UK and UK education could be enhanced for many Chinese students, thus improving the reputation of both UK universities and the UK as whole in the eyes of tens of thousands of Chinese people.

Chapter 2 Literature Review and Proposed Conceptual Framework

International student migration is increasing four times faster than total international migration globally, with nearly all countries for which data are available experiencing an increase in the number of international students studying within them (King & Raghuram, 2013). Indeed, while the number of Higher Education (HE) enrolments worldwide rose from 97 million in 1990 to 182 million in 2011, the number of these students who were studying abroad increased at an even faster rate, from 1.3 million in 1990 to 4.3 million in 2011 (UNESCO, 2013). There are many possible reasons for this growth. Brooks and Waters (2013) point out that, as travelling becomes easier and cheaper, it has become an increasingly important aspect of young people's lives. Technological advancements have enabled young people to maintain social networks from the other side of the globe, so they can keep in contact with home friends and family (or keep in touch with international friends). The increasing ease of communication across the globe and the widespread access to media, films and news have made studying abroad more accessible, as young people are increasingly exposed to the outside world, and thus feel inspired to travel and 'see the world'.

However, given this rapid increase, there is recognition that international student mobility has sometimes been overlooked (King & Raghuram, 2013). For example, in a 36 page review of the theories of international migration for Population and Development Review, international student migration was barely mentioned (Massey *et al.*, 1993). Similarly, international student migration is also largely ignored in one of the most popular recent books reviewing international migration: "The Age of Migration" (Castles, de Haas, & Miller, 2014). Having said that, there has been a sharp increase in the number of studies into international student mobility in the last five years (Bahna, 2018; Börjesson, 2017), including studies that focus exclusively on the motivations (Cao *et al.*, 2016; Chao *et al.*, 2017; Martin, 2017; Xue & Huybers, 2015) or experiences (Heng, 2018; R. Huang & Turner, 2018; Spencer-Oatey *et al.*, 2017; Su & Harrison, 2016; Ye & Edwards, 2015; Y. Yu & Moskal, 2018) of Chinese international students. However, the theoretical background of some of these studies of Chinese students in UK universities is limited in perspective. For example, Bamber's (2014) study into the motivations of female Chinese postgraduate students and Wu's (2014) study into the motivations for Chinese master's students produce useful insights

through the predominately economic theories they adopt, but they lack sociological and cultural perspectives and do not consider Chinese concepts within their theoretical frameworks, leading to incomplete interpretations lacking nuance. Further, relatively limited attention has been given to the characteristics and backgrounds of international students (Bahna, 2018), and, regarding the motivations of Chinese students, the narratives within the international student mobility literature rarely move beyond the human and cultural capital perspectives associated with gaining better job prospects (Cebolla-boado *et al.*, 2018).

Given the increasing importance of Chinese students for the financial health of UK universities (Y. Yu & Moskal, 2018), this thesis therefore seeks to make a timely contribution to the study of this rapidly growing phenomenon in what remains a relatively under-researched field by focussing on one of the largest student flows within global Higher Education (from China to the UK). This thesis provides a detailed overview of the demographic characteristics of Chinese students that has been lacking in the literature (Bahna, 2018). Importantly, this thesis draws on relevant Chinese cultural factors within its theoretical framework relating to student motivations and experiences and explains some of the differences and nuances among the heterogeneous Chinese student body, which is a valuable perspective that has been missing in the existing research (Brooks & Waters, 2013; Findlay, King, Smith, Geddes, & Skeldon, 2012; King & Raghuram, 2013).

The first section of this chapter provides a review of the literature on the young and rapidly developing field of international student mobility. The next section reviews the push-pull theory of migration and presents a broad array of factors relating to Chinese student mobility associated with this perspective. It then discusses Bourdieu's theory of capital as a framework for international student mobility, and highlights the shortcomings of the theory in a Chinese context, emphasising the need for a framework that is more suitable for Chinese students. This need is then realised through exploring relevant Chinese concepts (namely face, *suzhi* and *guanxi*) in order to develop an innovative and relevant conceptual framework for understanding the international student mobility of students from mainland China.

2.1 An overview of international student mobility

International student mobility is normally looked at through three lenses: as part of international migration; as part of the globalisation of Higher Education; and as part of the pedagogy discourse (King & Raghuram, 2013). As these three dimensions are all interlinked,

any comprehensive social theory concerning international student mobility should seek to bring perspectives from these three different fields together (King & Raghuram, 2013). Brooks and Waters (2013) make a similar point regarding disciplines advocating for an interdisciplinary agenda; international student mobility is shaped by theory from the disciplines of sociology, geography and education.

Research on international student mobility through the lens of international migration encompasses many disciplines including demography, economics, geography, political science and sociology (Brettell & Hollifield, 2015; Castles & Miller, 1998). While sociologists and economists are generally interested in the reasons why people migrate and the social and economic implications of migration (albeit from a range of theoretical perspectives), demographers have a particular interest into how migration affects populations and population change (Brettell & Hollifield, 2015). Many of the authors who contribute to the second lens, the globalisation of Higher Education (HE), are geographers (including Waters, Raghuram and Findlay). Literature relating to the lens of the pedagogy discourse can be mostly found within the education discipline. This chapter begins by considering each of these three lenses. However, the main theories that this thesis considers fall under the first lens of the international migration discourse. This emphasis is justified by the research focus: the main aim of this thesis is to understand the motivations of a particular group of international students, rather than to investigate the global market of globalised HE or to consider the experiences of international students within the classroom.

2.1.1 International migration discourse

Theories within this strand of literature tend to relate to either the causes of migration or the impact of migration (Castles *et al*., 2014). Since this thesis is primarily focussed on the causes of Chinese international student migration, theories relating to the impact of migration are beyond the scope of this thesis. Regarding causes, a review of the literature suggests that a framework for international student mobility should include the following considerations. Firstly, it should go beyond economic factors and include personal factors such as an individual's background or their aspirations for fun or adventure. Secondly, it should take social structures and macro-level factors into account, not just focussing on individual level factors. Thirdly, it should be sensitive to the areas in which international student mobility differs from international migration. Fourthly, frameworks for international

student mobility should place international students within the contexts of the student's wider life course. Fifthly, the framework should take factors such as gender into account.

Massey *et al.* (1993) provide an overview of several different theories of international migration. These are mostly based on economic theory: the underlying assumption is that the movement of the people around the world is primarily caused by variations in the supply and demand of labour in competing markets. Originally, the discourse on international migration mainly consisted of theories relating to macro-economic factors (such as wage differentials, differing employment conditions between countries and migration costs) or micro-economic models of individual rational actors making decisions to migrate based on a cost-benefit analysis process (Massey *et al.*, 1993). One popular perspective that emerged predominantly from the this micro-economic perspective (King & Raghuram, 2013) is Lee's (1966) push-pull theory. While Lee (1996) admitted that the decision to migrate is "never completely rational" (p51), he did assume the decision to migrate was, for most people, a mostly rational decision based on a consideration of the positive factors of the destination and the negative factors of the origin weighed against the obstacles of the journey. However, theories that solely consider international student mobility from an economic perspective are limited. King (2002) reflects on the diversity of the field of international migration, and argues that the existence of migrants leaving wealthier countries to less economically developed countries in Europe demonstrates the need for less economic and more interdisciplinary theorisations of international migration. In order to answer questions such as why migration takes place and who migrates, the economic and political perspectives need to be integrated with perspectives from other fields such as sociology and geography (King, 2002). Incidentally, Massey *et al.* (1993) note that the discourse of international migration has now expanded to include perspectives from disciplines such as geography, demography and sociology, as well as economic perspectives. Within the context of international student mobility, various authors also emphasise that labour-market focused economic theories are insufficient to explain the patterns of international student mobility (Brooks & Waters, 2013; Findlay *et al.*, 2012; Madge, Raghuram, & Noxolo, 2015). For example, Brooks and Waters (2013) point out that students choose to study abroad for a variety of reasons, including those that have very little relation to economic factors, such as adventure and personal fulfilment, while Cebolla-boado *et al.* (2018) argue that research of international student mobility should move beyond a narrative focussed merely on employability. In light of this,

this thesis considers a variety of perspectives that shape Chinese international student mobility rather than only focussing on employability.

Massey *et al.* (1993) helpfully suggest that theories of international migration should consider both the importance of structure on individuals and families (macro-level factors) as well as individual and family factors (micro-level factors) within structures. Within international student mobility, Findlay (2011) likewise observes that many previous studies of international student mobility have focussed on the individual choices of international students and do not consider how these migrants are impacted by supply-side policies such as recruitment drives of HE institutions. Increasingly within the context of a challenging financial environment, universities in the UK are considered as businesses: competing in a market for the best students in order to maximise revenue from tuition fees and gain greater reputation (Choudaha, 2017). Thus, perspectives that include macro-level supply-side factors and consider societal structures will produce a more complete picture of international student mobility than those that merely focus on the demand of international students.

International student migration can be considered a subset of international migration, where the main purpose to migrate internationally is to study (as opposed to work, to be reunited with family or to travel). Findlay (2011) observes that many studies within international student migration tend to very simply theorise international students as a category of international migrant through using a basic micro-level push-pull theorisation. However, Findlay argues that international students are more than merely a category of international migrant. One of the key characterisations of international student migration is that it tends to be temporal rather than permanent (Brooks & Waters, 2013; Xiang & Shen, 2009). Indeed, it is for this reason that most researchers in this field refer to international student mobility rather than international student migration. This is especially true in the UK since post-study work visas were removed in April 2012 to reduce net migration to the UK, restricting the opportunities for international students to remain in the UK and work after they complete their studies (Mavroudi & Warren, 2013). According to the latest Office for National Statistics figures, 69% of non-EU migrants using student visas returned home in 2016/2017 (Crofts, 2017). For Chinese international students, this percentage was even higher, almost 75% (Crofts, 2017). This corresponds to Findlay's *et al.* (2017) finding that Chinese students are more likely to anticipate their studies will end with their return home than students of other nationalities (Findlay, Prazeres, McCollum, & Packwood, 2017). These

findings are also consistent with the results from the Survey of Graduating International Students carried out in the same year by the Centre of Population Change, the Office for National Statistics and Universities UK, which show that 84% of students intend to leave the UK either immediately finishing their study or at some point in the future (Falkingham, Giulietti, Wahba, & Wang, 2017). Additionally, the personal characteristics of international students further distinguish international student migration from other forms of migration: they are mostly unmarried young adults in the late teens or early twenties that are highly skilled or in the process of becoming highly skilled.

Given these particular characteristics, international student mobility should not be considered merely as an isolated migration event that is independent from the rest of their life history, but as part of process within the course of a student's life (Findlay *et al.*, 2012; King & Raghuram, 2013; King, 2002). Findlay (2011) points to the importance of considering perspectives from the field of sociology that consider the relationship between international student mobility and their social class background. Water's (2006) study into Hong Kong international students in Canada also places mobility within the wider picture of a student's life course, theorising international student mobility as a process of accruing cultural capital that can be converted into other forms of capital later on in life in order to reproduce class.

A second perspective emphasised in the sociological literature is the need to consider gender (Brooks & Waters, 2013; King & Raghuram, 2013). Relatively little has been written about gender within the international student mobility literature (Brooks & Waters, 2013). One notable exception is Ono and Piper's paper (2004) into Japanese women studying and working in the US. Ono & Piper (2004) suggest that one of the reasons there appear to be more female than male Japanese workers in the US is because of unequal work opportunities between Japanese women and men, which pushes Japanese women to study abroad in order to compensate for the disadvantages they face. Given that Japan and China share a similar Confucian heritage, these insights could apply to the Chinese context. Therefore, there is a need to give more focus to gender in both migration studies as well within the field of international student mobility (King & Raghuram, 2013).

This thesis is informed by the lessons from the existing literature. It seeks to incorporate non-economic (in particular non-employability) narratives (Cebolla-boado *et al.*, 2018), take the structure of Chinese society into account, considers the impact of personal characteristics such as gender and level of study on the motivations and experiences of international

students (Brooks & Waters, 2013; King & Raghuram, 2013) and reflects on the role of macro-level factors that influence international student mobility, such a government immigration policies (Findlay, 2011). Consequently, theorisations of international student mobility such as Bourdieu's theory of capital (Bourdieu, 1986) are valuable in addition to perspectives like the push-pull theory, as they allow for the complex, personal and interconnected factors that shape the motivations of international students. Hence, a theorisation inspired by Bourdieu's theory of capital will be used in this thesis.

2.1.2 Globalisation of HE discourse

The discourse of international student mobility as part of the globalisation of HE is popular with many researchers from a more geographical background such as Madge, Waters, Findlay and Raghuram. Brooks and Waters (2013) see international student mobility as reciprocally related to the internationalisation of HE: while the internationalisation of HE helps to shape international student mobility, the growth in international student mobility in HE also helps facilitate the internationalisation of HE. However, the internationalisation of HE is wider than the international mobility of international students and also includes the international migration of academic staff and the internationalisation of teaching methods, learning, research and institutional polices (Henze & Zhu, 2012). It should be noted that the number of providers of HE is growing globally, as illustrated by the rapid growth of HE in East Asia (British Council, 2008; Marginson, 2010a; UNESCO, 2013, 2014; Ziguras & Mcburnie, 2011). Thus, the international student market is becoming increasingly congested as a greater volume of HE institutions enter the market and compete for students (Beech, 2017).

One impact of the internationalisation of HE is the increasing pressure to standardise HE, as can be seen by many universities in East Asia (as well as many over parts of the world) offering courses in English to appeal to international students more broadly (Marginson, 2010b). Indeed, as shown in the fourth chapter of this thesis, trends show that English speaking destinations tend to attract more Chinese international students than non-English speaking Western regions, suggesting that English is the "lingua franca" of the academic world (Dewey, 2007). Further, there are a range of international factors that exert power and influence over international student mobility, such as global ranking lists (such as QS Top Universities Rankings, the Shanghai Jiao Tong University league and Times Higher Education Supplement rankings); these rankings matter enormously to Chinese students, especially the Shanghai Jiaotong University league (Tsang, 2013). These international actors form a widely

accepted social hierarchy of universities (Findlay *et al.*, 2012). For Chinese students, the perceived quality of education in different countries is (in order of desirably): first the US and the UK, followed by Australia and New Zealand, then Singapore, Malaysia, South Africa, then other English speaking countries, and then European countries like Germany and France (Xiang & Shen, 2009), although no reason for this hierarchy is offered, which is why a framework that incorporates concepts such as face is valuable. Therefore, international student mobility cannot be understood independently from the wider internationalisation of Higher Education, which is, in turn, a significant component of globalisation.

The internationalisation of HE and the increasing volume of internationally mobile students worldwide leads to a growth in transnational ties: how an international student belongs to or identifies with two or more different countries or cultures simultaneously (Brooks & Waters, 2013). Consequently, an issue raised in the review of the international student mobility literature is the need to consider the multiple identities of international students *(*Findlay *et al.*, 2012; King & Raghuram, 2013; Madge *et al.*, 2015). For example, Raghuram (2013) argued that theories of international student mobility should allow for students possessing multiple identities; what distinguishes student mobility from other forms of mobility is that, although the primarily motivation of students is to acquire knowledge, that is by no means their only identity. For instance, those who are students may also be workers, refugees and family members (King & Raghuram, 2013; Madge *et al.*, 2015). Additionally, students can possess multiple transnational identities, where they feel they belong to two or more different cultures or nations simultaneously (Gu & Schweisfurth, 2015; Gu, 2009). However, in her study of perspectives of employability of Chinese postgraduate students in the UK, Li (2013) found no evidence to support the claim that Chinese students saw overseas study as a means of entering the international labour market or becoming more transnational, but instead mostly intended to return to work in China. Thus, although Chinese students possess multiple identities, viewing international student mobility as a means to establish transnational ties or to become more transnational may be less relevant for Chinese students, which suggests an alternative framework that incorporates Chinese concepts could be more insightful, as my third research question seeks to discover.

The concept of brain circulation, also referred to as knowledge circulation or knowledge migration (Geddie, 2015; Jöns & Hoyler, 2013; Raghuram, 2013), is another insight from the globalisation discourse. For example, Raghuram (2013) notes that a consequence of living in

a globalised world is that ideas and knowledge are easily shared across national boundaries, meaning that knowledge exists in transnational space. Once consequence of this is that international student mobility can be seen as a way of circulating knowledge around this transnational space. However, the sizeable language barriers between the UK and China at least partially disrupt the circulation of knowledge between the UK and China. Consequently, this furthers the rationale to develop an innovative conceptual framework that is more appropriate for understanding Chinese students.

2.1.3 The pedagogy discourse

The research from the pedagogy discourse tends to focus on individual experiences of international students within UK Higher Education (Arkoudis *et al*., 2013; L. Brown, 2009; Gu & Maley, 2008; Gu, 2009; Henze & Zhu, 2012; Hotta & Ting-Toomey, 2013; Kwon, 2013; Lillyman & Bennett, 2014; Mathias *et al.*, 2013; Mcmahon, 2011; Rienties & Nolan, 2014; Spencer-Oatey & Xiong, 2006; Tian & Lowe, 2012; Wu, 2015). This literature tends to look at psychological challenges international students face (Gu & Maley, 2008; Spencer-Oatey & Xiong, 2006; Tian & Lowe, 2012), how they adapt to an intercultural environment (Arkoudis *et al.*, 2013; L. Brown, 2009; Hotta & Ting-Toomey, 2013; Kwon, 2013; Rienties & Nolan, 2014; Spencer-Oatey & Xiong, 2006), and differing pedagogical practices (Gu, 2009; Jin & Cortazzi, 2006; Lillyman & Bennett, 2014; Mathias *et al.*, 2013; Mcmahon, 2011; Tian & Lowe, 2012; Wu, 2015).

It should be noted that Chinese students are not homogenous, and that their culture, background, aspirations, motivations, location in the UK and their relationships will all impact and shape their experience in the UK (Gu & Maley, 2008). While there may be certain identifiable shared characteristics (some of which are related to culture), Chinese students may also learn and behave differently in ways related to their personal needs and situation demands (Gu, 2009). However, there are certain common themes in the literature. Many authors discuss the challenges international students face. Gu (2009) finds that Chinese international students often feel alienated from British students and local people, in part reflecting the language barriers they encounter. Additionally, particularly when students are feeling more stress, Chinese students are less likely to interact with non-Chinese students (Spencer-Oatey & Xiong, 2006). This results in the commonly observed phenomenon of Chinese students remaining in groups of exclusively Chinese students, which hinders their ability to develop their English language and intercultural skills (Gu, 2009; Henze & Zhu, 2012;

Kwon, 2013; Mcmahon, 2011; Spencer-Oatey & Xiong, 2006). Bodycott (2012) and Gu 2009) both find that Chinese students sometimes suffer from culture shock due to a lack of interaction with family and friends combined with an unfamiliar living and educational environment. This can be associated with anxiety, depression and loneliness or feelings of isolation (Bodycott, 2012): Chinese students are more likely to experience clinical depression than home students (Henze & Zhu, 2012). Moreover, familial expectations to attain high grades put Chinese students under great pressure (Bodycott, 2012). When Chinese students receive financial support from their parents, they may feel pressure to replay the sizeable investment their family sacrificed for them (Mcmahon, 2011). Cultural differences such as differing learning styles can also be a challenge. Chinese students are accustomed to more flexible, warmer and more personal teacher-student relationships, which can make them feel less supported in the UK and adds to the pressure they often experience (Cheng, Friesen, & Adekola, 2019; Mcmahon, 2011). Of course, many students have positive experiences too, and many find ways to overcome some of the challenges faced (Lillyman & Bennett, 2014), leading to personal growth (Gu, 2009). Social networks can help support international students; for example, Gu and Maley (2008) find that the networks of exclusively Chinese students can be beneficial for psychological adjustment. Similarly, Ma's (2014) investigation of overseas Chinese students studying in Taipei finds that students protect themselves against these problems they face by establishing social ties with friends of the same nationality and cultural background. More specifically, Bodycott (2012) finds that Chinese students tend to turn to local students for help with language and academic difficulties, but to co-nationals for emotional support.

A feature of this body of research within the pedagogical literature is that the majority of the research consists of small scale qualitative studies driven by practice-orientated concerns, and are not established within a wider theoretical framework (Gu & Schweisfurth, 2015). Nonetheless, the experience of international students during their stay in a particular country shapes their perceptions of that country, which in turn can shape the perceptions of potential future students in their host country of that country and that country's HE systems (Bamber, 2014). Therefore, as the experience of international students is a factor affecting the motivations of international students, then the experiences of international students should be included in a comprehensive theoretical framework of international student mobility.

2.1.4 Conclusion of this overview

International student mobility is a broad and growing area of study, with contributions from various fields and perspectives, using different theoretical frameworks and methodologies. It should be noted that it is not always easy to compartmentalise a particular research study into one of these three discourses. For instance, there is substantial overlap between the lenses of international migration and globalisation (Castles *et al.*, 2014). For this study, the primary focus of understanding the underlying motivations for why Chinese students come to the UK so to assist universities in attracting Chinese international students means that this research study is best informed by the international migration lens, although the link between the experiences of Chinese students and their motivations means that perspectives from the other lenses (particularly the pedagogy lens) will also be considered.

2.2 An evaluation of the push-pull theory

There are two common theorisations used to explain the motivations of Chinese international students: Bourdieu's theory of capital (R. Huang, 2013; Z. Li, 2013; Ma, 2014; Tsang, 2013; Waters, 2006; Xiang & Shen, 2009) and the push-pull theory (Bamber, 2014; Bodycott & Lai, 2012; Cao, Zhu, & Meng, 2016; Fang & Wang, 2014; Hung, 2010; Maringe & Carter, 2007; Z. Wang, 2010; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; Rodríguez González, Bustillo Mesanza, & Mariel, 2010; Zhou, 2015).

Similar to many of the economic theories in Massey's e*t al.* (1993) overview, the push-pull theory hinges on the assumption that those that migrate are rational agents that make the decision to move abroad intentionally through some form of a cost-benefit ratio process. Lee (1966) considers the factors affecting migration under four headings: factors related to the country of origin, factors related to the country of destination, factors relating to intervening obstacles, and personal factors. Many scholars, including Wang (2010) and Hung (2010), attribute the first application of the push and pull theory to international student migration to Altbach (1981), who observed the reasons students study abroad consist of push reasons (negative factors about the environment of their own country such as lack of HE availability or unfavourable political environment) and pull reasons (perceived positive factors of the country they are moving to). Li and Bray (2007) broadened this concept to include reverse push factors, such as desiring not to be parted from one's family and friends, and reverse pull factors, such as the higher costs of living abroad. Broadening the theory in this way is helpful,

since while these barriers are not preventative for the students that do study abroad, there are likely many others who do not study abroad due to these reasons.

The lack of accessibility to high quality HE in China is one of the main push factors for Chinese students (Brooks & Waters, 2013). The high demand of students in the world's most populous country for quality HE exceeds supply and creates a very competitive environment. It is difficult to obtain places at the universities widely regarded as elite Chinese universities, which leaves students with the option of studying at a less reputable university (thus lowering the chances of attaining a well-paid, well-respected job) or (should finances permit) studying abroad (Tsang, 2013).

The most common pull factors for Chinese students include the UK's reputation for quality Higher Education and (for postgraduate taught students) the one-year master's programme, as it saves time and financial cost compared to other countries (including China) where master's programmes require two or three years to complete (Z. Li, 2013). This may be particularly relevant for women, on whom there is cultural pressure to get married soon after the age of 25 (Bamber, 2014). Li (2013) finds that developing intercultural skills (or skills deemed easier to acquire in the UK, including independent working, self-confidence and "broadmindedness"), in addition to gaining work experience in a foreign environment, are important pull factors as these "soft" skills (rather than the qualification itself) are seen by students as most important for obtaining jobs in the future. Other pull factors mentioned in the literature include the ability to travel in the UK and in Europe (the UK and Europe are seen as having more tradition and history than the US) and the opportunity to build up social and professional networks (Bamber, 2014). Having friends and family who already lived in the UK are further pull factors attracting some Chinese students (Hao, Wen, & Welch, 2016). However, emigrating from China (either by staying in the UK or working in another country) in the future is a not a common pull factor, with the vast majority of students hoping to return to work in China (Bamber, 2014). In addition to these micro-level factors, macro-level pull factors also encourage the mobility of Chinese international students. For example, Findlay (2011) observes how organisations like the British Council or universities themselves continue to work in many countries (particularly in East and Southeast Asia) seeking to attract new international students.

One example of a reverse pull factor is students relates to poor experiences connected with the destination country: if many Chinese students are not satisfied with certain aspects

of their study or time in the UK, this is likely to deter future Chinese students from studying there. Choudaha (2017) warns that since 2010 (when the UK coalition government introduced cuts to university funding leading to an increased dependence on international student tuition fees), universities have opened up alternative pathways to attract higher volumes of international students (for example by becoming more relaxed with measures of English proficiency). Unless sufficient resources are provided to support these increases, this may lead to a lack of support for these international students and consequently poorer experiences of UK HE than previously. This is illustrated in Bamber's study in 2014: although the majority were mostly satisfied with their study experience at a UK university, 14% would be unwilling to make the same decision (to study in the UK) again, and overall respondents felt factors such as overly large class sizes and degree programmes dominated by Chinese students (in addition to other factors such as the changing sentiments of Chinese employers and current UK visa regulations) would make other overseas options more attractive to Chinese international students in the future. Other common reverse pull factors include high tuition fees, high living costs, restrictive immigration policies, uncertain visa approval and the threat of discrimination (M. Li & Bray, 2007) as well as fears of security and linguistic challenges (Bamber, 2014). Leaving familiar social environments (particularly being parted from family and friends) was commonly seen as the greatest cost students made (Z. Li, 2013) and consequently the biggest reverse push factor. A summary of the common push and pull factors (together with reverse push and pull factors) can be found in table 2.1 below.

Therefore, the main advantage of the push-pull model is that it effectively identifies a range of factors (including motivations and experiences) affecting the decision-making of students. However, the model does not explain how the different factors relate to each other (Castles *et al.*, 2014). Further, the model does not effectively demonstrate how these factors vary at an individual level. For example, Li and Bray (2007) find that motivations differ according to personal characteristics, while the subject a student studies or whether they are studying at undergraduate or postgraduate level can also affect motivations (Findlay & King, 2010), as can the class, gender and ethnicity of students (King & Raghuram, 2013). In addition, there are other factors in the decision-making process which are not clearly expressed in the push-pull theory, such as a student's background, their history, and their aspirations (Findlay *et al.*, 2012; Findlay, 2011; Wu, 2014).

Table 2.1: Summary from push-pull theory literature showing common factors for Chinese students in the UK (developed by the author)

	Reasons to go to the UK	Reasons to stay in China
Reasons connected with home country (China)	Lack of HE accessibility (M. Li & Bray, 2007; Z. Li, 2013) Pressures of family and Chinese society (Bodycott, 2012)	Closer to family (Z. Li, 2013) Better social life (Z. Li, 2013)
Reasons connected with host country (UK)	Reputation of UK universities (Z. Li, 2013) Broaden horizons and experience different culture (Wu, 2014) Acquire "foreign" skills such as critical thinking (Z. Li, 2013) Improve English ability (M. Li & Bray, 2007) Ability to travel in the UK and Europe (Bamber, 2014) Building social and professional networks (Bamber, 2014) Friends and family living in the UK (Hao *et al*., 2016) Increases prospects of working abroad or in an international environment (Bamber, 2014) Future employability prospects (M. Li & Bray, 2007) Study specialised subject (M. Li & Bray, 2007) Short duration of postgraduate programmes (Bamber, 2014; Z. Li, 2013) Encouraged by marketing or agents from UK universities (Bamber, 2014) Encouraged by cross-cultural organisations like the British Council (Findlay, 2011)	High living costs (Hao *et al.*, 2016; M. Li & Bray, 2007) Hard to gain foreign work experience (Bamber, 2014; Z. Li, 2013) Unfamiliar teaching styles (Bamber, 2014) Linguistic challenges (M. Li & Bray, 2007; Z. Li, 2013) Isolated society leading to loneliness (Bamber, 2014) Uncertainties with visa approval (Bamber, 2014; Z. Li, 2013) Fears of security (terrorism) (Bamber, 2014)

Moreover, the model creates a dichotomy between positive and negative factors, which is not helpful at times: concepts that can simultaneously be both a pull factor and a push factor

(or a reverse pull factor) are less clearly theorised. For example, although many students consider the relatively short duration of UK courses as a major pull factor, for others it turns out to be a reverse pull factor: some employers in large cities in China tend to favour skills and experience over academic qualifications, and view the UK's one year master's degree programmes as inferior to other countries' longer master's degrees which allow more time for accumulating knowledge, skills and international experience (Hao *et al.*, 2016). Hence, this puts returnees from the UK at a potential disadvantage in the Chinese job market compared to those who studied in the US, Canada or Australia. Thus, a theorisation that can simultaneously consider both the positive and negative aspects of a factor, the past and future course of an individual student's life, and the relationship between different factors will better express individual perspectives on international student mobility, and explain more clearly at an individual level why a student may choose to move to the UK to study. Therefore, while push-pull theory gives a good overview of the array of factors that affect international student mobility, on its own it is insufficient to provide an in-depth explanation of how and why Chinese students come to the decision to study in the UK.

2.3 A discussion of Bourdieu's theory of capital

Compared to the push-pull theory, I argue that Bourdieu's theory of capital (Bourdieu, 1986) provides a clearer framework for understanding the complex, interrelated motivations that shape the individual (or familial) decision-making process to migrate for study. According to Swartz's overview (1997) of the sociology of the French sociologist, Bourdieu recognised that human actions, including the action of migrating abroad or the pursuit of education, involve an individual (or group) investing one form of capital in order to acquire other types of capital. In recent years, Bourdieu's theory of capital has become possibly the most common framework used by researchers studying international student mobility (Bahna, 2018; Findlay, Packwood, McCollum, Nightingale, & Tindal, 2018; R. Huang, 2008; Z. Li, 2013; Ma, 2014; Tsang, 2013; Waters, 2006; Wu, 2014; Xiang & Shen, 2009).

Bourdieu (1986, p241) defines capital as "accumulated labour" that has the "potential capacity to produce profits and to reproduce itself in an identical or expanded form". Capital can take many different forms, the three most common of which are economic, cultural and social. Economic capital refers to either money itself, or anything that can be immediately directly converted into monetary form like property. One example within the international

student mobility literature is Waters' (2006) study into the motivations of families in Hong Kong that participate in international student mobility to Canada; one of the main objectives of some of the middle-class Hong Kong families in her study was to ultimately accumulate economic capital through better job prospects and higher wages for their child. From this perspective, studying abroad is seen to increase the capacity to increase economic capital. Cultural capital exists in two main forms: embodied and institutionalised. Embodied cultural capital refers to forms of capital that are stored inside the body and mind (Bourdieu, 1986). Embodied cultural capital therefore includes knowledge, the skills one acquires and personal qualities. For international students, these include gaining cosmopolitan skills such as being able to be more flexible and reflective when encountering unfamiliar perspectives (Brooks & Waters, 2013), increased confidence and the ability to think through concepts critically (Brooks & Waters, 2013) and improving language ability (Findlay *et al.*, 2012; Ma, 2014). Institutionalised cultural capital consists of forms of capital attached to institutions, the value of which is determined in part by the recognition of that institution (Bourdieu, 1986). Academic qualifications are therefore the primary example of institutionalised cultural capital, where the value of the qualification is determined largely by the institution that bestowed that qualification: HE qualifications from a highly-ranked global institution will give those that attend it greater institutional capital relative to a lower-ranked, less well-known institution (Brooks & Waters, 2013). Social capital refers to the power one has due to one's connections. Bourdieu considers someone to possess social capital if they have access to a network of an identifiable group (whether that is a family, a class, a tribe, a school or political party) that can utilise that connection in order to obtain some benefit (Bourdieu, 1986). In the international student mobility literature, Findlay *et al.* (2012) and Beech (2017) note that reproducing social capital is a key motivation for many international students; many students hope to expand and diversify their network during their time studying abroad, thus developing a useful pool of connections they may utilise in the future.

One key aspect of this theory is the concept of convertibility; that is, one form of capital can be converted into another form in order to achieve the purpose of reproducing capital. Bourdieu argues that economic capital, cultural capital and social capital are all connected to each other, and an individual (or agent) may invest in one form in order to acquire another form. Bourdieu is concerned with social inequality, power and domination, and uses this theory as the framework to explain how individuals employ strategies to accumulate, invest in and convert various kinds of capital in order to maintain or enhance their power; their

position within the social order (Swartz, 1997). While Bourdieu envisioned this theory to be applied in a great variety of settings (from hiring practices in firms to the choice of spouses), the primary motivation of establishing such a theorisation was to highlight how education (and in particular, the rapidly growing HE sector), was being used to entrench social inequalities (Swartz, 1997).

Therefore, there are many useful applications of Bourdieu's concept of capital within international student mobility, including the international student mobility of Chinese students (Tsang, 2013). Most notably, Xiang and Shen (2009) use this theory to explain the decision-making process behind Chinese parents sending their children to study abroad. Xiang and Shen argue that Chinese parents send their child abroad to study in the hope of converting economic capital (through the payment of school fees) into institutionalised cultural capital (a degree) and embodied cultural capital (in particular, life skills and language ability). The parents in their study hope that eventually their child will convert this cultural capital into political capital (a position of influence in the community), social capital (gaining higher social status and recognition) and economic capital, thus not only acquiring more capital, but also giving the family more opportunity to enhance their power and ability to convert their accumulated capital in the future. In particular, international education is believed to be an especially effective strategy as it "lifts people to a higher scale of capital conversion" (Xiang & Shen, 2009, p514), enabling parents to convert their capital into more internationally valued assets. Similarly, Bourdieu's theory can also explain why wealthy Chinese families often send their child to private schools in the UK; a student who attends a UK private school has a 13 times higher chance to get into Oxbridge than an average local student (Xiang & Shen, 2009). Therefore, these wealthy families seek to convert their abundant economic capital into useful embodied cultural capital (gaining skills and language competencies) and social capital (a link with a highly respected UK private school) to help increase the odds of entry into the most elite universities, thus obtaining institutionalised cultural capital in the form of their child's academic qualification at that elite university (Xiang & Shen, 2009). Tsang (2013), in her study investigating the structure of the Chinese class system through examining the class and mobility reproduction strategies of Chinese parents in the southern province of Guangdong, also found parents were investing in education to acquire cultural capital for their children. However, one way she builds on Xiang and Shen's study is by beginning to include Chinese concepts into her framework. Tsang focuses on how the Chinese concepts of *danwei* (the place of employment an employee belongs to), *hukou*

(the national household registration system that favours those who live in the large Chinese cities) and *guanxi* (the relationship between parties that facilitate the potential exchange of cooperation and support) shape the "new Chinese middle-class" who, in line with Bourdieu's theory of capital, seek to reproduce their accumulated capital by sending their children who miss out on the top-tier Chinese Universities (such as Peking, Tsinghua or Fudan Universities) either to private universities in China or abroad to universities in the US or the UK. Although Tsang's contribution enriches the discourse of the international student mobility of Chinese students by considering the overall structure of Chinese society, nonetheless, there is a need for further contributions along similar lines, such as through using Chinese concepts to understand the perspectives of Chinese international students' own motivations to study in the UK.

There is, of course, some overlap between Bourdieu's theory of capital and the concept of human capital theory that has emerged from the field of economics. Indeed, some scholars use human capital theory in an almost identical way to Bourdieu. Wu (2014), for example, while investigating the motivations and decision-making process of Chinese undergraduates, separates human capital into three groups: scholastic capital (skills and knowledge gained from HE study, equivalent to Bourdieu's embodied cultural capital), social capital (identical to Bourdieu's social capital) and cultural capital (defined as social status, one form of Bourdieu's cultural capital). Similarly, Castles *et al.* (2014) define human capital as the knowledge and skills a human possesses, which aligns with Bourdieu's definition of embodied cultural capital. For the purposes of this study, then, Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital is preferred to human capital theory due to the explicitly convertible nature of Bourdieu's cultural capital.

A key part of Bourdieu's theory of capital is the idea of social reproduction: that those privileged to have capital tend to make decisions that ultimately ensure their privilege is maintained. Bourdieu (1984) acknowledged that individuals can take actions for non-strategic reasons that nonetheless still tend to lead to social reproduction: individual tastes and personal preferences are a product of one's upbringing and education, and therefore one tends to have a similar worldview (or habitus) as one's peers, which ultimately tends to result in people regarding themselves and those similar to them (whether consciously or not) as superior to who are different from them. Thus, groups (or classes) tend to pursue actions that maintain this distinction, which enables the distinction between the dominating and dominating classes to continue (Bourdieu, 1984). Similarly in an international student

context, Waters and Brooks' (2010) study of privileged UK students who studied abroad for reasons such as excitement and adventure found that these students, through their international experience, reproduced their social privilege, albeit seemingly unintentionally in many cases. While it is possible this could apply in a Chinese context too, this is not assumed in this thesis. There are couple of possibilities of why this narrative of privileged students (perhaps unintentionally) reproducing their privilege may not be suitable for Chinese students. Firstly (as was suggested in the data collection of this study) it can be ultimately less expensive (and therefore more accessible to students from poorer backgrounds) to obtain a master's degree in one year in the UK than a master's in China (which takes three years): indeed, more than a third of the students studying in Europe from China are not from middle-class backgrounds (Soysal & Schneider, 2018). Secondly, given the difficulty of obtaining employment upon returning to China (Hao *et al.*, 2016; Z. Li, 2013), the economic and cultural long term benefits of international student mobility for Chinese students should not be assumed. Therefore, there are potential limitations in applying Bourdieu's theory of capital in a Chinese context.

A more important drawback of Bourdieu's theory of capital for this thesis relates to its limitations in applying to Chinese society. One critique of Bourdieu's concept is that the theory was based on middle-class families in capitalist societies seeking to convert economic capital into cultural capital through education, so that they may accumulate greater economic capital later on (Swartz, 1997). Swartz argues that this does not apply so well across less capitalist societies, or with groups with less economic capital (such as those from a working class background). This raises questions as to how suitable Bourdieu's theory of capital is to understanding Chinese society, as politically China is a socialist country (full capitalism is not allowed under the Chinese constitution (Tsang, 2013)). Tsang (2013), however, argues that, in reality, China practices capitalism on an economic front and that most families that send their children abroad are likely to be relatively wealthy and part of the rapidly expanding Chinese middle class (Tsang, 2013). Nonetheless, one should take care when applying a theory developed through observing one Western society to a very different society (Qi, 2013). Bourdieu designed his theory within the culture and framework of Western, individualistic, capitalistic culture (Swartz, 1997). However, Chinese culture is built in a very different way, with different cultural rules governing society. This affects every level of society and impacts how decisions are made (Qi, 2011). Moreover, in addition to Chinese and Western societies having distinctive structures, the values and priorities driving

motivations can also differ. For example, Cebolla-boado *et al.* (2018), in their study of Chinese students in a number of British universities, found that students often sought to attend prestigious universities not so much to acquire some other end, but as an end in itself. Further, while there are Chinese concepts that share some similarity to some of Bourdieu's concepts (particularly regarding *guanxi* with social capital and *suzhi* with embodied cultural capital), these Chinese concepts contain key differences to those of Bourdieu, as will be argued later in the chapter. Therefore, while Bourdieu's theory of capital is arguably a more suitable framework than the push-pull theory for understanding individual's perspectives on why they choose to study in a foreign country, an approach is needed that goes beyond Bourdieu's theory of capital. Therefore, this thesis incorporates Chinese concepts that shape and are shaped by both the structure of Chinese society and common Chinese cultural values in order to understand the motivations and experiences of Chinese students in the UK accurately.

2.4 The implications of Chinese culture for Chinese international student mobility

The need for an approach that incorporates the structure of Chinese society and Chinese cultural values concurs with the thinking of Qi (2013), who, while looking at the Chinese concept of *guanxi* in relation to Bourdieu's social capital, questions whether Western theories can be directly applied to non-Western regions. In general, theories and concepts developed in one sociocultural context cannot necessarily be meaningfully applied to data generated in other sociocultural contexts (Qi, 2017). Further, global sociological theories can be developed and enhanced through the use of non-Western concepts, thus broadening their applicability within a global context (Qi, 2013). Consequently, not only will using Chinese concepts and Chinese perspectives inform our understanding of Chinese decision-making (particularly with regard to international student mobility), but also this serves as part of a movement towards the enhancement of global sociology through the development of concepts and theories from outside North America and Western Europe, which is a much needed development given the current global asymmetrical knowledge flows (Qi, 2017).

My review of the literature identifies three Chinese concepts as important to understanding Chinese international student mobility: face, *suzhi* and *guanxi*. Face is "an inevitable and unavoidable aspect of interpersonal encounters, connections and relationships

in almost every aspect of social life in China" (Qi, 2011, p281) and "a major dimension in Chinese culture" (Cardon & Scott, 2003, p9). Li (2013) argues that the Chinese concept of s*uzhi* has a stronger explanatory power and broader applicability regarding the motivations of Chinese students than cultural or personal capital possess within an employability narrative. Similarly, *guanxi* is a key component in Chinese society (Tsang, 2013) and a more suitable concept in a Chinese context than social capital (Qi, 2013; Swartz, 1997). Thus, face, *suzhi* and *guanxi* have a substantial bearing on the structure of Chinese society and help shape certain Chinese cultural values. It should be noted that, while I will demonstrate how these concepts are particularly salient and effective within Chinese society, these concepts are by no means unique to China, and can apply (to a certain extent) to other contexts. Therefore, while the main focus of this thesis relates to the understanding of these concepts in a Chinese context, their wider context will also be considered. Before we examine these concepts in detail, a background to Chinese international student mobility is provided.

2.4.1 Background to China and Chinese history with regards to international student mobility

China is the most populated country in the world (M. Li & Bray, 2007), with a total population of 1.4 billion (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2018a). The last four decades have also seen China's economy grow at an unprecedented rate. Gross National Product per capita grew at an average of 9.2% between 1993 and 2002 (M. Li & Bray, 2007). It is now the world's second largest economy, after the United States. The large number of Chinese students going abroad is related to both demographic and economic factors. China completed the demographic transition very quickly: the mortality rate decreased in the 1950s, which was followed by the birth rate declining rapidly in the 1970s. The change in population structure associated with these changes led to a large working age population, which has helped to promote rapid economic growth (Guo, 2010). This has, in turn, led to a rapidly growing middle class containing parents who can afford to send their children abroad (Guo, 2010). Simultaneously, the Chinese higher education market has expanded. Enrolment numbers increased from 1.43 to 5.43 million from 1996 to 2002 (M. Li & Bray, 2007). However, the HE market has not expanded enough to meet demand; there is a shortage of academic places in China. For example, over 9 million candidates took the *gaokao* exam (national university entrance examination) in China in 2007 (S. W. Lee, 2017) and over 10 million candidates in 2008 (Tsang, 2013), yet in both 2007 and 2008 there were only 6 million

places available within Chinese universities (S. W. Lee, 2017; Tsang, 2013), and only 10% of *gaokao* candidates in 2008 were admitted into China's top-tier universities (Tsang, 2013). Thus, China has the need and means to send hundreds of thousands of students abroad each year. It is worth noting, however, that this trend is unlikely to continue indefinitely. Guo (2010) argues that this boom in the working age population (and consequently, the rapid economic growth) will decline as the proportion of the elderly people in China's population increases. Thus, not only is economic growth likely to slow down, but also there will be potentially more pressure to look after elderly relatives, which may further reduce the numbers of young Chinese people emigrating or studying abroad (Guo, 2010).

It is also important to look at the historical dimensions as well as the emerging trends when analysing Chinese international student migration (Shen, 2010). Policy changes have played a substantial part in this increase in Chinese international students moving abroad to study. Xiang (2003) argues that at the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, the border between China and the outside world was not only a symbol of sovereignty, but also an ideological one between the "socialist" and "capitalist" worlds. To emigrate was illegal, as it indicated betrayal of the Chinese ideology. In particular, there was no possibility of legally studying abroad during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). After the end of the Cultural Revolution, paramount leader Deng Xiaoping began his Open Doors policy in 1978, in which China intentionally sought to open up its borders and engage with other countries politically, economically (through trade and investment) and within education (through seeking to establish links with HE institutions across the globe) (Shen, 2010). One aspect of this Open Doors policy involved Deng Xiaoping urging Chinese universities and the Ministry of Education to send more students overseas to learn advanced technologies, skills and knowledge and subsequently 3,000 students were sent overseas by the Ministry of Education in the first year of the policy (Xiang, 2003). During this time, although the Ministry of Education allowed students funded by the state to study abroad, these students were heavily regulated and would be punished if they did not return on time (Xiang & Shen, 2009). Studying abroad became more accessible in the early 1990s, as the Chinese government set up the Chinese Scholarship Council to sponsor Chinese students to undertake studies or research overseas (Xiang, 2003). By the late 1990s, a high proportion of Chinese overseas students were young people attending undergraduate programmes or language courses, in addition to postgraduate students who were either sponsored by the state or by themselves (Xiang, 2003). As the numbers of students studying abroad grew, so did expenditure. For

example, in 2004, mainland China students contributed £300 million in tuition fees alone to the UK economy, and £479 million in living expenses, according to a Chatham House survey (Shen, 2010). As emigration laws relaxed, Xiang and Shen noticed a new group of Chinese going abroad to study. This group were much greater in volume, younger in age, supported by themselves or their families or through overseas scholarships, and were more likely to study undergraduate programmes or language courses. They became known as "self-financing students". This group were driven more by the individuals and their families rather than the state, and consequently had less incentive to return compared to the state funded students. Xiang and Shen (2009) report that according to the Chinese Ministry of Education, by 2007, self-funded students accounted for 90% of all Chinese international students, with only 4% of students funded by the state. As various policies regarding emigration relaxed and encouraged international student mobility, the numbers of Chinese students studying abroad has increased dramatically: in 2007, approximately 144,000 students left China to study abroad, 167 times as many the 1978 figure (Shen, 2010). Thus, these polices have facilitated growth in international student mobility, providing some of the political context underlying the recent substantial outflow of Chinese international students to the UK and other countries. This brief history gives a snapshot of how China is rapidly increasing: in political power, in economic might, and in middle class population (Marginson, 2010a). Consequently, China has become by far the biggest sender of international students both globally and to the UK. This means that analysing the patterns of mobility, motivations, aspirations and experiences according to the varying characteristics of Chinese students is not only relevant but also increasingly important.

2.4.2 The role of Chinese culture in international student mobility

While the historical and political setting give helpful context, the role of culture is also essential in providing meaningful explanations of Chinese international student mobility. To this end, the highlighted concepts of face, *suzhi* and *guanxi* are vitally important for understanding Chinese culture and societal structure, and, although these concepts are not unique to China, they do not impact other societies in the same way they do Chinese society due to both the intensity with which they are experienced in China as well as the magnitude of influence within the functioning of Chinese society (Z. Li, 2013; Qi, 2011, 2013).

There have been sizeable changes in Chinese society since 1978 (Faure & Fang, 2008). These changes have had a great impact on Chinese cultural values. Cai, Kwan, & Sedikides

(2012) have observed that younger Chinese persons and those from higher socioeconomic backgrounds are more individualistic and self-focussed than older Chinese persons and those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, while Hsu & Huang (2015) differentiate between traditional Chinese values (such as a sense of duty or obligation, stability and security, filial piety and social harmony) and modern Chinese values (such as independence and freedom to be true to oneself, acquiring the latest trend and the pursuit of leisure and of living in the moment). Thus, there are different sets of Chinese cultural values, and those who are younger and from wealthier families (perhaps undergraduate students or those from big cities or developed regions of China) are more likely to adhere to modern Chinese cultural values, while those international students whom are older of from less wealthy families (perhaps older PhD students or those from less developed provinces) are more likely to adhere to traditional Chinese cultural values. Therefore, throughout this thesis, attention will be paid to this cultural heterogeneity, so as to understand the nuances within the Chinese international student population, as well as the particular ways in which important Chinese cultural concepts affect various subsets of Chinese students.

2.4.2.1 Chinese perspectives on the nature of Chinese society

In order to understand face, *suzhi* or *guanxi*, it is firstly necessary to understand accurately how Chinese society is structured. It is widely assumed that Chinese culture is a collectivist culture. However, this assumption is challenged by some Chinese authors who argue for a more nuanced understanding (Qi, 2013). Chinese culture is indeed more family-orientated than individual-orientated: it is widely accepted that Confucian ideals, including the requirement that all children should respect and obey their parents, remain important for young Chinese people today (Bao, Zhou, & Su, 2003; Bodycott & Lai, 2012; Marginson, 2010a). For example, learning and education are particularly valued in Confucian cultures, and so parents seek to honour their ancestors by giving their children the best education possible, while children are encouraged to work hard to achieve a good education so they bring honour to their parents and repay their parents' investment in them (Marginson, 2010a). Therefore, the concept of family identity is particularly strong for Confucian cultures like China compared to non-Confucian cultures. This can be seen through how decisions are arrived at: decisions will be often made on a familial rather than an individual basis (Bodycott & Lai, 2012; Bodycott, 2012; Brooks & Waters, 2013; Waters, 2006). Further, decisions are made not only by the family, but also for the family (as opposed to the individual) as there is

an assumed understanding that an individual's actions affects the family, not just themselves (Bodycott & Lai, 2012). For instance, if an individual loses face, then, as they are interconnected and interdependent with the family, their whole family loses face. Similarly, if an individual has good *guanxi* connections, then by extension, the whole family have good *guanxi* connections. From this perspective then, Chinese culture can be considered more collectivist than, for example, UK culture. However, a simple dichotomy of the West being individualistic and the East collectivist does not accurately reflect Chinese society. The Chinese do not view themselves as lacking a meaningful individual self or as individuals merely expected to contribute to their family's (or other social group's) objectives and goals instead of their own (Qi, 2013). Rather, as in the West, each individual has their social circles: the inner circle includes relatives and close friends while the outer circle includes colleagues and acquaintances. While circles of Chinese individuals are more interdependent than their Western counterparts, Chinese individuals are not passively controlled by the ensuing interdependence (Qi, 2013). A better way to understand "Chinese collectivism" , then, consists of Chinese persons building "evolving networks between individuals in which the individuals take heed of the interests of others, and in which the individual self is seen as dependent on the relations with others" (Qi, 2013, p320). In essence, Chinese society is more interconnected (with both a greater quantity as well as intimacy of connections) than most Western societies such as the UK. Thus, a Chinese individual will likely have more connections with other people than do individuals in the UK, with those connections within their inner circle (which contains close friends and in particular, family) displaying a greater level of interdependence than in the UK. A visual representation of these differing webs can be seen in figure 2.1 below. This more nuanced understanding of the structure of Chinese society sheds light on why concepts like face and *guanxi* are so influential in Chinese culture.

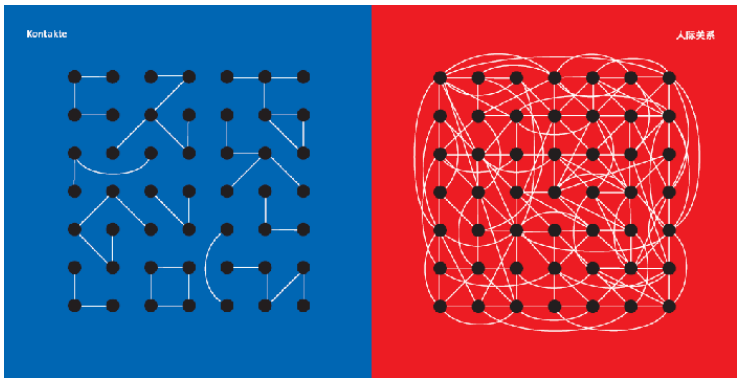

Figure 2.1: Yang Liu's diagram representing individualism (left) and Chinese collectivism (right) (Yang Liu, 2015)

2.4.2.2 Face

The concept of face cannot be ignored when seeking to understand Chinese culture (Zhu, 2003). Indeed, face may define the true nature of Chinese character and Chinese culture (Jia, 2001). Face is something possessed by an individual or collective body that cannot directly be determined by them: face is provided to them or taken from them on the basis of a complex series of social interactions (Qi, 2011). Face is accompanied by a variety of emotions (including honour, shame, anger, and guilt), which function both as the motives for gaining or losing face, as well as the consequences of gaining or losing face (Zhu, 2003). If a person gains face, they experience feelings relating to pride, honour and dignity; if they save face, that is, if they prevent the loss of face, they are likely to feel relieved or secure (Qi, 2011). However, if a person loses face, then, depending on the severity of the circumstances, they may experience a range of feelings ranging from embarrassment or incompetence in minor cases to shame and inferiority in more serious incidents (Qi, 2011). Shame affects one's sense of self and personal identity; when one experiences shame, their identity (how they see themselves and how others see them) is questioned (Bedford & Hwang, 2003). Thus, emotions are both a product of the experiences of gaining, saving and losing face and also a strong incentive to pursue strategies that should gain or save face or avoid the loss of face (Qi, 2011).

Goffman, a Western author who contributed to the development of a global understanding of face (Qi, 2017), defined face as a social representation of self-image reflecting the respect, regard and confidence (or lack thereof) others have in oneself, and noted that face is common to all peoples regardless of culture and pervades almost every facet of social life (Goffman, 1972). Face is therefore universal to all peoples and cultures. However, what differentiates face in Chinese culture is the quantity and quality of connections within Chinese society which intensifies the power of face (Qi, 2017). In individual societies, each person has their own face and is responsible for maintaining their own face (Qi, 2017). While a Western student may gain face by being supervised by an eminent scholar, or a Western teenager may lose face by what they regard as their parents' improper behaviour, generally face is more dependent on one's own actions, rather than the actions of others. Conversely, in Chinese society, one's face is highly dependent on those one is connected with to such an extent that one has a responsibility, a social obligation even, to

actively maintain the face of those they are connected with (Qi, 2011). For example, Qi (2017), in her study regarding family relations in mainland China, tells how one of her respondents, who, while attending a date with her mother that her father had arranged, saw from her mother's obvious facial expressions that her mother disliked him. Therefore, although she had no interest in the young man herself, she made great effort to hide her true feelings and talk very pleasantly with the young man and his parents in order to save her father's face. If she had not attempted this, then her mother's discourtesy would have likely offended the young man and his parents (who had travelled far for this date upon her father's invitation) resulting in a substantial loss of face for her father. Similarly, for another respondent in Qi's study, his mother had felt great shame when his father went bankrupt, which had subsequently soured her relationship with his father. However, when this respondent was admitted into a well-known university with a good ranking, his mother gained enormous face to such an extent that her relationship with his father improved. Further, Qi (2017) also found that Chinese individuals see themselves in relation to a collective face (as opposed an individual face related to a collective such as an American feeling embarrassed due to improper behaviour of American presidents): several overseas Chinese students in her study felt pressure due to the fear that if they (as in individual) behaved improperly while overseas, then the collective Chinese people would lose face. Thus, the structure of interdependence within Chinese society enhances and amplifies the value of face.

Further, gaining face (and avoiding losing face) are key objectives for Chinese people in their actions, social interactions and decisions (J. Wang & Spencer-Oatey, 2015). While face is not an exclusively Chinese practice, the use of face as an object consciously sought after through pursuing various strategies further distinguishes the Chinese practice of face from Western practices (Qi, 2017). For example, in her family relations study, Qi observed families in the rural provinces of Hunan and Jiangxi in south-eastern China who were unable to afford to eat meat regularly and seldom spent money on themselves, and yet spent a high proportion of their income on gift-giving rituals at Chinese New Year or held lavish funerals (one lasting four days) even though that meant incurring a debt of tens of thousands of *renminbi* (a few thousand pounds). The reason for this extravagant spending was that they felt their families would be laughed at and lose face if they did not follow the local customs. Thus, their strong desire to make money was not for their own comfort or their well-being, but instead to gain and maintain face. Consequently, instead of face being a background

aspect in the exchanges between individuals (which is predominantly how it is seen in the West), face becomes a primary concern to all members of a community, and the explicit and conscious purpose of interaction (Qi, 2017). A diagram representing the differences between Western and Chinese perspectives is displayed in figure 2.2.

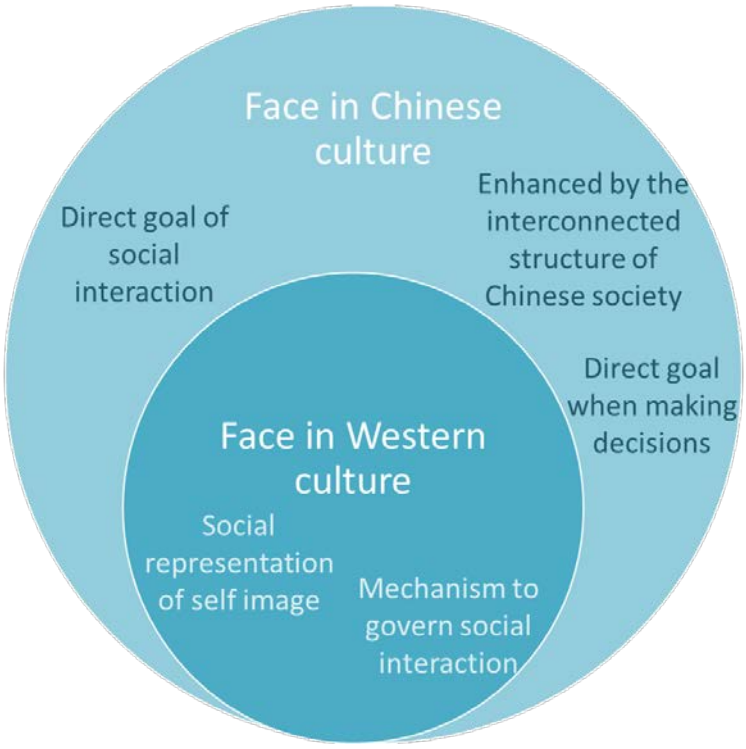

Figure 2.2: Author's own Venn diagram displaying similarities and differences of Western and Chinese perspectives on face

Therefore, face is deeply ingrained in Chinese culture, and plays a crucial role in Chinese decision-making processes (Bao *et al*., 2003). Face additionally has macro-level implications for Chinese society (Zhu, 2003). For example, government, business and university practices are influenced by face (J. Wang & Spencer-Oatey, 2015) and therefore face is key to understanding Chinese politics, economics, business and education (Qi, 2011). Face is also linked to other Chinese values such as social harmony (Fan, 2000; Hsu & Huang, 2015). When members of a society behave in a socially acceptable manner, social harmony and stability is seen to be enhanced (Qi, 2011). This has positive implications for society as well as negative implications: while harmony and order are encouraged at the expense of conflict and disorder, these goals of harmony and stability can encourage the toleration of unsatisfactory situations such as injustice (Zhu, 2003). Thus, face is a product of Chinese culture and society and simultaneously plays a highly significant role in shaping Chinese culture and society, both at a macro and micro level.

Face is therefore an essential factor to consider when seeking a better understanding of the motivations and experiences of Chinese students. Consequently, this thesis will consider face as a key component in the conceptual framework relating to the motivations and experiences of Chinese students. This will not only shed more light on Chinese international students, but also, through examining the nuances and particulars of how face affects Chinese society, will contribute to the development of the global concept of face.

2.4.2.3 Suzhi

Face is related to other Chinese concepts, including the concept of *suzhi*. The concept of *suzhi* has grown out of Confucian thought (Upton-McLaughlin, 2014). Historically, it referred to a set of key values one would associate with a person with proper behaviour. Such values included modesty (highlighting the achievements of others at the expense of your own), deflecting attention away from yourself, tact (to not embarrass others or make someone else lose face), respect for authority, etiquette and the pursuit of education and knowledge (Upton-McLaughlin, 2014). Thus, historically at least, the concept of *suzhi* involves noble and moral connotations of propriety; a person with high *suzhi* will bring honour to his or her parents, while conversely, a person with low *suzhi* will make parents lose face. These connotations have changed a little over time, yet remain in essence the same. Those with high *suzhi* are these days seen as elite, educated, urban dwelling and sophisticated, while those with low *suzhi* are seen as uneducated, rude and rural dwelling (Anagnost, 2004). In Li's (2013) investigation into the employability of Chinese postgraduate students in the UK, she found that many students identified *suzhi* with personal skills. Thus, developing one's *suzhi* by acquiring presenting skills, independent working skills, self-confidence and broadmindedness (and thereby gaining an advantage in social and economic life) was seen as a key reason to study in the UK.

There exists overlap, therefore, between *suzhi* and Bourdieu's embodied cultural capital, yet the Chinese concept of *suzhi* cannot be broadly summarised as "embodied cultural capital" without losing some its richness and relevance. The concept of *suzhi* is broader and contains aspects and connotations that differ from embodied cultural capital. For instance, *suzhi* includes a morality dimension (Anagnost, 2004; H. Yan, 2003). One common theme in Confucian and Buddhist Chinese thought is self-improvement, that is, the process of becoming a more moral person: as one learns, one develops one's moral character (Jin & Cortazzi, 2006). Given that a key aspect of Bourdieu's theory is the transferability of capital,

where capital holds value only when it can be transferred to another form of capital, pursuing high *suzhi* for altruistic purposes is not easily reconciled with Bourdieu's theory. Having said that, it was noted in the literature (Anagnost, 2004; Upton-McLaughlin, 2014) that meanings of *suzhi* have adapted in the post-Mao era, becoming more social class focussed, bringing the concept of *suzhi* more in line with Bourdieu's embodied culture capital. Nonetheless, *suzhi* remains a broad and relevant concept that has much larger connotations than merely transitioning to the job market (Z. Li, 2013), and therefore will be used in this thesis. These differences and similarities are represented in pictorial form in figure 2.3.

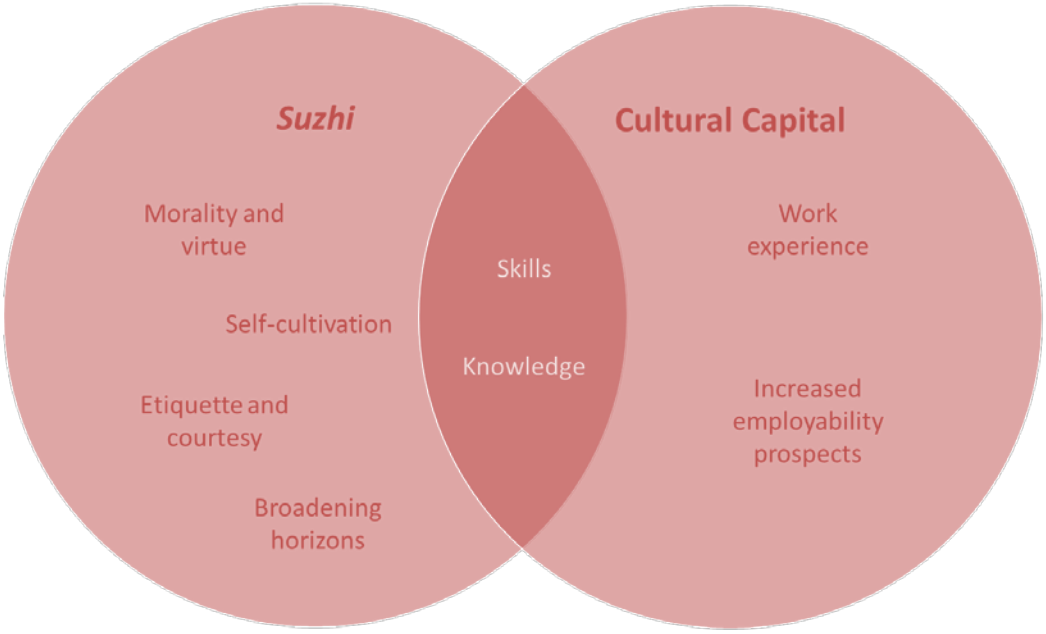

Figure 2.3: Author's own Venn diagram displaying the similarities and differences between suzhi and embodied cultural capital

Within a Chinese international student mobility context, I argue that Chinese students believe that studying abroad will help them attain a higher *suzhi* through acquiring skills, knowledge, experience and improvement of character. It has been observed in the literature that Chinese students in the UK seek to gain cosmopolitan and independent learning skills, internships or work experience, improved English speaking and listening skills and like to travel to historic and cultural places and cities (R. Huang, 2013). I propose that underlying these motivations is a desire to increase *suzhi*, which in turn brings greater face. This thesis therefore explores how important *suzhi* is in understanding the motivations and aspirations

of international students, as well as which kinds of students are motivated particularly by *suzhi*.

2.4.2.4 Guanxi

As with the concept of face, the intertwining, interdependent social connections that form the structure of Chinese society, and the quantity and intensity of these connections, allow the concept of *guanxi* to flourish within Chinese society. *Guanxi* is a concept that operates in a similar way to social capital in some respects, but occurs under certain conditions that distinguish it from social capital. Both *guanxi* and social capital can be seen as a social resource that can be acquired by investment of time or money in order to obtain benefits for both individuals and groups (Qi, 2013). Both *guanxi* and social capital involve networks of people, personal connections and relationships. Yet, there are key differences relating to the application of *guanxi* in a Chinese context and social capital in the context of acquiring social reproduction. There are two forms of *guanxi*: primary and extended: primary *guanxi* applies to personal relationships, and are characterised by moral obligations and emotional attachments, while extended *guanxi* operates at a professional or societal level, and is intentionally cultivated for advantageous purposes (Qi, 2013). Consequently, primary (or personal) *guanxi*, in particular, is conceptually different to social capital, although extended (or professional) *guanxi* and social capital have more in common. Nonetheless, even in a professional context, *guanxi* involves personal interdependence and a moral duty of mutual reciprocity, which distinguishes it from social capital (Qi, 2013). As opposed to seeking to build up one's social capital in order obtain recognition and accumulate other forms of capital, the greater aim of *guanxi* is building relationships founded on trust that will be mutually beneficial over long periods of time (Smart, 1993). Although *guanxi* can be seen as a form of building social capital that can potentially be converted into different forms of capital in the future, to treat *guanxi* as solely a means to acquire other forms of capital is misguided, and underestimates the importance of trust and mutual reciprocity placed on *guanxi* relationships in China (Smart, 1993). An overview of some of the differences and similarities between *guanxi* and social capital are displayed in figure 2.4.

Guanxi is much more effective in a connected society than a less connected one as a greater quantity and quality of connections suggests more opportunities to use *guanxi*. However, there are also some other aspects of Chinese culture that enable *guanxi* to be particularly effective in Chinese society. The first is the value of *renqing* (in Chinese 人情;

literally "human kindness or feeling"). *Renqing* can be seen as a duty to give gifts of social goodwill generously and warmly to those close to you. It entails those of one's acquaintance (those with whom one has *guanxi*) to respond to each other's needs through a mutual exchange of gifts and favours in proportion to the strength of the *guanxi*; the closer the relationship, the greater this exchange of favours should be. Thus, if I have *guanxi* with you, then because of *renqing*, it is expected and assumed that if I am in need then you will help me, and vice versa. In Chinese culture, the concept of *renqing* is a powerful benefit and pressure that exists in every relationship (Qi, 2013). One is obliged to reciprocate favours when others are in need just as others are obliged to assist you in your need; thus it is difficult for one to decline a request for help or fail to repay a debt of *renqing* (Qi, 2013). Thus, *renqing* and *guanxi* are heavily associated with each other. Qi (2013) describes *renqing* as "the force behind *guanxi*". *Guanxi* is the platform through which *renqing* is exchanged, while at the same time r*enqing* encourages one to pursue *guanxi* in order create a larger, more powerful and more stable *guanxi* network.

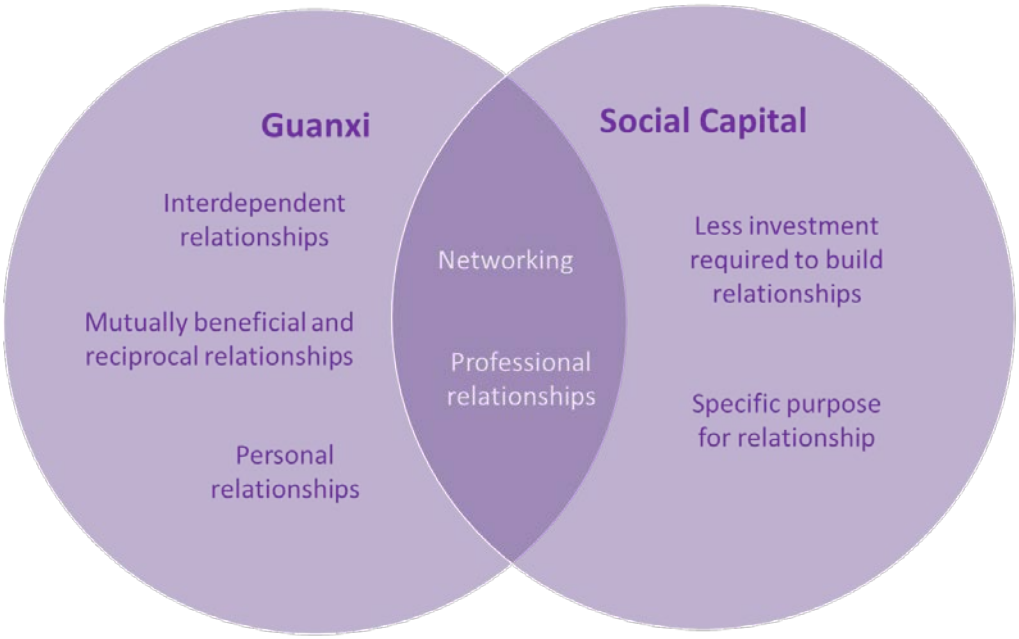

Figure 2.4: Author's own Venn diagram displaying the similarities and differences between guanxi and social capital

The reason *renqing* is so powerful in Chinese society is because of face. In cultures where social harmony, stability and conformity are highly-valued, face will matter more as face is the mechanism by which social harmony, *renqing* and stability are achieved. As Qi (2011)

notes, the West has historically used law and religious structures to achieve and maintain social order, but for China face is the chief means by which social and moral order occur. Even in the younger generation, values advocated by Confucian thought (such as social harmony and filial piety) are deeply embedded in the minds and behaviour of the Chinese (Bedford & Hwang, 2003; Zhang, Lin, Nonaka, & Beom, 2006). Therefore, it is widely considered unthinkable to allow one's parents to lose face through one's actions or inactions, and actions or behaviours (such as breaking social protocol or resisting socially respected standards) that bring shame to your parents are to be avoided at all cost. Hence, the importance of face in Chinese culture allows *guanxi* to flourish as the fear of face pushes one to partake in *renqing*; to not provide help for someone in your *guanxi* network when they are in need (when you are able to) will cause you and your family to lose face, as it will appear that you have not been brought up properly. If your family is seen as unreliable, it will reduce your family's social standing in the community, and may cause others to break their *guanxi* with you (Buckley, Clegg, & Tan, 2006). In a society when *guanxi* is almost essential for many situations, from acquiring a job to getting urgent medical help when needed (Z. Li, 2013), to lose *guanxi* is not an option. Therefore, given how *guanxi* and *renqing* relate to each other, mutual reciprocity is assumed to such an extent that it is taken for granted (Qi, 2013). This mutual reciprocity, held in place by the value of face, ensures that *renqing* is used to establish *guanxi*, and debts of *renqing* are repaid. In summary, in the interconnected Chinese society, the concept of *renqing*, policed by the value of face, helps establish trust, which in turn develops and grows *guanxi*. Thus, the mechanism of face shapes social interaction in Chinese society, and enables *guanxi* to be a highly desirable, powerful tool that in turn shapes all of Chinese society.

Within the context of international student mobility, I argue that utilising existing *guanxi* relationships with those who already live in the UK is a motivation for some students to study in the UK as having friends or family already in the UK would be a source of much needed local information and support, as was the case of Tsang's (2013) study of Chinese students in China. I further argue that Chinese students seek to build *guanxi* with both their coursemates and with others, with the expectation of helping and being helped by each other in the future, a phenomenon observed in the literature (Bodycott, 2009; Hao *et al.*, 2016).

2.5 Conceptual framework

Having examined and evaluated the various strands of existing literature on Chinese international student mobility, I have recognised that failing to consider important Chinese structural and cultural concepts is a shortcoming of the existing body of research. Therefore, there is a need for a theoretical framework based on these Chinese concepts. This framework was developed by employing an inductive process approach for my thesis, which was inspired by Bourdieu's theory of capital and is ultimately refined by the data. When researching existing literature on Chinese culture as part of the literature review, the concepts of face, *suzhi* and *guanxi* were particularly salient given the synergy they share with existing factors other studies have identified as important for Chinese international students. There were two reasons why particular attention was given to face, *suzhi* and *guanxi* (instead of other relevant concepts such as filial piety) in developing the theoretical framework, however. The first relates to originality. While other studies including Bodycott and Lai (2012) and Waters (2006) include discussion on the importance of considering the role of parents when theorising Chinese international student mobility, few studies focus sufficiently on the important role of face, *suzhi* or *guanxi,* establishing why a theoretical framework that incorporates these three concepts is particularly necessary. Secondly, these concepts are important due their nature as motivations. The data collected for this study reveal that these three concepts can be a distinct goal for Chinese students. While, for example, filial piety may be shaping students' motivations for accumulating face or *guanxi*, the data suggested that the desire to acquire face, *suzhi* or *guanxi* could play a substantial role in the aspirations of what Chinese students hoped to achieve through international student mobility. Therefore, as throughout the process the theoretical framework was revised in light of the data, concepts such as face, *suzhi* and *guanxi* shaped the data more directly than other relevant concepts (including filial piety), hence why they were ultimately included in my conceptual framework.

When applying the three Chinese concepts (face, *suzhi* and *guanxi*) to the table of push and pull factors earlier in the chapter (table 2.1), it is apparent that these three concepts are linked to many of the common motivations for Chinese students. I therefore revised the earlier table of common motivations (based on the push-pull theory literature) through colour coding the factors in accordance with the three Chinese concept of interest in this thesis. This colour-coded table of factors is displayed in table 2.2. Factors related to gaining

face (such as attending a reputable university), I have coloured in blue. Factors linked with *suzhi* are coloured in red, while purple factors represent those connected with *guanxi*. For example, I relate the need for HE, the pressure within Chinese society (such as the pressure to succeed (Bodycott, 2012)), and the pressure to study short-duration programmes (for master's students) as factors that are primarily related to face. Factors that affect desires for intercultural skills, broader horizons and self-improvement I argue are related to *suzhi*. Factors relating to relationships, whether to do with intimate, personal relationships or professional relationships, I argue are related to *guanxi*. Therefore, these three concepts shed light on 15 out of the 24 (63%) common factors relating to Chinese international mobility. For the remaining nine factors, I argue that four are ultimately related with capital, namely factors relating to increasing employability prospects (including gaining international work experience that can later be converted into future economic capital) and factors relating to economic assets (such living costs). These factors are related to Bourdieu's theory of capital. The remaining clusters of factors relate to safety, the desire to study particular subject and macro-level factors (such as incentives from universities or other organisations and visa considerations). These groupings, while subjective, help to demonstrate how influential Chinese concepts are to Chinese international student mobility. This table, with the seven categories of types of factors, then form the basis of my conceptual framework, which is pictorially described in figure 2.5 below.

One can acquire face is by finding a good career, and thus maintaining the family's reputation (Tsang, 2013). Meanwhile, graduating from a prestigious, well-known university (preferably a Western one should one miss out on a place at an elite Chinese university) further gives Chinese families face (Qi, 2017), which is pertinent given that demand exceeds supply for places in elite Chinese universities (Brooks & Waters, 2013; Tsang, 2013). The decision to study in the UK instead of, for example, India or South Korea can also perhaps be traced down to face: certain universities and certain countries allow families to gain more face than others. In the perception of Chinese families (no doubt influenced by university ranking tables), the UK is seen as more as a more prestigious country in which to obtain higher education than a country like India or even South Korea (Marginson, 2010b). To address the third research question, therefore, this thesis investigates the importance of face for Chinese international students in the UK, and evaluates any relationship between face and the motivations of these students, particularly in regard to the ranking (and reputation) of UK universities and the UK as an HE provider.

Table 2.2: Author's own table of common factors in the literature relating to the decision to partake in Chinese international student mobility[2]

	Reasons to go to the UK	Reasons to stay in China
Reasons connected with home country (China)	Lack of HE accessibility (M. Li & Bray, 2007; Z. Li, 2013) Pressures of family and Chinese society (Bodycott, 2012)	Closer to family (Z. Li, 2013) Better social life (Z. Li, 2013)
Reasons connected with host country (UK)	Reputation of UK universities (Z. Li, 2013) Broaden horizons and experience different culture (Wu, 2014) Acquire "foreign" skills such as critical thinking (Z. Li, 2013) Improve English ability (M. Li & Bray, 2007) Ability to travel in the UK and Europe (Bamber, 2014) Building social and professional networks (Bamber, 2014) Friends and family living in the UK (Hao *et al.*, 2016) Increases prospects of working abroad or in an international environment (Bamber, 2014) Future employability prospects (M. Li & Bray, 2007) Study specialised subject (M. Li & Bray, 2007) Short duration of postgraduate programmes (Bamber, 2014; Z. Li, 2013) Encouraged by marketing, agents or connections from UK universities, or by cross-cultural organisations like the British Council (Bamber, 2014; Findlay, 2011)	High living costs (Hao *et al.*, 2016; M. Li & Bray, 2007) Hard to gain foreign work experience (Bamber, 2014; Z. Li, 2013) Unfamiliar teaching styles (Bamber, 2014) Linguistic challenges (M. Li & Bray, 2007; Z. Li, 2013) Isolated society leading to loneliness (Bamber, 2014) Uncertainties with visa approval (Bamber, 2014; Z. Li, 2013) Fears of security (terrorism) (Bamber, 2014)

[2] Blue represents factors connected with face, red with suzhi, purple with guanxi, gold with capital, green with safety, orange with desire for study and black with macro-level factors

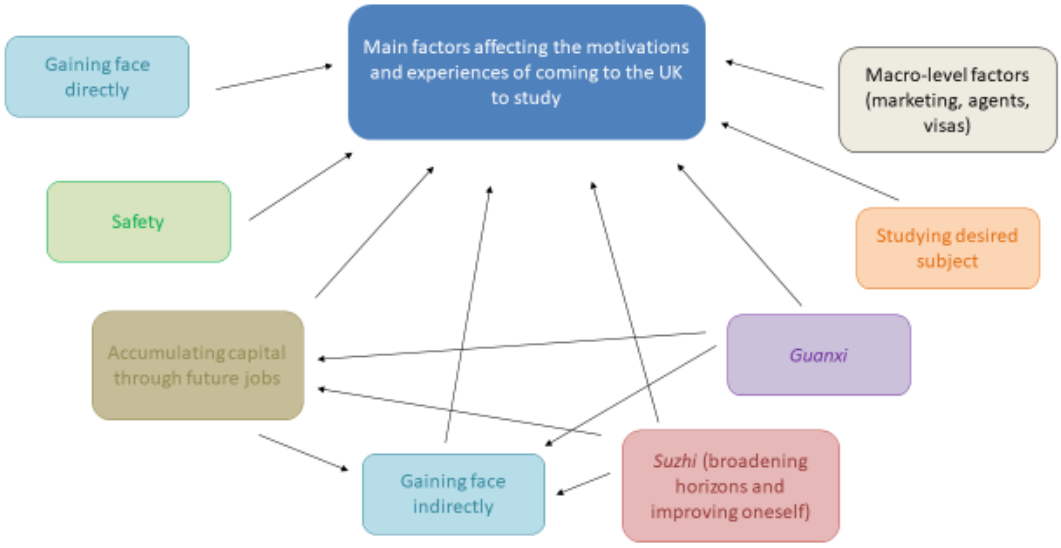

Figure 2.5: Authors' own diagram of conceptual framework of motivations and experiences

One motivation that could be indirectly linked with face is Bourdieu's (1986) concept of convertible capital. It has been shown in many studies that some Chinese students have the desire to accumulate capital through increasing employability prospects by gaining institutionalised cultural capital such as HE qualifications (in addition to the aforementioned embodied cultural capital and social capital), which can later be converted into economic capital (Z. Li, 2013; Ma, 2014; Waters, 2006; Xiang & Shen, 2009). However, Chinese individuals and families have been observed to pursue capital not as an ultimate objective, but in order to gain and maintain face (Qi, 2017). This can apply the families of Chinese international students: should the investment of sending their child to the UK to study result in acquiring a "good job", then the hope is that this job should bring stability to the family finances as the investments of paying tuition fees and living costs reaps dividends[3]. In Chinese society (as in many others), the more wealth a family has, the greater capacity that family has to acquire greater social capital through purchasing gifts and thus strengthening and establishing their *guanxi* network, or through acquiring greater cultural capital by sending other members of the family to study abroad, both of which can increase the face the family accumulates (Qi, 2017).

[3] Unfortunately, due to the high volume of returning Chinese international students, this strategy is not always as successful as parents assume it will be (Hao *et al*., 2016)

Face can be indirectly related to the experiences of Chinese students too. For example, it has been observed that Chinese students encounter pressure in everyday life in China (such as the pressure to succeed), the discomfort of which pushes students to study outside the pressurised Chinese environment (Bodycott, 2012; Cheung & Xu, 2015; M. Li & Zhang, 2011; Zhou, 2015). Chinese students also face pressure to start work as soon as possible, which attracts students to enrol on short duration master's programmes in the UK (Bamber, 2014). If, similar to how the fear of losing face creates pressure to repay favours within Chinese society, then these pressures could be intensified by face. Thus, this thesis also investigates the role of pressure in the lives of Chinese students in the UK and the pursuit of capital for the ultimate goal of face to gain a deeper understanding of the motivations and experiences of Chinese students.

The desire to broaden horizons, gain foreign skills, and improve language and potentially to travel around the UK and Europe is linked, in part, with a desire for higher *suzhi*, as well as a desire for cultural capital, as with Li's study (2013). In this study, I therefore examine how *suzhi* shapes these common motivations, and whether Chinese students see these motivations primarily to improve their employability (and therefore viewing them as cultural capital) or whether Chinese students pursue them as goals in their own right (and thus differentiating them from cultural capital). I also explore whether any relationship exists between *suzhi* and the concept of face.

Guanxi is vital to all social relationships in China (Qi, 2013). Moreover, utilising existing social relationships (such as friends and family already living in the destination country) is sometimes a motivation for Chinese students to study in a particular country (Hao *et al.*, 2016). Additionally, Chinese students seek to build both social and professional networks while they are studying abroad (Bamber, 2014; Bodycott, 2012). This thesis therefore examines whether *guanxi* shapes the motivations and experiences of Chinese students in the UK, and if so, how. If this is indeed the case, do Chinese students use *guanxi* as social capital, or do they use it *guanxi* in a more personal, intimate way that cannot be expressed as social capital? This thesis will also examine any links between *guanxi* and face.

While face, *suzhi* and *guanxi* form the core of my conceptual framework, there are other factors from previous studies that cannot be directly attributed to these three concepts. Therefore, other factors will be included in the conceptual framework even though they will not be investigated in depth during this thesis. These factor include the consideration of

safety (which may be a motivation or a barrier), the desire to study a particular subject a student may be interested in which is not accessible in China, along with macro-level factors such as immigration policies, visa restrictions, and the use of agents and marketing through universities or other organisations like the British Council.

This conceptual framework, particular the concepts of face, *suzhi* and *guanxi*, can be used to further our understanding of the motivations of Chinese international students that are studying in UK Higher Education institutions to a greater degree than Bourdieu's theory of capital, although Bourdieu's theory of capital can still be used to understand some aspects of the motivations of Chinese international students. Moreover, Chinese culture is not homogenous, but contains different sub-cultures within it, as discussed earlier in the chapter (Cai *et al.*, 2012; Guo, 2010; Hsu & Huang, 2015). Therefore, attention will be paid to differences within the Chinese international student population relating to these concepts, as it is probable these concepts may not apply to all Chinese sub-cultures equally. Through the framework (addressing the third research question), and being appropriately sensitive to the heterogeneity within the student population (addressing the second research question), I aim to provide an innovative, Chinese-orientated way of understanding the decision-making of Chinese students that will not only to enable universities to better understand Chinese international students, but also simulate other areas of research that involve those from China and which might benefit from drawing on these important themes.

Chapter 3 Methodology

This chapter gives an overview of the methods used within this thesis. It starts by evaluating my background, my own philosophical position and my motivations in order to conceptualise the research process. I then address and evaluate the methods used in this thesis and explain why these methods are appropriate for my research questions. The final part of this chapter considers the ethical considerations arising from the research.

3.1 Author's background

It is important for all researchers to be authentic in their interactions with participants (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009) and to be reflective about their role in the research process. Therefore, I begin this chapter by describing myself and how I relate to my research. I am a white, male, British citizen in my mid-twenties. My interest in China and in particular, the Chinese people, began in childhood, but has rapidly grown in the last five years since I found myself befriended by and befriending Chinese students studying at the University of Southampton. As I began forming increasingly close friendships with various Chinese students and grew more accustomed to their customs and culture, their food, their language and their history, my interest in China and Chinese people grew rapidly. As a practicing Christian, part of my motivation reflects a strong desire to welcome, befriend and support Chinese students both in their time in the UK and after they return home. More recently, I spent a year in the Chinese city of Shanghai studying Mandarin at Fudan University, during which time I married a Chinese former international student who had studied for her master's degree at the University of Southampton. This year of living in close contact with Chinese people served as an unanticipated form of ethnographic study into the opportunities and challenges facing Chinese students upon returning to China, and into wider aspects of Chinese norms and culture, such as the role of face and *guanxi* in everyday life. As my knowledge of China, its diverse population and its culture has evolved, I have been inspired to undertake this research so that universities and local people in the UK can better understand and support Chinese international students through a time in life when many may find themselves particularly vulnerable due to issues of culture difference (Y. Yu & Moskal, 2018) and away from the support networks for their own friends and family (Mcmahon, 2011).

Chapter 3

As a non-Chinese, Western researcher, am I a suitable person to undertake research about Chinese students? There has been much debate about 'insiders' (researchers of the same culture and background as the study population), 'outsiders' (researchers of a different culture or background as the study population), and the relative merits of each. Merriam *et al.*, (2001) argue that there are advantages to both positions. For 'insiders', they have the advantages of easy access to the study populations, the ability from their existing knowledge to ask questions that are more meaningful and to read non-verbal language, and have a clearer, more authentic knowledge of the culture being studied. However, this familiarity can be problematic in certain ways: for example, 'insiders' can be too close to the culture and therefore lack the curiosity to ask provocative questions. Further, respondents may presume such information is already widely known, and therefore do not see the need to mention it. In contrast, while an 'outsider' may have a less extensive understanding of the culture, they may be curious about the unfamiliar, and can ask questions that an 'insider' might consider taboo. Furthermore, an 'outsider' is not aligned to any particular sub-group within the culture, and this apparent independence can facilitate the collection of valuable information. Thus Merriam *et al.*, (2001) argue that an 'outsider' can sometimes gain more objective insights than an 'insider'. On the other hand, Dwyer & Buckle (2009) argue that being an 'insider' or an 'outsider' is not a binary distinction, but a spectrum. A researcher needs to be tuned into the experiences and meanings of others, yet simultaneously be aware of their own biases and preconceptions that may be influencing what they are trying to understand (Maykutt & Morehouse, (1994), quoted by Dwyer & Buckle (2009)). Shared experience, gender, ethnicity, race, or culture are important points to consider. 'Insiders' enhance depth, breadth, and understanding of a population, while 'outsiders' can achieve better objectivity, reflectivity and authenticity. No one is fully an 'insider', for there are many factors that can make one an 'outsider' to a particular individual or sub group. Further, some 'outsiders' will be more identified with the population they are studying than others (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009).

In light of this literature, my different race, ethnicity, nationality, mother tongue and cultural background sets me towards the 'outsider' end of the spectrum. This enables me to identify certain deeply embedded ways of thinking and values that may not be as apparent to a Chinese observer who may share some of those same ways of thinking or values. Additionally, my year of immersion in China, my elementary grasp of the Chinese language and my experience of close involvement in the lives of Chinese international students in the UK or who have studied in the UK give me some of the 'insider' advantages of possessing

deeper and more meaningful understandings into the cultural background and experience of the subjects of my study. I therefore believe that I can position myself in what Dwyer and Buckle (2009, p60) refer to as "the space between"; that is, being something of an 'insider' as well as an 'outsider' at the same time.

Having said this, whatever understanding I can obtain of the underlying thoughts and philosophies behind Chinese culture, and however much my Mandarin ability improves, I will remain a white *waiguoren* (foreigner) in the eyes of Chinese students. As Dwyer and Buckle (2009) point out, it is important to understand how others understand oneself. This relates to the issue of positionality. The concept of positionality refers to how one stands in relation to the other (Merriam et al., 2010). This is therefore a dynamic, not a static, concept, as these positions can shift. Positionality is determined by education, gender, class, race (amongst other defining variables), as well as cultural identity (Merriam et al., 2010). As a white, British, male PhD student in my mid-twenties, I needed to consider how this could affect my respondents. One potential problem is that the differences in race, nationality, language, culture and (in most cases) education level (and thereby perceived status) could cause distance between the respondents and myself, with this distance being greater among those most different from me, such as female respondents and those significantly younger than me. This distance could increase the likelihood of respondents being unwilling to be as open and honest with me as I might like. To counteract this, I attempted to bridge this distance by being as open about myself as possible, informing those I interviewed about the aims of my research. I also identified myself as much as possible with my student respondents, for example, telling them a bit about my experiences in China or of the challenges faced when I was an international student. Although the language used in the interviews was predominantly English (as the English ability of those studying in the UK is better than my Chinese language ability), I attempted to use Chinese phrases as much as possible to help reduce the distance between us.

Having considered my own position, and how my position relates to my respondents, I now explore the methods employed, and the motivations behind using those methods.

3.2 An overview of using mixed methods

This study employs mixed methods. The first research question (who are the Chinese students that come to the UK) explores the characteristics of the overall Chinese

international student population within the UK, and is best answered by quantitative methods, while the other three research questions (how do Chinese students in the UK differ from each other, how can we best conceptualise the motivations and experiences of Chinese international students and how do these findings shape university policy) are best answered through qualitative methods. The research questions associated with the first research question require numerical data to answer them, and quantitative methods are more suitable for this type of descriptive analysis (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). The research questions connected with the second, third and fourth research questions (regarding the motivations of Chinese students and the policy implications) can be answered by either quantitative or qualitative methods. While motivations can be examined quantitatively, for example, by using statistical analyses applied to survey data (see Bamber (2014), Cao *et al*. (2016) and Li and Bray (2007)), the lack of a sampling frame of Chinese students at national level and at institution level means it is usually impossible to randomly sample Chinese international students in the UK. This makes statistical analysis more difficult because it hinders the generalisability of the results. Moreover, a list of predefined motivations, as may be used in a quantitative survey, will not necessarily be exhaustive. In contrast, qualitative approaches are not hindered by the lack of sampling frame and do not restrict the range of possible motivations respondents can express. Moreover, the research questions relating to the Chinese concepts influencing the decision to study abroad require qualitative techniques that can explore the deep, underlying thought processes that Chinese students use in making such a decision, as qualitative research is better suited to exploring in-depth human experience (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Further, it is not easy to quantify experiences in a meaningful way, while qualitative methods can give a voice to the participants and enable the thoughts, feelings, experiences and background of individual students to be expressed more directly, which may lead to greater impact (Creswell & Clark, 2011). Therefore, qualitative tools will be used to answer the research questions relating to the second, third and fourth research questions, which are similar approaches to Li (2013), Tsang (2013) and Waters (2006). Overall, a mixed methods approach is appropriate given the nature of the different research questions I wish to answer. It helps to overcome some of the weaknesses of a solely qualitative (or quantitative) approach and provides a more complete understanding (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004), with numerical data giving the wider perspective of the current state of Chinese international students mobility in the UK, and the analysis of qualitative data conveying some of the stories of Chinese students in their own voice.

It has been argued that as positivist and interpretivist approaches are based on different views of reality, then the differing methods based on these two approaches (quantitative methods with positivist and qualitative methods with interpretivist) cannot both be used together to study the same phenomenon (Sale, Lohfeld, & Brazil, 2002). However, others claim it is more sensible to hold a third philosophical viewpoint: pragmatism (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Pragmatism seeks to find common ground to philosophical dualisms (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Rather than maintaining that reality is completely testable as with positivism, or that reality is subjective and discovered through experience as with interpretivism, the pragmatic worldview sees reality as a complex system that may never be completely discovered. However, truths, or parts of the greater reality, can be derived through observation, experiences and experimentation (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Thus, I believe that the philosophical worldview of pragmatism is a suitable basis for using mixed methods, and that quantitative and qualitative approaches can complement each other. Using both quantitative methods to provide broad, objective, descriptive context and qualitative methods to explore the detailed, subjective meanings and experiences together may gain greater insight to the underlying, complex reality than either approach in isolation. Indeed, Symonds & Gorard (2010), believe that qualitative and quantitative approaches should never have been divided originally.

For this thesis, an explanatory mixed methods design is used: specifically, a sequential design. The first phase is a quantitative analysis; I analyse HESA (Higher Education Statistics Agency) data relating to student enrolment in UK Higher Education (HE) institutions in order to describe the trends and composition of Chinese international student mobility between 2003/2004 and 2013/2014. This is followed by a qualitative analysis phase: qualitative interviews that build on the findings of the quantitative phase to add greater depth and meaning to the quantitative findings. The qualitative interview participants were selected using purposive sampling, with respondents selected from a diverse array of backgrounds (namely both male and female undergraduate, masters and PhD students) in order to explore potential similarities and differences in relevant themes according to gender and level of study. The qualitative participants were recruited through contacting a large group of Chinese students enrolled at the University of Southampton using the Chinese social media platform WeChat. This explanatory design (where the numerical data is used to shape and inform the qualitative phase (Creswell & Clark, 2011)) is important for the aims of my research since the findings of the quantitative phase of this study play a role in the design of

the qualitative phase, particularly relating to the questions in the qualitative interviews relating to gender and level of study.

3.3 Quantitative aggregate data analysis phase

Within the literature on international student mobility, snippets of numerical data are often collected from secondary data sources (primarily HESA (Higher Education Statistics Agency) and UIS (UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation) Institution of Statistics)) to introduce the population under study and to situate the respective study within the broader context. However, with notable exceptions (Findlay, 2011; Iannelli & Huang, 2014), it is rare for studies to provide an in-depth overview of the trends in international student mobility by exploiting the range of available secondary quantitative information. This study, therefore, seeks to address this lack of research by using secondary data to describe the Chinese international student population in detail, and understand some of the macro-level factors shaping this population, which will then be used to inform the qualitative phase of the study.

One of the most significant advantages of using secondary data is that it allows one to gain larger scale perspectives that would not otherwise be possible. For example, sources such as the HESA data collect information on every single student enrolled in UK HE institutions, thus providing national-level insights and perspectives. The aggregate-level data from these sources are easily accessible and are often collected on a yearly basis, enabling the analysis of trends. However, there can be certain limitations to using secondary data, particularly when collating data from a variety of sources. Different secondary sources can vary in the methods used to collect the data, the scope of the data and in the definitions used. For example, most of the HESA aggregates did not include exchange students, and yet data from university international offices often do. Further, with secondary data published online, the data collection methods are rarely described in detail, particularly on non-Western websites such as the official Chinese demographic data published in the yearly China Statistical Yearbook by the National Bureau of Statistics of China. Moreover, secondary data are not always accessible. For example, there are no standardised statistics for Chinese emigration (Shen, 2010).

For this thesis, the main source of secondary data analysed are aggregate data purchased from HESA data pertaining to student enrolment in UK HE institutions over the most recent

ten-year period available at the time of purchase (2003/2004 to 2013/2014). These aggregate totals are stored in a Microsoft Excel pivot format, meaning that the total of number of enrolments per year can be split into various sub-categories, including the institution where the student was enrolled, the sex of the student, the student's level of study (undergraduate degree level, postgraduate taught degree level or postgraduate research level), subject area of study, and country of domicile (the country of the student's permanent residence prior to undertaking their UK based degree), as well as any combination of the above (Higher Education Statistics Agency, 2015). The Higher Education Statistics Agency was set up in 1993 following a collaboration between relevant government departments, HE funding councils and HE providers in order to provide flexible, efficient, high-quality data, information and analysis to support and enhance the UK HE sector (Higher Education Statistics Agency, 2018a). The HESA data I purchased consider a student as someone who is enrolled in an undergraduate or postgraduate course at a UK HE institution, thus excluding those enrolled who are on exchange programmes, those that are primarily enrolled in an overseas HE institution or those who study overseas on offshore campuses. The HESA data are collected from all subscribed Higher Education Providers in the UK, and give detailed information about every student enrolled within the Higher Education Provider (Higher Education Statistics Agency, 2018b). They are also of high quality: all HESA data are subjected to rigorous and automated quality assurance procedures (Higher Education Statistics Agency, 2018b). Although only aggregate data were used for the purposes of this study, HESA have an individual record of every student (both national and international) enrolled within all UK publically funded HE institutions, including the personal characteristics of the students and their course (these individual-level data are not used in this thesis as they are not as accessible due to disclosure considerations). It can therefore be seen that the HESA data contain a census record of the stocks (the total number of migrants currently within a country) of all international students enrolled in UK HE institutions in the format of aggregate data totals. Consequently, while other datasets were considered for this thesis such as the UIS data freely available from UNESCO (UNESCO, 2018b), the coverage, detailed information and quality of these HESA data meant that it was sensible to use the HESA data as the primary source for the quantitative phase of my thesis. Additionally, more recent (but less detailed) HESA data were obtained freely online (Higher Education Statistics Agency, 2018d), for the purposes of supplementing the purchased data with the most recently available information on the numbers of Chinese students in the UK. For the purposes of this

thesis, HESA data references for 2015 relate to the detailed purchased HESA data, while HESA data references for 2018 indicate the online data.

3.4 Qualitative phase

After the first phase of the study was completed, I reflected on the findings obtained from the aggregate data. I then used these findings to guide the second phase, which addresses the remaining three research questions of this thesis.

3.4.1 Choice of HE institution

The second phase of this research focuses on Chinese international students within the University of Southampton. There are a number of reasons for the choice to focus specifically on the University of Southampton. Firstly, it is an HE institution with a high number of Chinese students, representing the sixth highest population of Chinese international students enrolled in the UK (Higher Education Statistics Agency, 2015). Secondly, it is a Russell Group university; a group of world class universities that specialise in intensive research (Russell Group, 2018). Almost half (40,000) of the total Chinese students enrolled in the UK study at one of the 24 Russell Group universities (Higher Education Statistics Agency, 2015). Indeed, 18 of the 25 most popular UK HE institutions for Chinese students (including all of the top seven) are Russell Group universities. Thirdly, I have access to Chinese students through my links with the University of Southampton's Chinese Students and Scholars Association, a society to which many of the Chinese students studying at the University of Southampton belong, while I do not have comparable access to networks of Chinese students at other universities.

The University of Southampton is located in the south of England, and has 24,000 students, of whom 2,800 are from China (University of Southampton, 2018). The University of Southampton considers itself as a global university with an international culture, with international students compromising 25% of the University of Southampton's student population, in addition to a high volume of international staff from a diverse range of countries (University of Southampton, 2018). While the University of Southampton is by no means representative of all UK HE institutions, it shares a number of similarities with the types of universities that attract the highest proportion of Chinese international students, and is therefore a suitable choice for my qualitative interviews.

3.4.2 Choice of qualitative interviews

Qualitative interviews were chosen as the preferred method for the second stage of the data collection process used for this thesis, as opposed to other methods, such as focus groups. Qualitative interviews offer the opportunity of exploring the subjective and complex experiences of the respondents, as well as their decision-making process (Broom, 2005). For this study, one advantage qualitative interviews hold over focus groups is the lack of peer influence during the discussion is likely to better enable new categories and themes to develop that may confirm or contradict the background assumptions or theories, consequently facilitating the production of complex, rich and nuanced data (Broom, 2005). In contrast, focus groups could reduce the quality of the data, as in a society where face and social harmony are fundamental (as discussed in the previous chapter), participants may be reluctant to openly discuss experiences that (when discussed in front of a group) may lead to embarrassment. They may also be reluctant to disagree with opinions expressed by their peers in order to avoid disrupting the harmony of the group. A critique of qualitative interviews is the lack of generalisability (Broom, 2005). However, the same critiques apply to focus groups too. In any case, qualitative interviewers are not seeking to establish universal truths but rather to gain an in-depth understanding of the experiences and meanings interviewees associate with particular events and actions (Broom, 2005). Qualitative interviews are also more suitable for gaining a sufficiently in-depth understanding of individual students' motivations and experiences. One of the defining features of focus groups is group interaction, which, while it can lead to participants querying and explaining themselves to each other (thus enhancing the data and establishing a range of perspectives) (Morgan, 1996), can also lead to personal experiences being missed. Thus, while focus groups offer wider perspectives, qualitative interviews enable deeper perspectives into social and personal matters (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006) and are therefore well aligned with the focus on the underlying motivations and individual experiences of Chinese students.

3.4.3 Sample for qualitative study

A suitable sample size within qualitative research depends on the a number of factors, including the breath and scope of the research questions, the heterogeneity of the population from which the sample is drawn, as well as the time and resources available for the project (Baker & Edwards, 2012). In general, the guiding principle in determining a sufficient sample size when using qualitative interviews is saturation: the point in the data

collection process where additional data no longer provides any new theoretical insights into the research questions of the study, or no longer reveals new aspects to the core theoretical categories (Dworkin, 2012). As qualitative research is concerned more with meaning than generalising to a population, frequencies of recurring phenomena are rarely important in qualitative research (Mason, 2010). Thus, while more data will always add new insights, the point of saturation is the point where the little gained by new insights does not substantially contribute anything to the overall story, model, theory or framework (Mason, 2010). In Mason's overview of the sampling sizes of 560 qualitative studies, the mean, median and mode sample size were all around 30, indicating that this is often a suitable target to ensure saturation (Mason, 2010). Thus, achieving around 30 qualitative interviews should be sufficient to distinguish the categories of interest for the coding and maximises the possibility that sufficient data are collected to clarify relationships between the categories of interest and identify variation between respondents (Dworkin, 2012). In aiming for 30 students, I ultimately recruited 27.

It is also important to consider factors that shape within population variability, as these factors (any demographic or other characteristics of the respondents that may cause differing patterns or responses) are critical for establishing an in-depth understanding of the topic (Dworkin, 2012). Based on the outcome of the aggregate data analysis conducted in the first stage of the data collection process for this thesis (recorded in the fourth chapter), two of these key factors for Chinese international students are gender and level of study. There are generally a higher proportion of female Chinese international students in the UK than male (as will be shown in the fourth chapter). Additionally there is reason from the existing literature to suggest that motivations vary between level of study (Bamber, 2014; Z. Li, 2013). Consequently, the sample was stratified by these factors, with multiple students recruited from each of the sub-categories produced by the interaction of these two factors. Another important factor to consider when selecting a balanced sample is subject of study, as the motivations of students from one field may differ from those studying other subjects. While subject of study was not used as a key stratification criterion due to the impracticality of including students from each of the many subjects available to study, effort was made to include students from a broad range of subjects by interviewing students who studied at different campuses. Age is also likely to be an important factor influencing within population variability. However, since age is likely to be strongly correlated with level of study, both

variables are not needed for stratification purposes and of level of study is the variable of greater interest for the purposes of this investigation.

Thus, in order to achieve a varied sample for the purposes of reducing sample bias (Morgan, 1997), 27 students were selected according to gender, level of study and subject of study. I ultimately interviewed two female and two male undergraduates, eleven female and four male master's degree students and five female and three male PhD students, across subjects such as business, law, humanities, engineering, education and creative art, among others. Interviewing multiple students from these subcategories facilitated analysis relating to the second research question of this thesis focussing on exploring potential differences in the motivations and experiences of students according to gender and level of study.

In order to acquire this sample of 27 students, I initially used the University of Southampton's Chinese Students and Scholars Association (CSSA). When enquiring at the university's international office, I was assured that this group is highly effective for accessing Chinese international students studying in the University of Southampton, as nearly all Chinese students enrolled at the university are associated within this group. I was given the WeChat (a Chinese social media platform that many mainland Chinese students use regularly) contact details of the president of the CSSA. In order to build up my *guanxi* with the group, I took part in the society's Chinese New Year festival video, an initiative of the international office working with the CSSA designed to advertise the University of Southampton to potential students of Chinese ethnicity throughout the world. Through joining this initiative, I was able to meet the president of the CSSA society, who kindly agreed to be my gatekeeper, and, with his help, I recruited many of the students I needed for this phase of my research. In particular, many of the master's and undergraduate students I interviewed were recruited through the WeChat contacts he gave me. However, after interviewing these students, I still needed to recruit more students, particularly more undergraduate students, PhD students, and students from different campuses (who were studying different subjects). To this end, I asked undergraduate students I interviewed to invite their undergraduate friends to contact me, gave out leaflets at different university accommodation halls popular with undergraduate students and across different campuses, and asked friends and colleagues to invite any of their friends who were happy to be interviewed to contact me. Eventually, through using these methods, I was able to recruit a varied sample of 27 Chinese international students.

3.4.4 The interviews

When getting in contact with interviewees, I arranged to meet them in a public setting at a place convenient for them with the hope that this would encourage them to participate and feel relaxed. I aimed for each interview to last around an hour, with the first few minutes of the interview involving informal conversations, including introducing myself and my thesis in order to build up a rapport with the interviewees (Broom, 2005). While the interviews were conducted mainly in English, if I felt a student was struggling to express themselves, I suggested they use Chinese to express that idea, and then asked them further questions to try to understand their Chinese, using smartphone translation apps (such as Pleco) for words or phrases that neither of us could translate. A limitation of these interviews was the potential for misunderstanding and lack of clarity due to these language barriers. However, although language is one aspect where my 'outsider' status may have caused some limitations to the depth of data I could collect through the interviews, this barrier was not serious enough to reduce the validity of my findings. After gaining permission from the interviewee, I recorded the interviews using a digital voice recorder, to assist me in transcribing the interviews later on. I took great care to consider the welfare of the participants and ensure they were as comfortable as possible. For example, during the interview process, if one of the participants felt uncomfortable with answering a question, I reminded them that their participation was strictly voluntary, and that they did not have to answer any question they did not wish to answer.

I asked each interviewee questions relating to their background, such as whether they were studying at undergraduate, master's or PhD level, their subject of study, the province that they originated from and their ethnicity as it was expected that the motivations, aspirations and experiences may differ according to these factors, in line with similar studies (Gu & Schweisfurth, 2015; Kwon, 2013; Tsang, 2013). Questions relating to the role of family members in the decision to study in the UK were also investigated, given the nature of the interconnectedness of Chinese society (especially within families) and the significant roles of family within Chinese international student mobility (Bodycott & Lai, 2012; Waters, 2006). I also asked interviewees about their past international educational experience (if any), their future return intentions and their aspirations, in line with Findlay's *et al.* (2012) argument that the life course of international students should be considered.

The decision-making process for international students can (although not always) be broken down into three aspects: the motivations for studying outside of the home country, the motivations for studying in the UK, and the motivations for choosing a particular HE institution within the UK (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002). Therefore, I asked the respondents in my study about the reasons that influenced their decision to study outside China, their reasons for choosing the UK and their reasons for choosing the University of Southampton to ensure that I could understand their motivations for partaking in international student mobility as fully as possible. I further asked about several aspects of this decision to determine the deeper underlying motivations, and see if they had any relation to face, *suzhi* or *guanxi*. For example, if they referred to experiencing pressure to obtain a job as soon as possible upon returning to China, or their experience was affected by pressure during their time in the UK, I would probe deeper to understand the sources of that pressure. Moreover, I asked interviewees about within population differences, such as gender differences, to understand more deeply the heterogeneous nature of Chinese students. The social experiences of Chinese students were another area I was interested in due to the focus on *guanxi*. I was particularly interested in investigating whether Chinese students had any social ties to the UK before they came, as well as their intercultural experiences (or lack thereof). The answers to these questions would play an important role in addressing the second and third research questions of my thesis (about the diversity within the Chinese international student population and the role of the concepts of face, *suzhi* and *guanxi* in Chinese international student mobility respectively). I was also interested in any negative experiences (as well as positive ones) during their time in the UK, as was the case in Hail's study of Chinese international students studying in a US university, who experienced unpleasant interactions with local people and national students (Hail, 2015). If students in the UK had similar negative experiences, then that would be a disincentive for future students to come to the UK, and could also help address the fourth research question of informing university policy. This final research question was also addressed by asking the interviewees if they thought the University of Southampton could do to anything to improve their experience in the UK or if there were any parts of Chinese culture that UK university staff should be aware of in order to assist them more effectively. A copy of the questions and prompts to guide each interview are found in Appendix B.

As a researcher, I need to pay careful attention to my role in the in the data generation process. While it is unavoidable for researchers to be completely objective and impartial

about the data they collect, they should be reflective and aware of their role in influencing the data generation process (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). To this end, therefore, while the themes of face, *guanxi* and *suzhi* are my initial themes, I endeavoured to pay attention to other alternative or additional themes that might emerge from my qualitative interviews (Broom, 2005) throughout the data collection and analysis processes. I was careful not to force the data I obtained into the mould of my initial theoretical framework, but rather I sought to allow "the data to speak for themselves" (Dierckx de Casterle, Gastmans, Bryon, & Denier, 2012, p369) through paying careful attention to any responses that challenged my initial theoretical framework, and through attempting to resolve any apparent contradictions in the data, for example, by identifying differences in beliefs or worldview that might explain why someone may insist a factor is important while another insists that same factor is not important. Further, I endeavoured to use open-ended, non-leading questions as much as possible to limit my impact on the formation of data (although sometimes I did give suggestions for possible answers to help prompt interviewees who were struggling to understand the question). For example, if an interviewee gave an answer that I wished to understand better, I probed to obtain the deeper meanings and background thought process by asking questions like "please could you explain to me why this is so important for you?" as this helped the interviewee express more of their in-depth thinking without me influencing them with my ideas. As analysing qualitative data is an inductive process (as opposed to a deductive one), I was continually reflective throughout the whole process, not only after each interview but also through each stage of transcribing and analysing the data (Dierckx de Casterle *et al.*, 2012). Reflecting on how each interview went enabled me to make minor adjustments during later interviews to address the research questions more clearly and to inform the process of describing, analysing and interpreting the data. I used a notebook to record my reflections, so as to improve this inductive process. During this reflective process, I continued to reflect on my positionality as a researcher (and how that may have shaped the data), as the data are co-constructed by both myself and the interviewee (Broom, 2005).

3.4.5 The qualitative interviews data analysis

I transcribed each interview soon after they were completed so that the interview transcripts were as accurate a reflection of the interview and the interviewee as possible. After transcribing all the interviews, I then analysed them. I used thematic coding as the principle form of analysis. I reread the completed transcripts several times, and noted down

any reflections, thoughts, and potential themes that I observed (Broom, 2005). This gave a holistic understanding of the interviewees' insights (Dierckx de Casterle *et al.*, 2012). Next, I observed and noted down any patterns within the data. This included similarities or differences with other interviewees in terms of their gender, level of study, or even their type (their beliefs and worldview) while also observing the unique aspects within each individual interviewee's data. I then used these notes to establish my themes emerging across the interviews, and thus began the actual coding process using the software Nvivo. During this process, I continued to reread the transcribed interview transcripts, seeking to identify additional themes or simplify and condense existing themes. Once I identified a theme, I considered if that theme occurred in the rest of the interviews in order to establish a consistent analysis across the whole data (Dierckx de Casterle *et al.*, 2012). I also reflected on how these themes fitted or contrasted with my conceptual framework, considering the empirical evidence for (and against) the three Chinese concepts evaluated in the last chapter and seeking to understand how the concepts relate to each other. Once I finished the coding, I employed various methods to interpret the data. Firstly, I categorised and rearranged the themes, including structuring the themes (for example combining certain themes into sub-categories of other themes), paying attention to data that appeared to not fit with my conceptual framework or differed from the main themes in order to give a voice to atypical cases (Broom, 2005). Secondly, I sought to explain the patterns I had identified in the data throughout the coding process by clustering the subjects into three groups based on common motivations and values. Finally, I used the themes that emerged from the data, the empirical evidence relating to the three Chinese concepts and the typology that emerged from clustering the data to modify the conceptual framework established in the second chapter, thus producing a revised conceptual framework that has been informed by empirical evidence, which can provide a deeper and clearer understanding of the motivations and experiences of Chinese international students than either the conceptual framework used to structure this analysis or previous theoretical frameworks used in earlier research.

3.5 Ethical considerations

Although the risks involved in this research were minimal, it is important to ensure that all ethical concerns are properly addressed. I considered the ethical concerns for each phase separately.

3.5.1 Analysis of aggregate data

There are very few ethical considerations for the first phase of research. As these data are in the form of aggregate totals, there is minimal risk of disclosure of information about individuals. Even if I could consider multiple dimensions of the data simultaneously, so that I could be looking at a very specific category that might only contain one or two students, disclosure controls are already applied to the HESA data, such that all cell counts fewer than five are suppressed. Therefore, no international students are at risk of their identity being disclosed through any part of the analysis for the first phase of research.

3.5.2 Qualitative interviews

For the qualitative interview phase, there were more ethical issues to consider, although none of these represented a serious risk either to the researcher or to the interviewees. One possible ethical consideration was the potential psychological stress and harm to the interviewees that might arise, for example, if discussing topics that reminded them of their homeland (see DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). Therefore, in the case of one of my interviewees becoming distressed, I resolved to be ready to empathise, for example by either using my own experience of being an international student in China, or my Chinese wife's experience of being an international student at the University of Southampton, if I perceived that sharing one of those experiences would be a comfort to my interviewees that were suffering psychologically during the interview. In unlikely cases of great distress (if they became visibly emotional), I resolved to remind interviewees that there was no pressure for them to answer questions they were not comfortable with, and that the interview could stop at any time. If they were upset about a certain situation, I resolved to encourage them to talk about their situation with their trusted friends, their personal tutor, the university counselling service, the university chaplaincy, or some other person they respected and trusted, depending on the nature of their situation. I also reminded all participants that they could ask me not to use their data at any point if they decided later that they felt uncomfortable with me using their data for my study.

Another ethical consideration was to prevent inadvertently causing my participants anxiety, for example, through the loss of face. From my previous experience of interviewing Chinese professors and staff at Xiamen University in China, I found that some Chinese citizens were sensitive regarding perceived criticism of China, the Chinese government or Chinese

culture. To prevent this, I resolved not to bring up subjects related to politics or any other particularly sensitive topics in my interviews. Similarly, in my experience, I have found that many East Asian people are reluctant to directly criticise bodies that they associate with me, be that the University of Southampton, the UK, the UK government or UK culture, for fear of causing me to lose face. Therefore, if I perceived that a student was starting to feel uncomfortable due to the fear of offending me, I let them know that they could say whatever they liked without me judging them or being offended.

Although the nature of the data collected was largely non-sensitive, I still resolved to ensure that the students' anonymity remained intact. I achieved this by storing information in a secure location (such as my password protected office computer), destroying all data after use, using pseudonyms when reporting my data analysis, and not giving sufficiently detailed demographic information anywhere in my thesis (or other reports) that could lead to the risk of their identities being disclosed. For example, if one of my participants is the only female student on her particular programme, I did not mention which subject she studies to prevent her identity being disclosed by people that could use such information to identify her. Similarly, I took particular care regarding the reporting of any opinions, incidents and experiences that I felt may be uncommon by being careful regarding what information I shared about Chinese interviewees. On the whole, I only gave the gender and level of study of the students I quoted. In cases where extra information (such as where they came from) added to the findings of this research, I would be careful in how I conveyed that information (for example, if a participant came from a province like Yunnan (that is unlikely to produce many international students) and the less-developed nature of this province was important for context, I would merely mention that this student came from a less developed province instead of giving the name of the province). Thus, these measures ensured that I maintained participant anonymity and confidentiality during all stages of the data collection process, from the analysis to the completion of my thesis.

In order to ensure that interviewees were not being exploited for personal gain in any way, I resolved to explain the purpose of my research in detail both at the start of each interview as well as when asking certain questions. If I perceived that any question made an interviewee uncomfortable, I reminded them that there is no compulsion to answer any question. Informed consent (both written and verbal) was obtained at the start of each interview. Moreover, I gave written information about my project for them to read and

verbally explained the objectives (and how the interviews were a vital component for achieving those objectives) of my project to ensure the interviewees understood what they were participating in. I further reminded them that their participation was strictly voluntary, and that they could withdraw from the study at any time. I also gave them the University's Research Integrity and Governance Manager's email address in case they had any concerns, in addition to giving them my email address so that they could contact me if they wanted me not to use their data in my thesis, or if they would like to read my analysis and thesis after I finished writing my results. Therefore, I am confident that all consent given for participation in this study was fully informed, and that my participants were not exploited in any way.

Consequently, neither my participants nor I took any substantial risks in order to perform these interviews. I informed my wife of the time and place every interview took place, and made sure I carried my phone on my person at all times as safety precautions. In this way, all risks to the physical and emotional well-being of both the participants and the researcher were considered and managed, so as to reduce the likelihood and seriousness of any form of harm to either my participants or to myself.

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter has explained my motivations for undertaking this research, my position in relation to both the research and the respondents, and outlined the methods employed throughout the thesis. The complementary strengths of the mixed methods approach have been described: quantitative analysis of aggregate data to provide a wider perspective on trends and the characteristics of international student mobility, and qualitative methods to capture a deeper perspective on student motivations and experiences through the face-to-face qualitative interviews. These methods combine to enable both an insightful overview of Chinese international student mobility to the UK as a whole and a richer understanding of the deeper underlying motivations of individual Chinese students within the University of Southampton.

The next chapter examines the findings from the analysis of the aggregate data on Chinese international student mobility and the characteristics of Chinese students enrolled in UK HE institutions, and describes how these findings shape the second phase of this study. The remaining chapters will then be largely focussed on the findings from the second phase of this study.

Chapter 4 Aggregate Analysis: The Trends and Characteristics of Chinese International Students

Worldwide, the number of students enrolled in overseas Higher Education (HE) is increasing dramatically. According to UNESCO figures for 2016, there are 4.8 million students studying abroad in Higher Education (UNESCO, 2018b), over double the 2.1 million students who studied abroad in 2001 (International Consultants for Education and Fairs Monitor, 2017). In 2016, the US had the largest market share of the global HE market (22%, down from 28% in 2001), the UK had the second largest market share (11%, as with 2001), while Australia, China and Canada (the third, fourth and fifth most popular destinations) had rapidly increased their shares in the global HE market to 11%, 9% and 8% respectively, demonstrating the increasing competitiveness of the global HE market (International Consultants for Education and Fairs Monitor, 2017). The biggest sender of international students for the US, the UK, Australia and Canada (and indeed for the world international student population generally) is China (UNESCO, 2018b): over a quarter of international students in Canada, Australia and the US are from China (Canadian Bureau for International Education, 2018; Nabi, 2017; Statistica, 2018), while 21% of the current international student population in the UK is from China (UK Council for International Student Affairs, 2018). Thus, China is vital to the global international student market, and especially important for universities in the US, the UK, Australia and Canada. In fact, Chinese international students are growing increasingly important for UK universities: although the UK international student population more than doubled between 2001 and 2012, since 2012 growth in the UK HE international student population has more or less ceased (International Consultants for Education and Fairs Monitor, 2017). This means that the UK's international student market share is increasingly under threat from the UK's competitors, and that Chinese students are essential for the UK to maintain its current market share.

However, despite this rapid increase in activity in international student mobility globally, there has been a lack of focus in the literature on providing data on the flows or stocks of international mobile students (King & Raghuram, 2013). The exceptions are Findlay (2011), who investigates flows of international students to the UK, as well as describing their basic demographic characteristics, and Iannelli & Huang (2014), who investigate the grades attained by Chinese undergraduate students who studied at UK universities using data from

1999 to 2009. Nonetheless, investigating the stocks of international students in the UK by nationality remains relatively neglected in the field of international student mobility.

This chapter, then, seeks to address this gap in the literature and furthers the development of this thesis in two aspects: firstly, it provides information on the wider trends in global and Chinese student mobility to provide context about the recent trends in Chinese international student mobility to the UK. Secondly, it examines the composition of the Chinese international student population in the UK (the first research question), which forms a platform to later explore the diversity within the international student population (the second research question). For the first section of this chapter, data freely available from UNESCO's Institute of Statistics (UIS) are used to provide context about the most common destinations worldwide for Chinese students. Then, data freely available from the National Bureau of Statistics from China is used to provide demographic insights about the global population of Chinese students and of Chinese HE. Having established the global and Chinese context, the trends in Chinese international students enrolled in UK universities are analysed using the data purchased from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA). The fourth section of this chapter uses the purchased HESA data to analyse the personal characteristics of Chinese international students in the UK (with particular attention given to level of study and gender, although other factors such as subject and UK HE institution are also considered). Therefore, the findings from the analyses of this chapter will give insight to some of the factors influencing Chinese international student mobility to the UK (particularly at macro-level), thus adding to the limited literature in this area. Furthermore, these findings are also used to shape the qualitative interview phase of data collection.

4.1 The global context

The UIS collect data annually about the inflows and outflows of international student mobility for the vast majority of UN member states. These data show that there has been a 130% increase in Chinese students studying abroad worldwide in a recent eleven year period, from 366,000 in 2005 to 842,00 in 2016 (UNESCO, 2018b). As well as this global increase, the numbers of Chinese students that are travelling abroad are currently growing significantly in many individual countries, notably Western, English speaking countries like the US, Australia, the UK, Canada, and (to a lesser extent) New Zealand (UNESCO, 2018b). The UIS data for the recent flows of Chinese students to the five most common destination countries in 2016 (the

US, Australia, the UK, Japan and Canada, together accounting for 75% of the world's Chinese international student population) are displayed in figure 4.1.

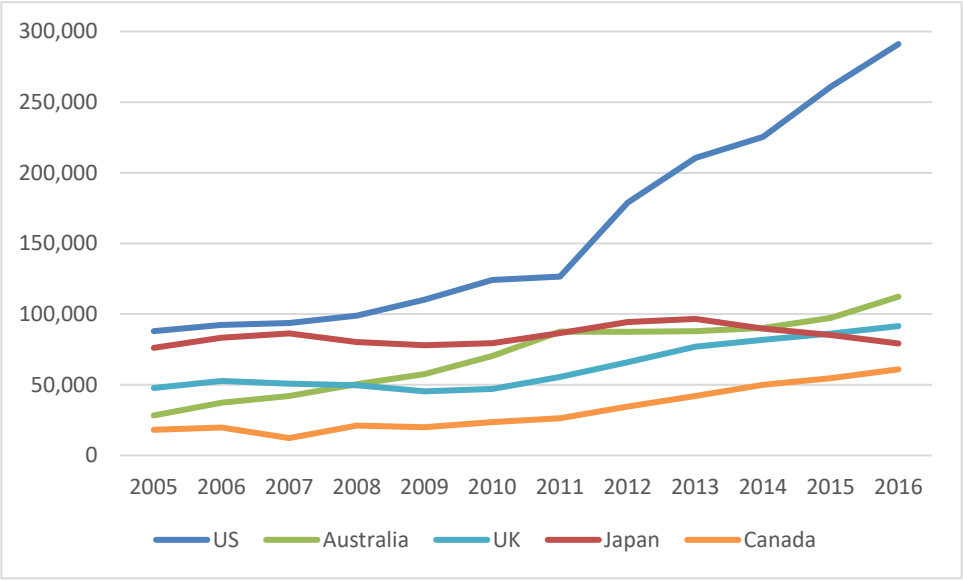

Figure 4.1: Destinations of the outflow of mainland Chinese students to the five most popular destination countries of 2016 (Source: UIS, 2018)

The data indicate that in 2005, the US and Japan were the most common destinations. However, since then, there has been an increase in Chinese international students studying in English speaking countries, with a decrease in Japan. The most popular destinations (all destinations with an inflow of 10,000 students or more) for new Chinese students in 2016 (the most recent year of data available) are displayed in table 4.1.

On the whole, macro-level government and organisation policies can shed insight on the increases of Chinese students to American, Australian and Canadian universities. Within the US, for example, the work of EducationUSA organisation (an organisation seeking to increase the recruitment of international students to US universities) in many Asian countries as well as the increased and effective use of recruitment agents by individual US HE institutions in China can partly explain the dramatic increase in the numbers of Chinese students enrolled in US universities (de Wit, Ferencz, & Rumbley, 2013). Alternatively, in Australia, which (unlike the US and the UK) is increasing its market share within the global international student market (International Consultants for Education and Fairs Monitor, 2017) and has one of the largest proportions of international enrolments (with one in five students coming from abroad and over a third of these from China (Australian Government Department for Education and Training, 2018), perhaps as a result of government policies to recruit more

international students from Asia (Dennis, 2017). Higher Education is Australia's third largest export, and consequently, as with the Canadian government, the Australian government has sought to create a welcoming environment for international students by reforming the visa application process and easing the citizenship process for international students after graduation (Dennis, 2017). This stands in contrast to the relatively less hospitable approach of the US and UK governments' immigration policies: the US has raised tuition fees for international students at public institutions by 28% since 2008 (Dennis, 2017), while the UK abolished its Post-Study Work visa in 2012 and now interviews each international student as part of the Tier 4 student visa application process (UK Council for International Student Affairs, 2017).

Table 4.1: All countries that have over 10,000 Chinese international students in 2016 (Source: UIS, 2018)

Country	Stocks of students from China in 2016	% of total Chinese students
US	291,063	34.6
Australia	112,329	13.3
UK	91,518	10.9
Japan	79,175	9.4
Canada	60,936	7.2
South Korea	34,513	4.1
Hong Kong	27,154	3.2
France	25,297	3.0
Germany	23,616	2.8
New Zealand	16,626	2.0
Macao	12,834	1.5
Italy	12,581	1.5
Malaysia	10,899	1.3
Russia	10,693	1.3
Other	33,041	3.9
Total	842,275	100.0

However, in contrast to the US, Australia, the UK and Canada, there has been no substantial increase in the numbers of Chinese students attending Japanese universities between 2005 and 2016 (if fact, these numbers have decreased since 2013), despite Japanese government policies to attract international students, such as providing inexpensive and secure accommodation for international students, improving enrolment and immigration processes and encouraging employers to accept international students after graduation (Shao, 2008). This suggests there are other factors beyond macro-level factors relating to policy that are shaping international student mobility.

In summary, there has been an increase in the number of Chinese students in all of the most popular English-speaking HE destinations for Chinese students in the last ten years or so, suggesting perhaps that the reasons for the increase in the numbers of Chinese international students in the UK is not primarily due to factors relating to the policies of the UK at the expense of the UK's HE competitors, but instead, at least partly, due to factors relating to China. These potential Chinese specific factors are explored in the next section.

4.2 The Chinese context

With notable exceptions (for example, Guo (2010)), it has been relatively rare for studies to explicitly consider demographic factors as a factor influencing the trends in global Chinese international student mobility. To investigate this matter, I used data collected by the National Bureau of Statistics of China that was available online through the Chinese Statistical Yearbook (Chinese Ministry of Education, 2016). Using data from the 2010 Census in China and assuming no deaths and no migration effects, there appear to be a substantial decrease in the number of 18 to 25 year olds in China. The 2010 census recorded that there were 190million people in China aged 18-25 in 2010 (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2010). However, due to a decreasing birth rate, I estimate using the 2010 Census data that (assuming the effects of death, migration and emigration are negligible) there were only 160million in 2015 in the same age group. This, I project, will decrease by a further 40million to 120million by 2020, meaning that I expect the population of 18-25 year olds in China will experience a 36% decrease during this decade. This corresponds with the decrease in the numbers of Chinese students taking the *gaokao* (the Chinese National Higher Education Entrance examination taken by the majority of 18 year olds in China every summer), from 10.5 million in 2008 to 9.4 million in 2017 (Zhuang, 2017). These, combined with the

relevant sex ratio (109 men for every 100 females aged between 20 and 24 (Chinese Ministry of Education, 2016)), are displayed pictorially in figure 4.2. Thus, the increase in Chinese international mobility worldwide takes place within the context of a decline in the number of young people.

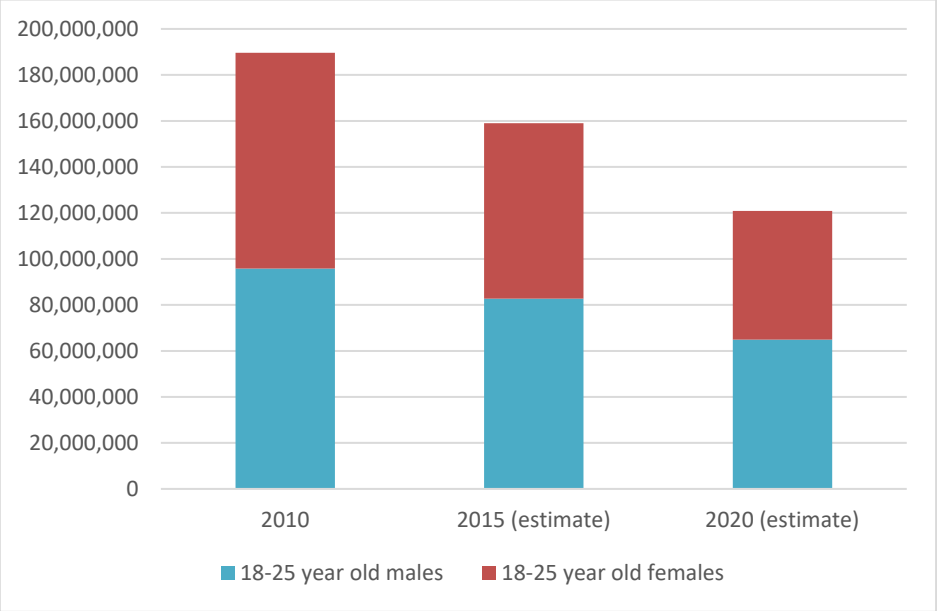

Figure 4.2: The number of 18-25 year olds in China, according to the data from the 2010 Census in China (Source: National Bureau of Statistics of China, (2010), with author's own projections for 2015 and 2020)

Some authors have suggested that an increasingly competitive Chinese HE environment is a factor that has pushed Chinese students to study abroad (Brooks & Waters, 2013; M. Li & Bray, 2007; Z. Li, 2013). Examining data on the aggregate totals of those who attend full-time HE in China within what the National Bureau of Statistics of China defines as "regular" HE institutions, there has been a steady increase in enrolments, from 12.3 million in 2008 to 18.1 million in 2016 (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2018b). Undergraduate students within Chinese HE institutions are largely responsible for this increase, as figure 4.3 demonstrates.

This growth within the Chinese HE sector is likely to partly reflect China's rapid economic growth (China's GDP per capita has increased from US$ 1,800 in 2000 to US$ 7,300 in 2017 (The World Bank, 2019)) and expanding middle class (China's middle class is expected to increase from 430million in 2018 to 780million by 2025 (Babones, 2018)) as well as Chinese government policies aimed at increasing the numbers of Chinese students attending HE: in 1999, the central Chinese government set itself the target that 15% of 18-21 year olds should

be enrolled in HE by 2010, a target that was achieved in 2002 (Bai, 2004). However, this rapid growth of the HE sector has led to the perception that Chinese universities are too crowded, with a pupil teacher ratio across the Chinese HE sector of 21 pupils for every teacher (Iannelli & Huang, 2014). Another possible reason behind the growth of Chinese HE is the increasing attractiveness of HE within China globally. Through initiatives such as the 985 project, the Chinese government has sought to raise the quality of the top-level universities (Iannelli & Huang, 2014), which has coincided with a rise in international student mobility towards China. In 2015, 185,000 foreign students came to study an academic degree in China, a 12.4% increase from the previous year (Chinese Ministry of Education, 2016), although most of these are on short-term exchange or language programmes (Sharma, 2016). This may reflect President Xi Jinping's 2013 "One Belt, One Road" policy, one aim of which is to attract more students to study in China (Maslen, 2017).

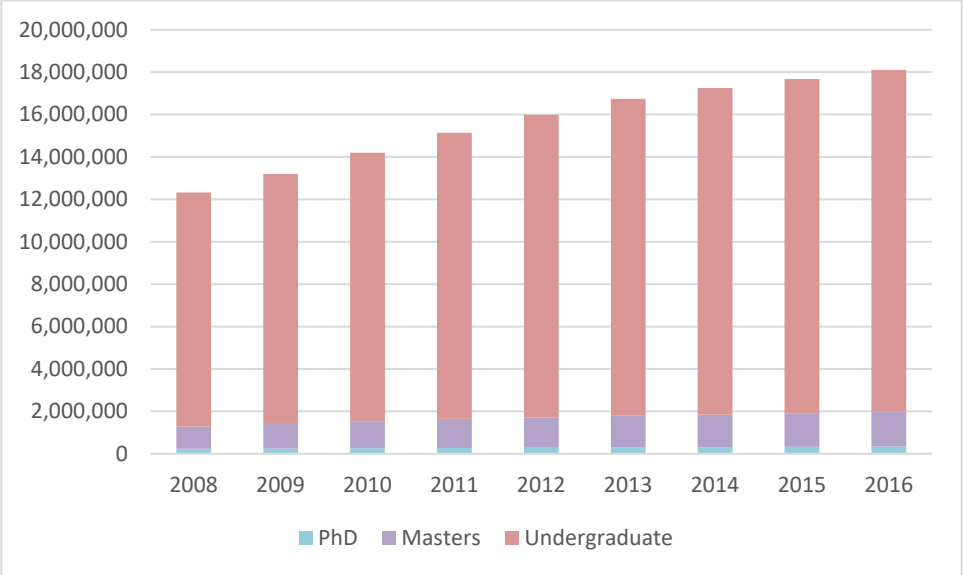

Figure 4.3: The number of students in Higher Education in China, by level of study (Source: Chinese Statistical Yearbook 2009-2017, 2018)

This rise in international students in China corresponds with the rise of elite Chinese universities in the QS World University Rankings (QS World University Rankings, 2018). According to the 2018 rankings, the highest top 100 ranked universities outside western countries are all found in East Asian countries (namely China, Singapore, Hong Kong, Japan, South Korea and Taiwan). China now has six universities in the top 100 globally ranked universities according to the 2018 QS rankings, twice as much as in the 2014 QS rankings (QS World University Rankings, 2018). Thus, Chinese HE, particularly top-level universities, are becoming increasing popular among Chinese and foreign students alike. However, most

Chinese universities have not benefitted from the 985 (or similar) policies (Cao et al., 2016; Ye Liu, 2013; Marginson, 2010a; Zweig & Yang, 2014), leading to the perception that the curricular and teaching methods in non-elite Chinese universities are not as advanced as HE institutions in Western countries (Iannelli & Huang, 2014). Consequently, this perception, combined with the overcrowding in Chinese universities resulting from the boom in students enrolled in Chinese HE institutions, leads to dissatisfaction with large parts of the Chinese HE sector, and fuels the desire to study abroad (Iannelli & Huang, 2014). Thus, the phenomena of a rapid increase of Chinese students enrolled in Western universities could be explained somewhat by the rapid increase in demand for quality HE that Chinese universities are unable to fully supply, coupled with policies from Western organisations and institutions seeking to attract international students.

4.3 The UK context

Having examined aspects relating to the global and Chinese context of Chinese international student mobility, we now investigate the UK context. The UK is the second most popular destination country for internationally mobile HE students behind the US (UNESCO, 2018b). It also has one of the highest percentages of international students within the overall general HE population; since 2013/2014, 19% of the HE population have come from outside the UK, increasing each year since 2003/2004 when only 13% of the HE student population were from not from the UK (Higher Education Statistics Agency, 2015). In the 2016/2017 academic year, there were 440,000 international students enrolled in the UK (Higher Education Statistics Agency, 2018d); that is, according to the HESA's definition, students whose normal residence prior to commencing their programme of study was a non-UK country (Higher Education Statistics Agency, 2018b). Although this is a 57% increase from the 280,000 international students that came in 2003/2004, it is only a 9% increase from the 405,000 students that came in 2009/2010, illustrating a substantially more gentle increase since 2010, as can be seen from figure 4.4. As with the US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Japan, the biggest source of international students in the UK is from China. According to the most recent data from HESA, there were 95,000 students from China in the UK in 2016/2017, meaning that more than one in every five international students (21.5%) in the UK is from China (Higher Education Statistics Agency, 2018d), a yearly increase since 2008/2009 (where only one in eight (12.8%) of UK international students were from China).

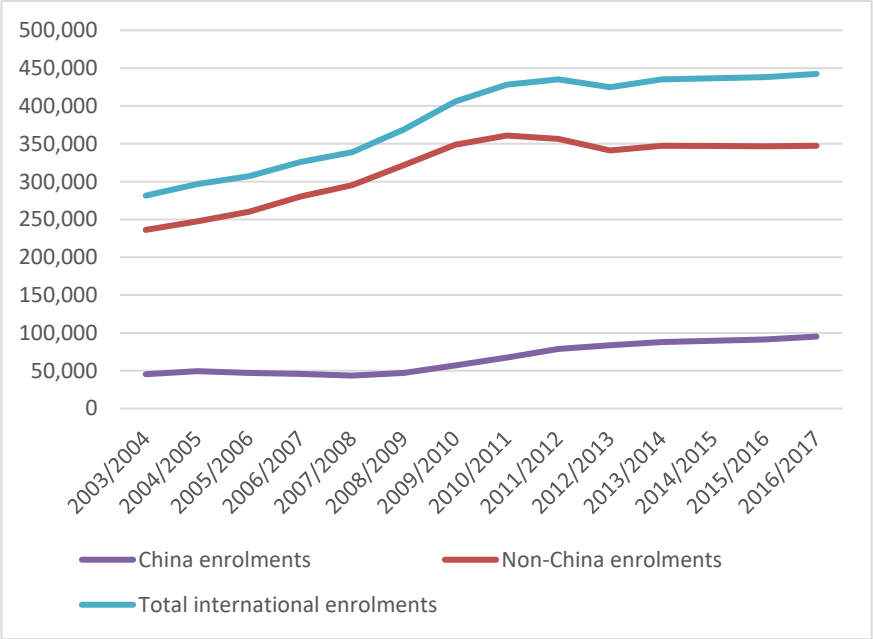

Figure 4.4: The trends of international students enrolled in the UK (Source: HESA, 2018)

The changes in international student mobility may partially reflect changes in UK government policies. In 1999, then UK Prime Minister Tony Blair launched an initiative to invest in the UK HE sector, seeking to attract international students to the UK by enhancing the reputation of UK universities as high-quality HE institutions (Lomer, 2016). Then, in 2006, Blair launched a second initiative, this time funding and developing international partnership and developing the UK's interest in transnational education (Mellors-Bourne *et al*., 2013). These policies coincided with a rapid increase in the numbers of international students coming to the UK for the first decade of the 21st century. However, after the coalition government came to power in 2010, international student mobility to the UK slowed substantially. In fact, excluding international students from China, international students enrolled in the UK reached a peak of 360,000 students in 2010/2011, and have not exceeded 350,00 students since 2011/2012 (Higher Education Statistics Agency, 2018d), as figure 4.4 illustrates.

Thus, it is only the growing population of Chinese international students in the UK that has enabled the overall UK international student population to keep on growing since 2010 (although even the rate of increase of the Chinese international student population has decreased dramatically since 2011). This relative stagnation takes place within the context of the Cameron-Clegg Coalition (and the current) government's policies to reduce overall net immigration to below 10,000 per year (which includes international students) since 2010

(Lomer, 2016), in addition to the stricter visa controls to reduce the number of students enrolling at "bogus" colleges in the UK (Madge *et al*., 2015) and the removal of the Post Study Work visa (a visa that enabled a route for international students to stay in the UK and find employment after they graduated) in 2012 (Beech, 2017).

4.4 The attributes of Chinese students

Now that the trends of Chinese students coming to the UK have been established, the composition of Chinese students will be investigated using the most recent data of the HESA data purchased in 2015 (data for the academic year 2013/2014).

4.4.1 Level of study

While the number of undergraduates, master's students and PhD students from China enrolled in UK universities has increased each year since 2008/2009, it is the increase of taught postgraduate students (master's degree students) that has risen the most rapidly and has contributed most to the overall increase in Chinese international students in the UK (Higher Education Statistics Agency, 2015), as figure 4.5 shows.

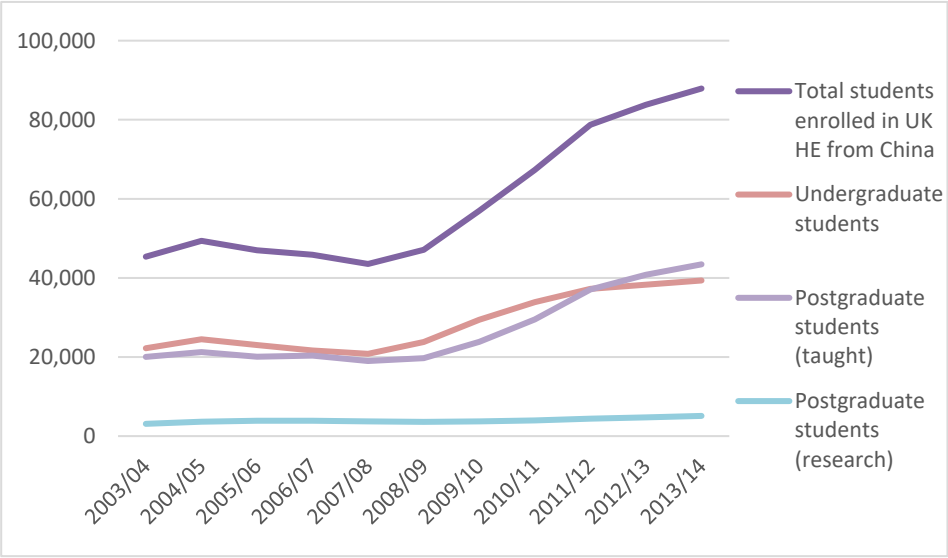

Figure 4.5: International students in the UK Higher Education from China, by level of study (Source: HESA, 2015)

This contrasts with the US, where the growth of international students in the US has been predominately driven by Chinese undergraduate students (Bhandari, 2017), and to a lesser extent with Australia, which also attracts more undergraduate students than postgraduate students (Institute of International Education, 2017). Thus, by 2013/2014, almost one in

every two Chinese students (49%) in the UK universities were enrolled on a master's degree programme, compared to 6% and 45% for those enrolled on PhD programmes and undergraduate programmes respectively (Higher Education Statistics Agency, 2015). Therefore, Chinese students studying master's programmes in the UK are of particular interest for future analysis.

4.4.2 Gender

It is instructive to look at the trends of international student mobility disaggregated by gender (Brooks & Waters, 2013; King & Raghuram, 2013). Over the eleven year period data are provided for, the proportion of female Chinese students in the UK has increased from 53.6% in 2004 to 57.5% in 2014 (Higher Education Statistics Agency, 2015). These data are displayed pictorially in figure 4.6.

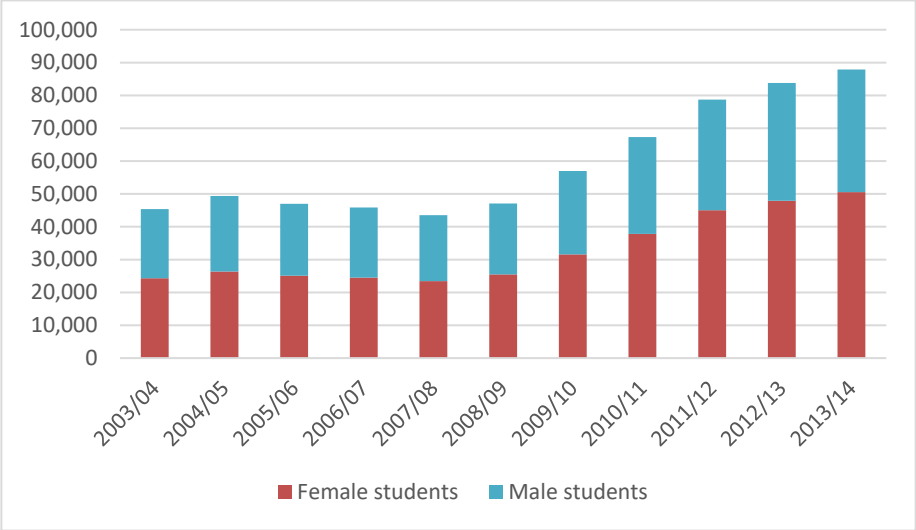

Figure 4.6: Enrolments of Chinese students in the UK, by gender (Source: HESA, 2015)

Does this phenomenon of an unbalanced sex ratio apply across female Chinese students across HE generally (regardless of whether they studied abroad or within China), or are female Chinese students more likely to study abroad compared with their male peers? Using the Chinese Statistical Yearbook collected by the National Bureau of Statistics of China shows that while there are also more Chinese female students than male students in Chinese universities, the sex ratio is not as unbalanced as with Chinese students enrolled in UK universities. The student population within Chinese universities is 52.7% female (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2015), lower than the corresponding percentatge of 57.5% female for Chinese international students in the UK (Higher Education Statistics Agency,

2015). This implies that female Chinese students are more likely to choose to study abroad then male Chinese students. In fact, a greater proportion of female Chinese students study in the UK than in China for each level of study (as figure 4.7 shows), but this effect is particularly evident for master's students: 63% of Chinese master's students in the UK are female, while only 52% of of master's students in China are female. In both the UK and China, however, PhD students are more likely to be male, perhaps be due to the notion of 'the third sex': the common Chinese belief that there exists a cohort of unmarried Chinese women with doctrates who struggle to find a marriage partner as men are supposedly intimidated by women with superior education qualificications (Bamber, 2014). Nonetheless, female students appear more likely to study in the UK than in China than their male counterparts, regardless of level of study. The imbalance of the demographic cohort sex ratio due to the one child policy makes this finding particularly interesting; in 2013, there were 110 males for every 100 females in the 20-24 age category (China Statistical Yearbook 2014). This phenomenon was explored in the second phase of data collection, and the insights these data shed on this phenomenon are discussed in the next chapter.

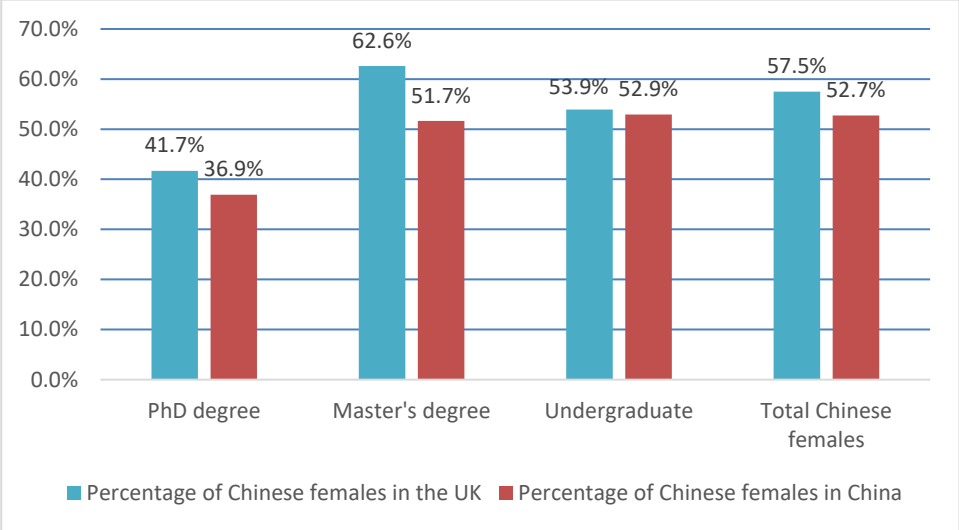

Figure 4.7: Percentages of female Chinese students enrolled in the UK and China in 2014, by level of study (Sources: HESA, 2015, Chinese Statistical Yearbook 2015)

Finally, looking at the Chinese students in UK universities by both level of study and gender provides further insights. Using the purchased HESA data for 2013/2014, not only does master's level constitute the most popular level of study, with 49.4% of Chinese students in the UK studying on master's degree programmes, but it is also at this level where the gender difference is most extreme (Higher Education Statistics Agency, 2015), as figure 4.8 illustrates.

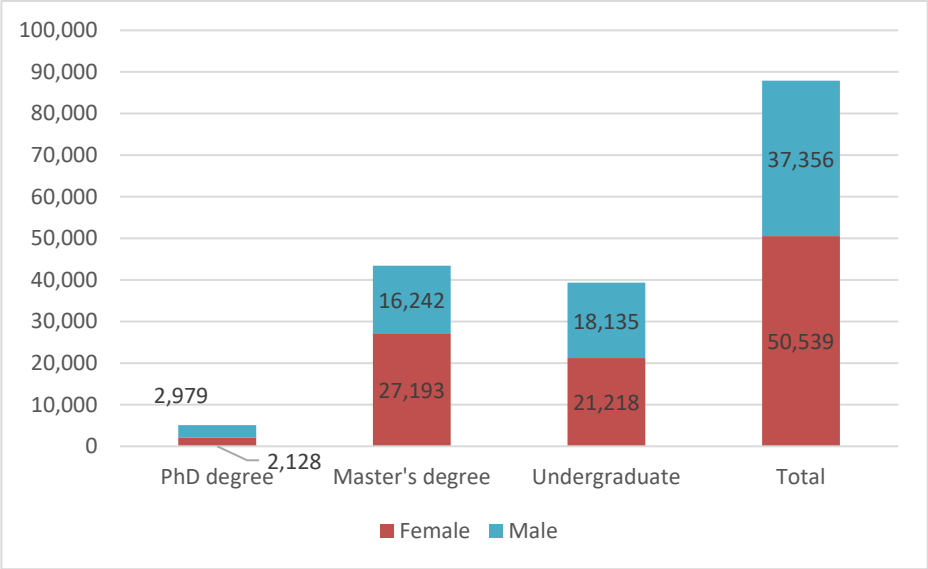

Figure 4.8: The numbers of Chinese students enrolled in UK universities in 2013/2014, by level of study and gender (Source: HESA, 2015)

Comparing this data with the 2008/2009 data, although numerically there are yearly increases in all six categories between 2008/2009 and 2013/2014, the most dramatic increase has been in the female master's student category as is shown (see figure 4.9), and by 2013/2014, female master's students account for almost a third of the entire Chinese international student population within UK Higher Education. Thus, female master's students are of particular interest as they are the group that has contributed the biggest component to the increase in Chinese international students in the UK.

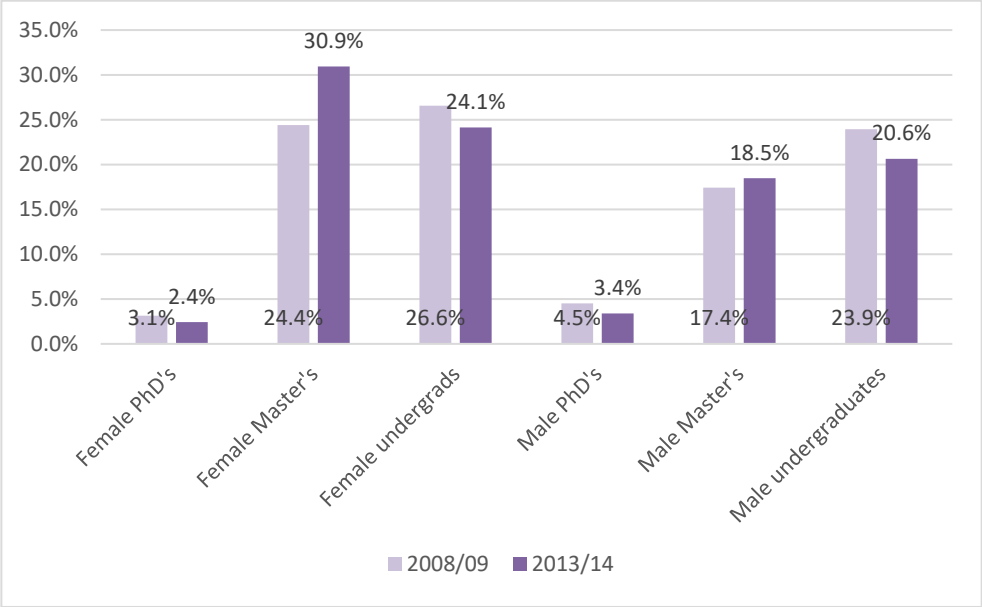

Figure 4.9: The percentage of the overall Chinese student population in 2008/2009 and 2013/2013, by gender and level of study (Source: HESA, 2015)

4.4.3 Institution, region and subject of study

Alongside level of study and gender, the other attributes that could shape the composition of the Chinese international student population in the UK are: which UK universities were most popular with Chinese students, which country in the UK Chinese students prefer to live in, and which subjects are most commonly studied. The aggregate HESA data of 2013/2014 were used to investigate which UK universities attract the highest numbers of Chinese students, and to see if there are any patterns in the characteristics of Chinese students within particular types of university. One of the most interesting findings was that the 24 Russell Group universities attracted almost half (46%) of the Chinese students enrolled in the UK; indeed nine of the ten (and 75% of the top 25) most popular UK universities for Chinese students are Russell Group universities (Higher Education Statistics Agency, 2015). The ten most popular UK universities for students from China are displayed in figure 4.10, and show the rapid increase between 2008/2009 and 2013/2014. More generally, the 24 Russell Group universities increased their Chinese international student populations by 125% during this timeframe, while the equivalent increase for non-Russell Group universities was only 63%. Consequently, there is not only evidence to suggest that Chinese students have a greater preference for the higher-ranking, better-known, research-intensive universities, but also that the growth of the Chinese international student population is not even, but has occurred disproportionately amongst this group of universities.

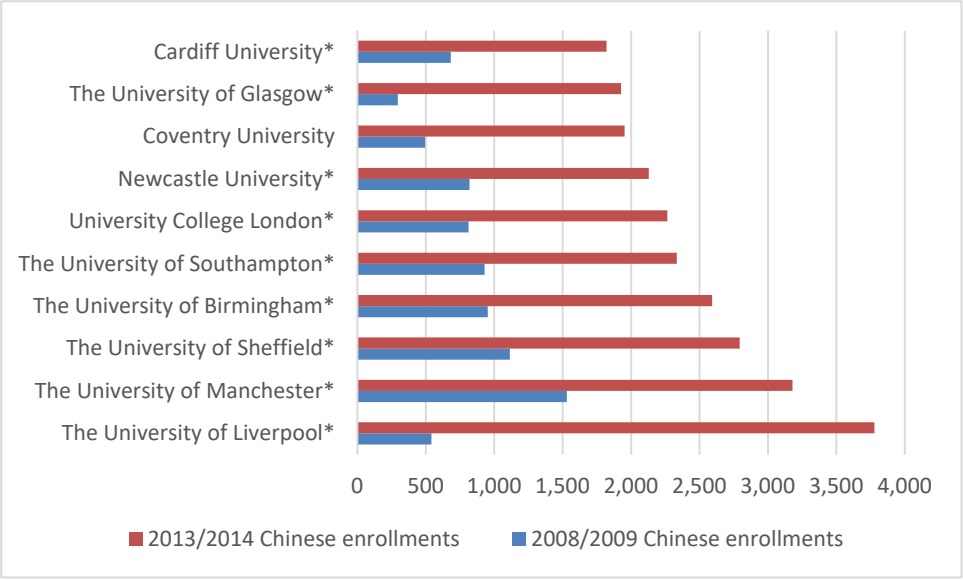

*Figure 4.10 The ten most popular UK universities for Chinese international students in 2013/2014; (Source: HESA, 2015); *Russell Group Universities*

When looking at the demographic characteristics of Chinese students attending Russell Group universities, they tend to have both a greater percentage of female students than non-Russell Group universities (60% to 56%) as well as a substantially higher proportion of postgraduate students relative to non-Russell Group universities (Higher Education Statistics Agency, 2015). In particular, one in every three Chinese students in Russell Group universities are female master's students, compared to only one in every four Chinese students in non-Russell Group universities, as figure 4.11 demonstrates (Higher Education Statistics Agency, 2015).

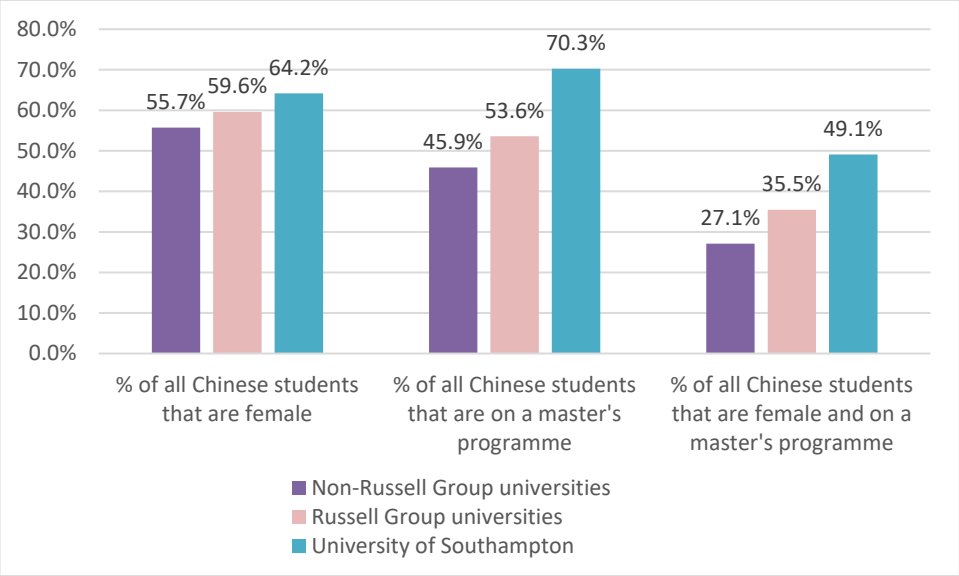

Figure 4.11: The percentages of: all enrolled Chinese students that are female, all enrolled Chinese students that are on master's programmes and all enrolled Chinese students that are female and on master's programmes, by non- Russell Group, Russell Group, and University of Southampton (Source: HESA, 2015)

It is also worth looking in particular at the University of Southampton, given that this is where all the interviewees in the second phase of this project were enrolled. The patterns shown in figure 4.11 are particularly marked at the University of Southampton, where one in every two Chinese students enrolled at the university are female students on master's degree programmes (Higher Education Statistics Agency, 2015). Indeed, the biggest contributor of the recent growth of the Chinese international student population in the UK is not merely the increase of female students on master's programmes, but more specifically female students studying their master's degree at high-ranking, well-known universities, of which the University of Southampton is a particularly noteworthy example. The University of Southampton has the third highest female master's degree population in the UK (behind only

the University of Birmingham and the University of Glasgow) and the second highest percentage of Chinese enrolments that are both female and studying at master's degree level in the UK (behind only the University of Glasgow) as well as being the fifth most popular university for Chinese international students in the UK (behind the universities of Liverpool, Manchester, Sheffield and Birmingham).

The Chinese student population forms a similar percentage of the student body in HE in most countries in the UK: 4% in English, Scottish and Welsh universities, although there were smaller percentage (2%) of students studying in Northern Irish universities (Higher Education Statistics Agency, 2015). Thus, the reputation and ranking of a UK university seems to be a greater factor in the decision of Chinese students about the choice of university than of which part of the UK their university is located in.

In addition to reputation and ranking, another factor affecting the university at which Chinese students choose to enrol appears to be the subject of study. Across UK universities in 2013/2014, 49% of the 88,000 students from China were enrolled on business and administration courses, 12% of them were enrolled on engineering and technology courses, 8% enrolled on social studies courses, 5% enrolled on languages courses and 5% on creative arts and design courses (Higher Education Statistics Agency, 2015). Therefore, four in five Chinese students were involved in one of these five discipline areas (in comparison, across the UK as a whole, only two in five students were enrolled in these five discipline areas). This pattern is even more marked at the University of Southampton, where 79% of the students from China were enrolled in business and administration courses, engineering and technology courses or creative arts and design courses. Indeed, 83% of master's degree students in creative arts and design courses at the University of Southampton were from China (Higher Education Statistics Agency, 2015). Conversely, UK universities with relatively few Chinese students, such as the University of Oxford, have fewer students of any nationality studying business and administration, engineering and technology and/or creative arts and design courses (Higher Education Statistics Agency, 2015), appear to not specialise in these fields and consequently tend to attract fewer Chinese students. Thus, the evidence from the HESA data suggest that subject of study is also a significant factor that affects which UK university Chinese students choose to attend.

4.5 Conclusions

Between 2003/2004 and 2013/2014, the number of Chinese international students enrolled in UK universities almost doubled from 45,000 to 88,000. This chapter reflects on some of the factors behind this increase, which produces a clear picture about who these students are (addressing the first research question of this thesis) and informs the data collection and analysis for the second phase of this thesis.

At a macro-level perspective, the global population of international students from China has doubled during this period (UNESCO, 2018b), reflecting a growing demand in China for higher education that cannot be met solely by Chinese universities. Despite the increase in the reputation and popularity of HE institutions in East Asia and South Asia (including China itself) in the last decade, Western, English-speaking destinations are increasingly popular for Chinese students. For example, the strict immigration policies of the US and the UK of recent years have slowed the trends of international students to HE institutions to such an extent that the international student populations of both of these countries would have ceased to grow if it had not been for the continued increase of the Chinese student population (although these trends have still slowed). This corresponds to the finding of Zhou (2015), who found that restrictive immigration policies in the US invariably cause obstacles for international student mobility despite their importance to both the US HE system (where universities face financial pressure to recruit higher numbers of international students) and the US economy. In contrast, in recent years Australia has introduced polices to make acquiring international student visas more assessable for international students, and is encouraging international students to stay and work after they graduate. As a result, Australia is increasing its market share in the global HE market for students, unlike the US and the UK. However, university policies to attract in particular Chinese students through using agents and recruitment fairs has helped ensure that the increase of the Chinese international student population in the US and the UK, despite inhospitable immigration policies. Thus, it appears that macro-level polices do often influence Chinese international student mobility, although this is not always the case (as with Japan).

What is particularly interesting about the increase in the UK's Chinese international student population is how important female master's students have been to this increase. In particular, there were 138% more female students (27,000 in 2013/2014 compared to 11,000

in 2002/2003) studying in master's degree programmes in UK universities; thus, these female master's students are responsible for 37% of this overall increase in the Chinese student population (Higher Education Statistics Agency, 2015). Further, it is the well-known and highly ranked universities, such as the Russell Group universities, have attracted disproportionally more Chinese international students compared to other UK universities. Female Chinese international students who are want to study at master's degree programmes appear to be particularly attracted to these prestigious universities. Another factor worth considering related to this is the subject of study. Almost half of the Chinese international students in the UK study a course related to business and administration, and thus universities that specialise in these subjects are particularly successful at attracting Chinese international students. Therefore, gender, level of study, ranking or reputation of HE institution and subject all appear to affect Chinese student mobility.

These findings and insights shape the second phase of this thesis to gain a clearer understanding of individual level insights into the motivations of Chinese international students to study in the UK. Firstly, the qualitative interviews explore reasons why the students chose to study in the UK as opposed to other countries (such as the US, Australia and Japan). Secondly, the data obtained from the interviews suggest reasons why female and master's students in particularly come to the UK to study. These are addressed in the fifth, sixth and seventh chapters. The findings further give evidence of why the University of Southampton is a not only a suitable university to use for the data collection of the second phase of this study (the University of Southampton is a Russell Group university, has the fifth highest population of Chinese international students in the UK and the sixth highest proportion of Chinese international students in the UK), but also is a particularly interesting location as the phenomenon of particularly high proportions of female Chinese students on master's programmes is especially evident for the University of Southampton (see figure 4.11). This chapter, then, not only provides valuable macro-level context of Chinese international student mobility towards the UK, but also lays the foundations for the next chapter to enhance the findings of this chapter using interview data, so that a deeper understanding of the diversity of Chinese students can be achieved.

Chapter 5 A Typology of Chinese International Students

"When a child travels 1000 miles, his mother will worry [儿行千里母担忧]"

Chinese saying

During the interview process, it emerged that there were some important differences in the ideas of the interviewees. For example, while there were some who claimed that most Chinese parents had a significant role in the decision to study in the UK and in the everyday lives of Chinese students studying in the UK, others claimed the opposite: that Chinese parents these days were more laid back and were happy as long as their child was happy. This chapter attempts to explore the differences among the interviewees by analysing the clusters of Chinese students that emerged from the data.

As part of the analysis of the qualitative interview data, I clustered each of the 27 students I interviewed into one of three categories through considering firstly their values (whether they appeared to hold mostly traditional values such as family-orientation, harmony with others and a sense of obligation to family and country, or mostly modern or individualistic values such as personal freedom, independence and self-improvement), and secondly their primary motivations to study in the UK (whether their main motivation for studying in the UK is job-related, experience-related or knowledge-related). From the analysis, it seemed that those with job-focussed motivations were more likely to be influenced by traditional values, while those with experience-focussed motivations tended to be influenced by modern or individualistic values (there appeared no obvious inclination towards traditional or individualistic values for students that were primarily motivated by knowledge or study related reasons). This clustering process is explained in more depth in Appendix C.

Therefore, through examining these differing value systems and primary motivations, I identify three distinct types of Chinese students: those whose underlying values suggested they are family-focussed, strongly influenced by Confucian ideals and were primarily motivated by future job aspirations (whom I describe as traditionally-orientated students), those who appear relatively independent, desire self-improvement and seem to come to the UK primarily because of experience based motivations (whom I describe as individualistically-

orientated students) and those who aspire to learn and are primarily influenced by knowledge related motivations (whom I describe as academic-orientated students).

This chapter, then, examines each of these three types of Chinese students in turn through analysing the patterns of particular characteristics and common primary motivations of each category of Chinese students. Consequently, this chapter builds on the findings of the previous chapter to answer the second research question of this thesis, that is, to examine the diversity within the international student population. Establishing these patterns within the heterogeneous Chinese international student population also provides a typology (used in the next three chapters of this thesis) through which to analyse the nuances of how concepts (such as face, *suzhi* and *guanxi*) shape each type of Chinese student differently. I argue that as the patterns in these data are relatively clear and align with findings in other studies including Cebolla-boado, Hu, & Nuho (2018) and Hansen & Thøgersen (2015), these three types can be considered as a basis to build a more nuanced understanding of Chinese international students. Thus, this innovative typology provides a structure that can contribute to bringing greater clarity and understanding of the diversity of Chinese international students for this study as well as for other research concerning Chinese international students.

5.1 Traditionally-orientated Chinese students

As motivations are shaped by the values one holds, cultural values (or subconsciously held beliefs) are essential to consider when analysing motivations (Sánchez & Fornerino, 2006). Yet there is a debate in the Chinese international student mobility literature regarding whether Chinese students hold onto traditional Confucian values (Bodycott & Lai, 2012; Zhang, Lin, Nonaka, & Beom, 2006) or whether Chinese students reject Confucian values in favour of modern or independent values (Martin, 2017; Ye & Edwards, 2015). Evidence emerged from the data collected from the qualitative interviews that supported both sides of the debate, indicating there are some students who are more strongly influenced by traditional values, while there are other students whom are instead influenced by values such as independence and self-improvement. This section examines the values and motivations of students who are more strongly influenced by traditional values, most of whom I identify as traditionally-orientated students.

5.1.1 Traditional values

At least half of the students (16 out of 27) in my study gave answers indicating that they were influenced by what are widely categorised as traditional Chinese or Confucian values such as observing filial piety, respecting tradition, prudence, or abiding by collectivism (Bedford & Hwang, 2003; Bodycott & Lai, 2012; Fan, 2000; Henze & Zhu, 2012; Marginson, 2010a; Zhang *et al*., 2006). This was not always consistent: on at least four occasions, the same interviewees gave some responses indicating a strong endorsement for some Confucian values, while other responses indicated an effort to resist or reject other Confucian values. Nonetheless, there was substantial evidence that there were some students who held onto many of these traditional values, while there was a separate group of students who consciously attempted to resist some of the same values. In order to decide whether a student had traditional values, I looked chiefly at how they responded to parental authority and their attitude towards following Chinese traditions of gender roles and marriage, as these were common themes in my interviews that coincide with traditional Chinese values (Fan, 2000; Hsu & Huang, 2015). If students appeared to uphold one or more of these values, I would likely categorise them as traditionally-orientated. If they did not fit neatly into that group, I would classify them into the group that best represented their values and primary motivation overall.

5.1.1.1 The role of parents in the motivations and experiences of Chinese students

Chinese morality is based on Confucian, relational and role-specific virtues such as trust, loyalty and filial piety (C. C. Chen, Chen, & Huang, 2013). Thus, observing attitudes towards parents is a key component of measuring how traditional someone may be. The role of parents was a key theme from my interviews, with 24 out of 27 of my students observing that their parents played some role in shaping their motivations to study in the UK or in supporting their study in the UK. This is consistent with the findings of other studies (Bodycott & Lai, 2012; Bodycott, 2009; Waters, 2006). However, while parental involvement was fairly universal, there was evidence that parents were involved in different ways and for different reasons. As Jia Lan, a male undergraduate student, observed:

> *"For me, I think that some parents, if they are very willing to let their children go out to look at the outside world, then they probably have more pressure on the children, as they think, "I let you go out, so I want you to be better". But other*

parents are just "Let it go, do whatever you want". So the children of these parents will have less pressure. "

In contrast to Bodycott and Lai's study (2012) of mainland Chinese students in Hong Kong, no students in my study told me that they were pushed to study in the UK by their parents against their will. In some cases, however, the decision to study abroad was indeed initiated by the parents, including for Tanchun, a female master's student studying education:

"A large part is my parent's decision [to study abroad]*, but I also think I want to."*

More commonly, however, the decision to come to the UK was made by the student, although this decision was often either encouraged or supported by the parents.

"I think studying abroad is my own choice. Because my parents, they hope I can go abroad to study, but they don't push *me. It is just the choice of myself."*

Yuhuan, a female master's student studying design

"My father doesn't really want me to go abroad, but my mother hopes I can broaden my horizons. She hopes I can decide my life for myself."

Sheyue, a female master's student studying creative art

Thus, the decision to study abroad was more often made by the student rather than by the parents. However, when it came to choosing what subject their child should study, while some parents were happy for their child to study whatever they liked, there were some who used their power to determine or influence which major their child would study. This power partly originated due to the students' financial dependence on their parents: one interviewee observed that as most parents fund their child's education, students' ambitions to study a particular major were therefore subject to their parents' willingness to sponsor them. Their parents' willingness to allow them to study a particular major appeared to depend partially on the parents' familiarity with particular fields or subjects:

"My parents wanted me to study finance and economics. Actually, I love chemistry. But my mother works in a bank, and my father is a manager in a big company, so they aren't familiar with chemistry, so I need to study finance and economics. I love chemistry, it is amazing, so this is really a shame..."

Qiaojie, a female undergraduate student studying business

Parents were commonly motivated to decide which subject their child studied by the practical concern for future stability. This concurs with literature that observed that Chinese people often value prudence and favour caution over risks (Fan, 2000).

"But in China, maybe most people don't like the major they do. It is just chosen by their parents, and only a few of them have the courage to change their major. My parents are ok, they really have respect for me. But for many Chinese parents, they will say no to their child. If your parents think your choice of major is ok, maybe they will accept it. But many Chinese families will analyse it, "this job is not suitable for you," or "you won't be able to find a job," or "you won't get a career!" That sort of thing. Chinese students don't like to disobey their parents."

Qingwen, female master's student studying engineering

For some students, Chinese parents' desire for their children to lead stable lives was highly influential in the decision to choose a particular subject. This was particularly prevalent for students studying business related courses.

"Parents will think that if you get employed in a bank, it will give you a stable salary, a stable job, and then a stable life. So I think the finance business might be a good choice in their opinion."

Xiren, female master's student studying business

"Parents want their children to get rich and successful. If you study finance, economics and accounting, they think that you will more likely get rich than if you study other subjects. I don't think it is important to me, but for parents think it is important. They think money is the foundation in life. In previous time, most Chinese people were very poor. Maybe nowadays they are richer than before, but they are still very afraid of running out of money."

Qiaojie, female undergraduate student studying business

Parents influenced not only the choice of degree, but also the students' experiences. In some cases, parents sought to look after and control their son or daughter during their time in the UK, despite the physical distance.

"My parents told me to not travel in Europe. So I didn't. So now, I don't travel in the UK or other countries. So safety is the primary factor Chinese parents will consider, because most Chinese students are funded by their parents rather than the government or some other body. So they must obey their parents' opinions."

Guan Yu, a male master's student

The importance of safety for Chinese international students was one of the distinctive findings of this thesis, a theme that may have been under-emphasised in the literature. Many students' lives in the UK were affected by their parents' concerns for their safety. Over a third of the Chinese students in my sample referred to the importance of safety either in the decision to study in the UK, or a key concern for them while they live in the UK. Eight of 27 students explained that the reason they did not choose to study in an American university was the perceived threat of gun crime in the US, while another deemed Canada to be similarly unsafe. Some students informed me that their parents had set them a curfew (although some students followed these curfews less rigidly than others did).

> *"My parents tell me that I shouldn't go out alone, and that I should make sure I am back home before dark. But I don't stick to their rules! (Laughs). Because Southampton is a smaller town than London, so I found it is much safer than London, even at night. So sometimes I come back really late, after 10pm, or sometimes even at 11:00!"*

Diaochan, female PhD student

Thus, as Guan Yu (a male master's student) observed, a risk aversion leading to concerns about stability and safety was one of the key factors parents considered before allowing their child to come to the UK. The parents' desire for personal stability and for avoiding the risk of harm also influenced how some of the students lived their lives in the UK through restricting (or attempting to restrict) the behaviour of students. Parents are able to exercise this authority and control over the choices and lives of their children through the traditionally close family unit, as Yuanchun, a female PhD student, explains:

> *"The relationship between the children and their parents is quite different from the UK. My English friends say their children become quite independent; they become a little bit detached from their family. But in China, we do not live in that way. Even if the son or daughter have their own children, they will still have a very intimate relationship with their parents. So I think to some extent, the parents still have the decision making power or responsibility over their children's life, for example, when they will get married, what type of job they will get, and even how their son or daughter will raise their own children. So maybe this kind of intimate relationships will become some kind of pressure on their personal choices."*

Therefore, parents with traditional views can play a substantial part in the motivations and experiences of some Chinese students in the UK, and the intimacy and interdependence of traditional Chinese families creates the means to enable parents to play such a role. Of course, in contrast to these more traditional parents, there are some parents who are more motivated by making their children happy, or who are more laid back regarding what their child does during their time in the UK. As will be made clear later in this chapter, there are also students who, in contrast to those who are strongly influenced by the pressure that comes from having an intimate, interdependent family, resist this pressure. Consequently, there is a clear distinction between the students whose behaviour and motivations were influenced and limited by their parents' intervention and those that were not. Those that demonstrated that their decisions or behaviour were controlled more by their parents than themselves were highly likely to be categorised as traditionally-orientated students.

5.1.1.2 Traditional views concerning gender roles and finding a romantic partner

Another theme that emerged from the data was the impact of distinctive gender roles on Chinese students. Martin (2007), in her study of female Chinese students in Australia, also observed how female students feel specific pressure due to deeply held beliefs concerning gender roles, and in particular the pressure that women face to conform to ideals of marriage and family formation. However, I add to her findings by also considering male reflections concerning gender roles and the masculine-specific pressures that men face. It is noteworthy that while experiencing gender-specific pressures is common for Chinese students, some students appear to be influenced by these pressures more than others. Therefore, identifying the attitudes of my interviewees towards gender roles and marriage provides another indication to which category to classify them within.

The traditional expectation for Chinese men is to provide for his family, a pressure that was expressed by the majority of my male interviewees.

> *"Because in China, if you are a boy, you must buy a house, you must provide for the whole family, because you are a man, the father of your children, the husband of your wife. So boys will get more pressure. For example, I am always thinking about the future, how to get more money, and to provide a better life for my family. Maybe girls are thinking how they can get a good husband, but this is the pressure I feel."*
>
> Huang Zhong, male master's student

"I think I have a common pressure with other male students. I feel I need to raise money for family, and if I choose to study a PhD, I have three years of lower money than those who have been working. So that is why anticipate a higher salary job. So this is one of the reason I chose to do a PhD."

Zhang Fei, male PhD student

As these quotes illustrate, this pressure to obtain a well-paid job and earn money was linked to the pressure to get married. Having evidence of one's ability to support their prospective bride financially appears to be an important consideration to the bride's parents as to whether or not one would be a responsible husband, and thus these male interviewees feel pressure to acquire a well-paid job tin order to increase their chances of marriage. Several students alluded to these male specific pressures as some of the reasons either male students come to the UK (with shorter duration master's degree programmes) instead of other countries, or cannot go abroad to study at all (resulting in the trend, as found in the quantitative part of this study, for more female students to study in the UK than male students).

"Maybe boys just have to get a job earlier in China because they have to afford the fee of a family. Maybe they want to get married, because in China parents want men to get married first, and then have a career, so the pressure of the boy is higher, and the opportunity for them to go abroad is less."

Yuhuan, female master's student

Thus, students that found themselves restricted by these male specific pressures were classified within the traditional cluster. The same applied to those adhering to female specific pressures, although the societal expectations for female students are more complex. In previous generations, the pressure for women was not to provide for the family through work, but rather to care for the family.

"China has a very long history, and it has been a very male dominated society during this history. And the tradition has very clearly defined roles and responsibilities for both male and females. So the responsibility of the man is to make money for the family and provide for the family, but for the woman the responsibility is to care for the family, and giving birth to their babies."

Diaochan, female PhD student

However, it was often noted that societal expectations of women were changing, with the expectation moving away from the role of the woman as taking care of parents and children, towards women also facing pressure to support their family financially.

> *"Previously, Chinese women are all expected to take care of the family more, more than the male. But nowadays, as the education of the female has risen, we have more freedom to choose our lifestyle. We have the choice to stay single for the whole life, or for longer than before. And we can choose to support our parents independently, without any support from the husband or our partners. The female not only has to take care of her family, but also has to earn money for the family and share responsibility. So it is more equal now."*

Xifeng, female PhD student

Thus, the notion that the primary responsibility of women was to care for the family instead of embarking on a career was seen as outdated by some interviewees. Nonetheless, while the expectation for women to work and provide for the family financially is common, the pressure for female students to marry and start a family remains. Consequently, how interviewees responded to marriage pressure also indicates whether or not they hold a traditional worldview. The acceptance (even if reluctant) of the pressure to marry before a particular age was taken as an indication of holding traditional views, in contrast to the instances of resistance to this marriage pressure noted by Martin (2017). In my study, both male and female students mentioned the pressure they felt to marry, although the belief that women have a narrower window of opportunity for marriage (Bamber, 2014) meant that female students more commonly referred to this marriage pressure than their male counterparts, as they presumably felt this pressure to a greater degree.

> *"Maybe in China for women, if you have not got a husband by a certain age, your parents and your relatives will give you a lot of pressure. They think the woman should do these things by this age, and be married before 30, or something. They really give specific limits to do things. (Sighs). But guys don't have these limits."*

Qingwen, female master's student

Besides these gender-specific pressures, whether students adhere to traditional stereotypes of gender roles was another factor that helped indicate traditional beliefs. A couple of male students I interviewed believed that woman were less suited to the workplace than men:

> *"Sometimes the work requires working day after day, the whole day, 24 hours, maybe 48 hours. Maybe girls cannot cope with this job because it is horrible, and their health can be easily damaged."*
>
> Guan Yu, male master's student

> *"Men can get a job more easily than a girl. I think it is common sense, because there are a lot of jobs that girls do not do well compared to boys. I mean if you are a bank investor, it is really hard work. And if you are a girl, it is really not good for your health to work all day until midnight. So many girls think it is really hard for them to work in that environment."*
>
> Huang Zhong, male master's student

The perception from these two male students that girls were less suited to certain job roles contrasted with female perspectives of their own capabilities, as evidenced not only by Martin's study (2017) of female Chinese students in Australia but also by female responses in my own study. For example, Xifeng, a female PhD student, argued that she thought that women performed better in most areas of academia due to their work ethic and social skills:

> *"Generally, I think female's academic performance is better than males. They work harder, and are more active and more sociable."*

Thus, Guan Yu and Huang Zhong's views about male and female capabilities reflects their more traditionally orientated beliefs about gender roles.

5.1.2 Job-focussed primary motivations

The majority of studies into the motivations of Chinese students look at the motivations of Chinese international students through an employability lens. Thus motivations relating to attending universities of high reputation, high teaching quality, good job prospects and short duration of programmes are interpreted in terms of how they relate to increasing the employability prospects in students' futures (Fang & Wang, 2014; Gao, 2014; Z. Li, 2013; Ma, 2014; Martin, 2017; Tsang, 2013; Waters, 2006; Wu, 2014; Xiang & Shen, 2009). My study shows that, in some cases, particularly among students with traditional views, this approach is valid: a third of the students I interviewed appeared to be primarily concerned about their future career, with nine of my 27 students telling me the main reason they chose to study in the UK was related to gaining advantages in the competitive Chinese labour market. All of

these students appeared to uphold traditional values more than modern values. Bourdieu's theory of capital (1986) best applies to this group: for these students (or perhaps their parents), education can be seen as an investment in cultural capital in the hope that the investment will return economic capital in the future. This is particularly true for poorer families:

> *"For less wealthy families, the only way to get higher and higher is through education. First, they need to go to a very good university, and then he or she can stand on a higher platform, and then, if she or he works hard enough, then they will get a good job. The first thing they need to learn how to survive, because they don't have many choices, they just can get higher grades, higher university, higher internship, get better jobs."*
>
> Liu Bei, a male master's student

One form of cultural capital highly sought after in Chinese society is obtaining a *hukou* (a registration of where one lives) in a large Chinese city, which can be converted into more respectable educational qualifications for (future) children, which then can be converted into a better paid job (Bodycott & Lai, 2012). The theme of studying in the UK to get a job in one of the big four Chinese cities (Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Shenzhen) in order to migrate to and acquire a *hukou* within those cities (thus gaining better opportunities in the future) emerged during five of the interviews I conducted.

> "[The reason the university ranking is important is] *to get a job; we need to make money to live! Actually, the majority of Chinese students want to live in Beijing or Shanghai or Guangzhou, so they need to improve themselves to get a higher degree to get a job. Although the price of house in Beijing and Shanghai are very expensive, they still want to make money to buy a house in these cities."*
>
> Sheyue, a female master's student

As Sheyue mentioned, the rank of the university is very important for job-focussed students, as employers look at universities' reputations (and particularly the academic reputation of the country) more than grades, as many other studies had observed (Bamber, 2014; Bodycott & Lai, 2012; Cebolla-boado *et al.*, 2018; Findlay *et al.*, 2012; M. Li & Bray, 2007; Waters, 2006; Xiang & Shen, 2009). Hence, being associated with a reputable university (and country) is as particularly important for many of the students holding traditional values in my study, such as Cao Cao, a male master' student:

"I need a degree at a high ranked university to get a job in China. If the HR in China has not heard of the university, they will not feel positive towards me."

One reason employment concerns continue to influence Chinese students relates to what Biao and Shen refer to as "anxiety about the future" (Xiang & Shen, 2009, p516). Even though overseas degrees are decreasing in value, the demand for them remains high because the competition for highly-skilled jobs is so fierce (Bai, 2004; Cebolla-boado *et al.*, 2018). Thus, this anxiety about future employment prospects pushes students to study abroad.

"In China now, the enrolment in university becomes very high, almost 80 or 90% go to university. So normally nearly everyone has at least higher education undergraduate background."

Zhou Yu, a male master's student

"It is high stress to find a job in China, because of the large population. In modern society nowadays there are many graduates in China, so I want to update my skills to learn more knowledge."

Tanchun, a female master's student

In particular, for some careers, such as within the business profession, a master's degree was seen as an essential requirement for entering the workforce, as Guan Yu, a male master's student on a business-related discipline explained:

"Not all the students have a strong feeling to study abroad… but we find that when we are looking for a job, the employers think that bachelor's degree is not enough, and Chinese have a lot of people, and a lot of graduates every year. So employers need and want more high quality employees. So they ask for a master's degree. So this is why many Chinese students want to continue their higher education abroad."

This pressure to acquire jobs can push students to work in damaging work environments when they return to China, thus highlighting the importance of acquiring graduate-level jobs for some Chinese students.

"I have a friend who works in Beijing. Every day she has to work until 11pm at night. She has no holiday, and she needs to work on Saturdays too!"

Qingwen, a female master's student

These quotes, therefore, demonstrate the perceived need of some Chinese students to obtain institutionalised cultural capital (academic qualifications) as well as embodied cultural capital (such as language ability, as commonly observed in the literature (Cao *et al.*, 2016; Findlay *et al.*, 2012; Gu & Maley, 2008; Kwon, 2013; Spencer-Oatey *et al.*, 2017)) in order to give them an edge in the competition for jobs in China, and that these motivations were driving them to study in the UK.

In addition to the financial pressure driving these job-focussed students to study abroad, some students noticed that there existed additional barriers for female workers, in line with other studies (Brooks & Waters, 2013; Martin, 2017; Ono & Piper, 2004). It was noted that one of the possible reasons why there were more female than male Chinese international students in the UK was that female workers had to acquire higher qualifications to compete with the same level jobs as their male counterparts.

> *"Generally speaking, it is easier for male students to find a job compared to female jobs. Because if a female student wants to find a similar jobs with a similar salary, they have to work harder. Because maybe for the employers, they think "If I have a female employee, she will get married soon, and then she will have a baby, and then she will work part-time in the coming years. So it is worse than getting a male employee who will work full time for longer. He can concentrate more on this job because he will spend less attention focussing on his own family issues." So that is why they want to get higher education, and pursue a higher degree."*
>
> Yuanchuan, female PhD student

The additional pressures that woman face were also expressed as a reason why female Chinese master's students preferred the short duration of UK master's programmes (Bamber, 2014).

> *"It* [the reasons why female students study on shorter programmes] *is also about beauty. Because as a girl gets older, she will get less beautiful as they were in their 20s. I think, in my view, although the employers say it is important to not judge the appearance, I think they* [female workers] *still are judged. Because there may not be significant difference between one candidate and another, they will definitely choose the more beautiful one, the more handsome one. So as a girl gets older, she will find it harder to get a job and get promotion. So it is important for her to*

narrow her study, and finish her study as soon as possible if she wants a successful career."

Guan Yu, male master's student

Having said that, as already mentioned, male students were also under pressure to complete their studies and acquire a job as soon as possible. Indeed, acquiring jobs seems to be the most common primary motivation to study in the UK for male students; six out of nine of the male students appeared primarily job-focussed, in contrast to three out of 18 female students. As a couple of students explained:

"We [Chinese male students] *have a lot of burdens, society gives us a lot of burdens. For example, if you want to buy a house it is really expensive. So if you want to buy it at an early age, so maybe you quit the study and come to the society to work and earn money is much wiser."*

Zhou Yu, male master's student

"For me, we should have responsibility to our wives. When the wife has a baby, Chinese culture requires the boy, the husband, to provide all of the earnings. So it is stressful, I think."

Guan Yu, male master's student

Consequently, there are incentives for both male and female students to restrict their duration of study as much as possible for the sake of their future career and earning potential. These incentives were particularly felt by those who held traditional values (students like Yuanchun, Guan Yu and Zhou Yu). The synergy between views on traditional gender roles and gender-specific pressures further supports this link. In keeping with existing research, therefore, this study finds that the financial pressure faced by (often traditionally-orientated, male) students, exacerbated by competition within the Chinese job market, is one of the key factors motivating students to come to the UK to study. For these students, if they could not get into elite Chinese universities, then their next strategy for entering the fiercely competitive Chinese labour market was to instead study abroad, preferably in the US or the UK (Brooks & Waters, 2013; Findlay *et al.*, 2012; M. Li & Bray, 2007). This was the case for Zijuan, a female master's student who studied for her undergraduate degree in the UK:

"The students around me [during high school] *are very excellent. They went to Tsinghua University, Fudan University: the top universities in China... However, I failed my gaokao* [Chinese national college entrance examination] *exam, and my*

father told me that I will pay the price because I didn't study hard enough, so you have to accept the result. And when I told my father I want to go the UK, as I want to be great, he told me it was ok as this is my life."

Therefore, based on the evidence emerging form these data, I argue that the most common primary motivation of traditionally-orientated Chinese students for studying in the UK is to improve job prospects. Driven by values such as achieving stability, a sense of obligation and filial piety (Hsu & Huang, 2015), these students appear to expect that by studying in the UK, they will ultimately improve their financial stability, thus enabling them to support their parents and achieve a stable life. These themes are discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

5.1.3 Summary of traditionally-orientated students

Therefore, despite potential changes in how gender roles and marriage are perceived within the last generation, there were 16 Chinese students in my study who either upheld traditional positions about the roles of men and women, or felt they were limited in their decisions about study or work due to parental pressures or gender specific pressures. I ultimately classified eleven of these 16 students with traditional beliefs as traditionally-orientated students, a group that included eight job-focussed students. Seven of the eleven traditionally-orientated students were male (in fact, all male students in the study except two were classified within this cluster), suggesting a possible link between gender and the values and motivations of Chinese students (with male students at undergraduate and master's levels seemingly particularly likely to primarily aspire to improve their job prospects), although the unrepresentative nature of the data collection strategy hinders any firm conclusions being formed regarding this potential link. Concerning subject of study, there appeared no real distinction between traditionally and non-traditionally-orientated students, although traditionally-orientated students appeared more likely to come from poorer, more rural provinces (including Hunan, Jiangxi and Liaoning). This matches the reflections of several of the students in my study, such as Diaochan, who told me that rural and poorer provinces would be much more traditional than the big cities like Beijing and Shanghai, and is also consistent with findings in research in other fields about Chinese values (Cai *et al.*, 2012).

5.2 Individualistically-orientated students

In contrast to the 16 students in my study that seemed to hold traditional values, eleven students in my study appeared to either intentionally resist some of the traditional Chinese values mentioned in the previous section, or hold onto values that Hsu & Huang (2015) identify as modern Chinese cultural values, such as liberation (personal freedom, independence and being true to oneself), living in the moment and improving one's own well-being. These students were less focussed on what their parents' or Chinese society's expectations of what they should or should not do, and instead were driven by fulfilling their own aspirations and desires, reflecting modern or individualistic values (Hsu & Huang, 2015). Recent studies of Chinese students have highlighted the resistance of some Chinese students to traditional perspectives on issues such as gender roles (Bamber, 2014; Martin, 2017) and emphasised their pursuit of independence (Ye & Edwards, 2015). In this study, similar phenomena emerged, although these attitudes did not appear to be universal across all Chinese students. Of the eleven students I felt held these individualistic values, ten appeared to be primarily motivated to come to the UK not so much to increase their career or earning potential, but rather to broaden their horizons and improve themselves. This section, therefore, investigates the characteristics and motivations of the ten individualistically-orientated students in my study.

5.2.1 Individualistic values

Within fields such as tourism (Hsu & Huang, 2015) and business (Faure & Fang, 2008; Wang & Lin, 2009) there has been a focus on how, within contemporary China, different cultural values coexist. These studies observe that there has been a shift in Chinese cultural values over the last sixty years, partly in response to Chinese government policy to modernise away from certain traditional values as well as due to the influence of global media emphasising individual choice and individual rights (Y. Yan, 2010). These factors have led to a rise in individualistic values among younger Chinese people, especially those from higher socioeconomic backgrounds and from urban areas (Cai *et al.*, 2012). However, the rise of these values among certain groups of people does not imply a widespread rejection of Chinese values and characteristics (Faure & Fang, 2008) as Confucian social barriers still limit the role of individualistic values even among young Chinese people (Wang & Lin, 2009). Chinese individualism, then, is distinct from Western individualism, and the rise of Chinese

individualism does not imply China has become more Westernised (Y. Yan, 2010). Therefore, this sub-section uses the interview data to obtain a nuanced understanding of these individualistically-orientated Chinese students through exploring their resistance of traditional values and their pursuit of modern cultural values within contemporary China.

5.2.1.1 Questioning traditional Chinese values

A common reflection in my study (by eleven of the 27 students) was that the rapid demographic, economic and political transformation of China in the last sixty years has also brought about rapid social change.

> *"My parents were born in 1960s, so the generation of my parents, they have experienced the hardest time of China* [the Cultural Revolution]. *They were starving for food. So when they became parents, they hoped their children will have a really good life, so they have a really high expectation of their children. But for those who are having children now, their highest expectation is for happiness for their child, rather than having a life plan for their children to obtain a stable life. So they will let them be themselves, instead of pushing them like my parent's generation. So I think the pressure from my parent's generation give us is from their experience."*
>
> Xiren, female master's student

> *"I think parents are changing their thinking. Some traditional parents will think the higher degree, the higher score their children get, the better. But now more and more parents think that the quality of their children's life is most important; their score is not so important. So I think the environment is changing now. "*
>
> Huang Zhong, male master's student

One effect of this social change was the confidence to challenge parents, resisting traditional values such as the pursuit of harmony (and avoiding confrontation) within social groups (Hsu & Huang, 2015), respect for tradition and deference to authority (Fan, 2000):

> *"The nineties generation are more creative, they are more brave to accept new, fresh information. And they are more open-minded. They no longer imprisoned by traditional concepts and mind-sets. We are more concerned about the real life we are living. So if we are happy with this lifestyle, we will try to argue with our parents."*
>
> Xifeng, female PhD student

Thus, in contrast to the pragmatic, stability-focussed, family-orientated traditional way of thinking (Fan, 2000; Zhang *et al.*, 2006), the modern way of thinking instead emphasises one's own well-being, pursuing one's own dreams, having an open mind, not adhering to social hierarchies and having a measure of independence from one's parents (Hsu & Huang, 2015; Ye & Edwards, 2015). However, it does not follow that Confucian values are no longer adhered to as Chinese society "modernises" (Faure & Fang, 2008; C. L. Wang & Lin, 2009; Zhang *et al.*, 2006). Firstly, as described in the previous section, there are many students that are still heavily influenced by traditional values. Secondly, while some people like Xifeng (the female PhD student quoted above) talk favourably about "no longer being imprisoned by traditional concepts", they also raise concerns about how the new modern values are replacing the old, traditional values:

> *"I think the younger generation are more and more independent… Those who come after me care very much about their own feelings. Because when I make friends with other people, I care more about their feelings. Sometimes I will sacrifice my own feelings to care about their feelings. But in the later generation, it seems that they could be described as more selfish... They have this viewpoint to care for their own feelings more than they care for the feelings of others…. Even though* [parents] *invest a lot of money and energy to raise their children, they* [the younger generation] *will leave them for their work in other places; parents cannot really rely on them when they have some problems."*
>
> Xifeng, female PhD student

Thus, there is evidence that these newer values are not wholly embraced by all, and are also seen as imperfect (C. L. Wang & Lin, 2009). Thirdly, to be influenced and motivated by the new, modern values such as self-fulfilment and independence does not prevent one from also being influenced by old, traditional values such as filial piety:

> *"Maybe my biggest motivations to come to the UK is self-satisfaction. Actually, my family is also very important for me. So this is one of the reasons I just go abroad for just one year... I don't want to* [stay abroad for more than two or three years] *because… I want to stay with my family, and develop my career in my hometown. If I have a very great career, I can earn money and I can offer better things for my family. So this is the big thing."*
>
> Xiangyun, female master's student

> *"But for me, as a local person from Beijing, I don't need to think about that* [making money to live]*, I just need to think about making money to travel, how to make money to have experience, but for other people, they need to make money* [to live]*. Maybe it is related with traditional Chinese culture. They need to make money to support their parents. Our parents get older and older, and so we need to support them. And we also need to raise our children. In China, the government don't give money to us, so we need money. Maybe European country have a good system for that and people don't need to think about that, but in China there are too many people."*
>
> Sheyue, female master's student

Nonetheless, despite these complications, there were common traditional aspects of Chinese culture that were resisted by several students, who overall appeared to have a mostly individualistic mind-set. One Confucian value that some of my interviewees resisted was, instead of showing deference and submission to parental instructions, demonstrated a willingness to contest and to enter debate with their parents, as illustrated by Qiaojie, a female undergraduate student:

> *"Yes, first they didn't agree with my decision to study in the UK, as they think it is dangerous, and I will be too far from them; I can just come back to home once in a year. But I just insisted on my decision, because I really don't want to go to the university in China, it is really bad and it is my life, and I don't like that university, so firstly they didn't agree, but after my insistence they compromised."*

In addition to resisting parental instructions, a willingness to risk direct conflict with their parents and to resist the pressure to conform to societal expectations (such as working in a well-paid and well-respected but non-fulfilling career, as was illustrated by a PhD student in my study who turned down a government position in order to pursue her PhD in the UK), also displays resistance of the traditional values of social harmony and conformity (Fan, 2000; Hsu & Huang, 2015). Thus, students who resisted values such as deference to authority, conformity and social harmony were likely to be classified as individualistically-orientated students.

5.2.1.2 Pursuing modern or individualistic Chinese values

As well as questioning or intentionally resisting traditional values, many of these less traditionally-orientated students indicated they were pursuing what Hsu and Huang (2015,

p231) refer to as “modern” Chinese values, one of the most common examples in my study being the value of liberation, or “having the freedom of being independent and true to oneself” (Hsu & Huang, 2015, p236). Some of the students I interviewed explicitly expressed a desire to be different from others or to follow their own dreams and ambitions, thus distinguishing them from their traditionally-orientated peers.

> *“I don't want to live like everyone else. I want to have something different. And I think after this experience of studying in the UK, I will change my identity and change my outlook to see the world. Getting a master's degree is also important, but to change my inner ability is more important.”*
>
> Xichun, female master’s student

> *“I do not want to struggle because of others' opinions. So in my opinion, I think my independence is the most important thing. Younger people will focus on themselves more, instead of focussing on others' opinions and judgements of them.”*
>
> Xiren, female master’s student

A number of these less traditionally-orientated students appeared to value the relative independence of their lives in the UK. Some of these students felt similar pressures to their more traditional peers, but intentionally choose to resist those pressures. For these students, the freedom from pressure was often one of their motivations for coming to the UK to study.

> *“You can be more free here. Because in China, in university, some teachers are very restrictive, and you don't have your own time.”*
>
> Qiaojie, female undergraduate student

> *“But for people born after 1990, most of them are the only child, so they are more likely to do something they want to do, rather than be pushed to do something. They want to do the things they like… And most of them want to travel, or have their own business.”*
>
> Miaoyu, female undergraduate student

For other students however, their parents were more laid back and just wanted their child to be happy, which led to these students enjoying independence without having to face the pressure their peers encountered.

> *“My parents are ok; they just hope I can have myself, my opinion, my experience my life.”*

Sheyue, female master's student

Sometimes, this lack of pressure was linked to a privileged status from having richer parents setting them free from the financial pressures that their less wealthy counterparts faced.

"My parents do not need me to support them. At least now, because I have a scholarship, I can support myself. And my parents live happily because they can support themselves through their salaries and their pensions. So I do not have that type of kind of pressure, and I am not in a panic to finish my PhD and go back to China."

Zhuge, male PhD student

It is also interesting to note that there appeared to be a small subset of individualistically-oriented Chinese students whose parents were apparently extremely wealthy, who had the tendency to avoid studying, and focussed on spending their time in the UK having fun instead. This group were not identified through my analysis of the characteristics of those I interviewed (as far as I am aware, there were no students from this subset in my study, although this may have been due to the difficulty in detecting such students, who would be potentially unwilling to confess such behaviours for fear of losing face), but only through the comments of the students I interviewed. This group of students were universally despised by the interviewees who informed me of this phenomenon.

"Some students just waste their time, playing games."

Li Wan, female master's student

"There are also some friends around me who just don't want to use this year to study, they just want to travel around Europe. They want to escape from work or from the pressure to marry, because they don't want to find their husband yet. They just want to enjoy themselves. Maybe their family is [expletive] *rich."*

Keqing, female master's student

One of the reasons this subgroup of rich students were despised was because they used their money to avoid having to study hard.

"But some of my friends, they pay money to buy the services of someone to write the essay for them. And they never go to class, they just go to the UK to go shopping and to travel. I think the University should take these students more seriously. I think this is unfair for other students. Because maybe they have a great score, but

> *even though you have worked really hard yourself, you still get a lower mark, so it is really unfair! These students are mostly from very wealthy families with a lot of money. Because a 3,000 word essay costs them £300, but for them it is just nothing."*
>
> Yuhuan, female master's student

The existence of these students could not be confirmed directly, but only through the reports of other students. Nonetheless, I have included them in the individualistically-orientated group as they are seen to reject the traditional Chinese value of thrift (Fan, 2000; C. L. Wang & Lin, 2009) and instead value "modern" Chinese values of grasping the latest trends, indulgence and leisure (Hsu & Huang, 2015). Further, these students are not limited or influenced by traditional pressures due to their wealth. This is similar to a couple of the students in my study who were also free from these pressures (and therefore may have been part of this subset, even if they did not self-identify as such).

Another value often pursued primarily by these individualistically-orientated students was the value of self-cultivation (Fan, 2000; Hsu & Huang, 2015). Eight students I interviewed told me about their desire to improve themselves or become a better or more developed person during their time in the UK, six of whom I have classified as individualistically-orientated. This value is explored at greater depth in the seventh chapter, as it relates to the Chinese concept of *suzhi*.

5.2.2 Experience-focussed motivations

As well as having differing values, individualistically-orientated students also tend to differ from their traditionally-oriented peers in their primary motivation for coming to the UK. In contrast to the many studies highlighting the motivations of job-focussed Chinese students, relatively few studies consider the desire for cultural experience and self-realisation as a serious primary motivation for Chinese students to come to the UK, although exceptions exist (Cebolla-boado *et al.*, 2018; Hansen & Thøgersen, 2015; Martin, 2017). However, for a third (nine out of 27) of the students in my study, this motivation seemed to be the main factor driving them to study in the UK. As a couple of PhD students observed, Chinese students (particularly at master's level) often pursued cultural experience and leisure for its own sake, before going back to "normal Chinese life".

"I think it [studying abroad] *is really a good experience if you can have the one year overseas studying and living experience before you start doing any formal jobs in China. I think to these master's students, a master's degree is like a gap year, because you just escape from all the pressure from your family, your job and your friends in China, and you take a very different way of life here. So there are different types of student that come here."*

Yuanchuan, a female PhD student

"I think they [Chinese master's students] *don't have the pressure to earn money, and as they have come from their undergraduate they are still quite young. So it is like the gap years of UK for European students; you want to go abroad and experience differences. You have holiday workers in Australia, so I think this is the Chinese equivalent. And girls do not have the pressure to earn money compared with guys. If you have just graduated, you are just 22, and if you have enough money, then why not have this experience?"*

Da Qiao, a female PhD student

Da Qiao's hypothesis, that the relative lack of pressure for female workers to earn money compared with their male counterparts enables women greater ease to study abroad, is supported by this study: the most popular primary motivations for female students in my study are these experience related motivations, and eight of the nine students in my study I identified as primarily experience-focussed were female. The idea of female Chinese students seeking freedom, cultural experience and self-development is affirmed in other research (Martin, 2017). It is also expressed by other students in my study, including the only male student to be identified as primarily experience-focussed.

"Girls like travel. I think that is the main reason most of the Chinese students are girls. And they think that when they are young they should travel to many countries, and get more experience. Girls like playing, they like beautiful things, beautiful views."

Huang Zhong, a male master's student

"At first I think that for girls the most important thing is to get a good job so you can have a good life. But after one year in here, I think that life is short, and so you should spend more time to enjoy your life yourself instead of focussing on your work,

those kind of things. So this is a really important change in my life. So the most important thing, I now think, is to enjoy your life."

Xiren, a female master's student

In contrast to the job-focussed students in this study (who often had few non-Chinese friends), one common component of experienced-related students was how they were influenced by cosmopolitan factors such as the desire to learn about other cultures and unfamiliar ways of thinking, emphasising the importance of tolerance for others in Chinese culture (Fan, 2000).

"Going to the UK helps me tolerate other cultures and other ways of thinking. I can cultivate my thinking, and become more independent."

Li Wan, a female master's student

"I think that by going to travel around UK I can know how British people live, and, maybe in China, there are very many different opinions about the UK, so I think I can learn this myself."

Keqing, a female master's student

This desire to learn about different cultures and religions was often a motivation to make friends with non-Chinese students.

"I am also interested in making friends with foreigners to learn about cultures, and learn about different religions."

Qinzhong, a male undergraduate student

In addition to a cosmopolitan orientation, the desire to travel around the UK and Europe was also very common for these experience-focussed students. While this has been noted by other studies of international students and specifically of Chinese international students (R. Huang, 2008; Y. Wang *et al.*, 2012), this study differs by arguing that exploring and travel is one of the *primary factors* that encourages a *subset* of experience-focussed students to come to the UK for their studies, rather than merely one of many motivations of Chinese students in general.

"I think the world is very large, so I want to go travelling and learn about local peoples and cultures. This is very useful and meaningful."

Tanchun, a female master's student

"I want to travel and try food all over the world. I have found UK has more other countries' restaurants food than China. In China I just have Chinese food."

Qiaojie, a female undergraduate student

As with Martin's (2010) study of female Chinese students in Australia, the desire for freedom from pressures in Chinese society was a common theme underlying the motivations to come to the UK for experience. This applied to both working pressure and parental pressure.

"I grew up in Beijing, studied in Beijing, worked in Beijing. So I want to go to a new place to learn more new things and maybe expand my experience, because I think that if people always stay in one place, they know little about the world. In my previous working experience [working in a bank], *I had little time to travel around. So actually this one year study, I very appreciate it, as I can focus on myself to learn something I want to learn, and the most important is that I can relax myself. This year I will use my eyes to view many new places that I have never been before. So I think travelling is very important thing for me. This is another reason why I think the UK is better than Australia or Canada, the UK is a country full of culture, like China."*

Xiangyun, a female master's student

"The world is so big. You don't just feel one place, you have to go everywhere to have different experiences and try to face different challenges. For example, I have never gone skiing before. And when I go to Switzerland, I go skiing, and think, "Wow! This is so cool!" Because maybe in China, your parents tell you, "Don't do that, because it is a little dangerous. Maybe you will fall off or get hurt!" But when I come here, I want to try many sports I didn't have the opportunity to do before."

Zijuan, a female master's student

In summary, in contrast to Li's (2013) study of Chinese master's students at a UK university, the experience-focussed students in my study appeared to seek experiences and skills not to enhance their employability, as Li argued, but rather for the sake of adventure and to explore unfamiliar cultures. As with some of the students from Cebolla-Baodo *et al.*'s (2018) study on Chinese students in the UK, the motivations of this group of Chinese students could be summarised by the popular Chinese phrase "世界那么大 我想去看看": literally "the world is so big, I want to go and take a look". While not all experience-focussed

students are individualistically-orientated, six out of the nine experience-focussed students in my study were ultimately classified as individualistically-orientated, and in particular the students that valued independence and self-improvement were likely to also express that their most important aspiration during their time in the UK was to gain new experiences or to travel. Overall, the contrast that has emerged in the interviews between experience-focussed and job-focussed students highlights the importance of a nuanced approach to considering student motivations that does not conflate all students to a single group. Further, the pattern of traditionally-orientated tending to be job-focussed while individualistically-orientated students tend to be experience-focussed makes the need to adopt a nuanced approach particularly salient.

5.2.3 Summary of individualistically-orientated students

In conclusion, a significant proportion of the students in my study were distinct from their more traditionally-orientated peers. As these students tended to be less affected by or more resistant to the pressures that arose from the group-orientated dynamics (intimate, interdependent families or communities) their peers faced, I classified them as individualistically-orientated. This group, as has been observed by studies of Chinese culture from other fields (Cai *et al.*, 2012; Hsu & Huang, 2015), are characterised by their desire for independence, their determination to challenge parental or societal expectations, their pursuit of freedom to do what they want to do and their pursuit of self-improvement. I classified 11 students (all of whom studied at undergraduate or master's level) from the 27 in my study into this group, ten of whom were female and only one of whom male, thus potentially suggesting non-PhD female students appear to be more likely to be individualistic-orientated than their non-PhD male peers (although a quantitative study would be needed to assess this hypothesis). In contrast to their traditionally-orientated peers, individualistically-orientated students were more likely to come from wealthier regions of China like the global cities of Beijing and Shanghai, or the wealthy province of Zhejiang (Cai *et al.*, 2012). This corresponds to the expectations of many students in my study, who told me that parents in areas where they can easily acquire wealth and education, compared with parents in less developed regions, were more likely to let their child do what they like. Further, these students also appeared to differ in their primary motivations of why they came to the UK. Instead of seeking better job prospects, these students are more likely to enrol in UK universities in order to gain the experience of living and travelling in a foreign environment.

5.3 Academic-orientated students

Most (21 out of 27) of the students in my study were classified as either traditionally-orientated or individualistically-orientated. However, the remaining six students (all of whom were PhD students) neither held solely traditional values at the expense of modern values or vice versa. Moreover, these students' decision to come to the UK was neither primarily about getting a better job nor about learning about foreign cultures through travel and intercultural friendships. Instead, these students' primarily purpose seemed to be to study and gain knowledge. As with the experience-focussed students, these students have tended to be overlooked in the literature, with occasional exceptions such as Hansen and Thøgersen (2015). These students are passionate about their subject, and the main reason they want to come to the UK is to further their knowledge. What sets these students apart is that, for them, higher education is not so much a means to an end as it is an object of desire itself (Hansen & Thøgersen, 2015).

> *"I would much rather do something that I enjoy than something that will get me more money."*
>
> Zhuge, a male PhD student

These knowledge-focussed students were characterised by the desire not primarily to get a degree or even a good grade, but instead to acquire knowledge.

> *"For me, I work harder on my assignments* [than some of my course mates] *because I really want to improve myself, and I want to make contributions in that field. I don't know if I will be a teacher, or after a few years apply for a PhD for further study. I want to learn things, I don't just want to get a degree."*
>
> Xichun, a female master's student

For these students, obtaining a deeper knowledge was the driving force behind their desire to study abroad.

> *"I am interested in data visualisation things. Because using equations and theories and you can write computer programs and code, you can simulate very complex things, and you can see real stuff even on your computer! This is amazing! So this is the real reason why I want to do this PhD. When I study more, I find more interesting physics behind it, and I try to use my result to explain and supplement*

the experiment measurements, to let people know more things than before. This is my passion."

Liu Bei, a male PhD student

For some students, their knowledge-related motivations led them to choose to study in the UK because they believed they could learn more in the UK.

"I think the teachers in the UK are very professional and… are more focussed on the academic side of things… The reason we choose to study abroad is because in China the educational system is bad. You can really study something in the UK."

Yuhuan, a female master's student

These knowledge-focused students appear as likely to come from a traditionally-orientated background as an individualistically-orientated background. Unlike the first two groups (one consisting of mostly non-PhD male students who were often job-focused and the other consisting mostly of non-PhD female students who were often experience-focussed), there was no clear pattern regarding gender, but there was according to level of study. Unsurprisingly, both the majority of PhD students appeared to be knowledge-focussed, and the majority of knowledge-focussed students were currently studying their PhD. Given that the six students I found hard to classify as either traditionally-orientated or individualistically-orientated were generally these knowledge-focussed students, I therefore clustered them as academically-orientated students to complete my typological framework.

5.4 Conclusion

Having identified the most prominent differences between students in my data, I conclude that a typology is a helpful means of understanding and conceptualising the inherent heterogeneity among Chinese students. I propose three main types of Chinese students: traditionalists, individualists and academics, as described in this chapter. Although not all students in my sample perfectly fit into one and only one of these categories, this typology is relatively clear and straightforward, and most Chinese students in my sample could quickly be identified as primarily belonging to one of these three types. The advantage of this typology is that it provides a framework for understanding some very important differences among Chinese international students. Therefore, not only it is used in subsequent analyses in this thesis, but also I argue that it would be a helpful framework for future studies that focus on

Chinese international students. Indeed, my typology helps explicitly conceptualise the lack of homogeneity evident in existing studies of Chinese students, such as Bamber (2014) and Xiang and Shen (2009).

A criticism of this typology could be that it is stereotyping and labelling students, thus preventing students from being considered as individuals (Ye & Edwards, 2015). However, while these types are imperfect since not all students fit perfectly into one and only one of these types, they serve to convey and make sense of the variation that no doubt commonly emerges when studying Chinese students, but which is nevertheless not explicitly articulated and explored in detail in academic research. Utilising this typology prevents either the extreme of, on one hand, treating Chinese students as a homogeneous block when analysing the data; and on the other hand, of refusing to draw out meaningful patterns in the data in fear of generalising, stereotyping or labelling a diverse group of complex and unique individuals.

This chapter and the typology this chapter presents therefore addresses the second research question by answering the two connected sub-questions. Firstly, the diversity within the Chinese international student population is demonstrated through the observation that the motivations of Chinese students do vary by level and gender, with male students (particularly at undergraduate and master's level) often having job-focussed aspirations and female students (particularly at undergraduate and master's level) often have experience-focussed aspirations. Incidentally, this may help to shed lights on the finding from the previous chapter that the rise in Chinese international students in the UK is largely the result of an increase in female master's students: it highlights the importance of factors such as broadening horizons to this subset of Chinese international students. Meanwhile, PhD students (regardless of gender) often appear to have knowledge-focussed aspirations. Secondly, the diversity is demonstrated through the differences in values within the Chinese international student population, with some (including many who are motivated by job-focussed aspirations) influenced mostly by traditional values while others (including many of those who are motivated by experience-focussed aspirations) influenced more by modern or individualistic values.

Now that this typology has been established, certain key concepts that are relevant for understanding the motivations and experiences of Chinese students in the UK can be investigated in more detail. The following three chapters look at the concepts of face, *suzhi*

and *guanxi* in turn, describing the key findings emerging from the data relating to each concept and emphasising how these concepts further our understanding of the motivations of Chinese students beyond the understanding provided by existing frameworks, such as Bourdieu's capital.

Chapter 6 Face

"As a tree needs bark, so a man needs face [人要面树要皮]"

Chinese proverb

While face is a universal concern (Qi, 2011), it is particularly prominent in Chinese culture (Faure & Fang, 2008). Protecting, giving and preventing the loss of face is listed as a core Chinese cultural value (Fan, 2000), and the management of face is a common strategy among Chinese nationals in an intercultural context (J. Wang & Spencer-Oatey, 2015). Further, face is of key importance due to its prevalence in Chinese society (Y. Wang *et al.*, 2012) and is a goal within social interaction (Qi, 2017). The pursuit of acquiring face as a strategy to build up social status has been observed at both a national level (Faure & Fang, 2008; Zweig, 2006) as well as an individual level (Qi, 2011; C. L. Wang & Lin, 2009; J. Wang & Spencer-Oatey, 2015). Nonetheless, the impact of face on the motivations and experiences of Chinese international students has been overlooked in the literature on Chinese international student mobility.

Despite the lack of focus of the impact of face on Chinese international students in the literature, my study revealed how face shapes both the motivations and experiences of Chinese international students in the UK. All 27 interviewees either mentioned face directly, or indirectly acknowledged the role of face in their own lives or in Chinese society generally. Included in my sample were five respondents (all of whom were classified as individualists) who claimed that face was of little importance in their own life or in their decision to come to the UK to study, but even some of these students appeared to be influenced by face to a certain extent. This chapter will explore the many ways face affects Chinese students, both directly (though intentional strategies of accumulating face) and indirectly (through various types of pressure regulated by face). This will enable me to answer the third research question (how to best conceptualise motivations and experiences of Chinese students in the UK) by establishing the importance of incorporating face into a theoretical framework of Chinese international student mobility. In the first section of this chapter, I argue that there exist substantial differences between Chinese and Western perspectives on face in both depth (the importance of face) and breadth (the scope of society affected by face). In the next section, I argue that face is important for understanding the motivations of Chinese students by considering how face underlies three motivations for Chinese students, which

adds to the findings of previous studies that have not considered face. The following section examines how face indirectly shapes the experiences of some Chinese students in the UK through regulating various types of pressure experienced by students. Throughout this chapter, building on the diversity of Chinese students explored in the previous two chapters, I consider how face affects some students more than others. I conclude the chapter by arguing that face plays a vital role within the motivations and experiences of Chinese students and needs to be considered in research regarding Chinese students.

6.1 The breadth and depth of face in Chinese society

Face is common in all cultures, as it is a universal concept (Qi, 2017). As one participant commented:

"I think everyone experiences face, not just in China, but also foreigners."

Xiren, a female master's student.

Therefore, it would be a mistake to see face as unique to Chinese or East Asian people. For example, one way in which face affects both Chinese and Western people is in the aspect of social interactions: social interactions are governed by unwritten rules, which, if broken, result in the loss of face. This is the aspect of face discussed most in Western literature (M. C. Yu, 2003; Zhu, 2003). While both Western and Chinese scholars agree that face can be lost, saved and given, research on face from a Western perspective focusses on saving face, particularly related to the context of politeness (J. Wang & Spencer-Oatey, 2015). However, face affects politeness differently in Chinese society compared with Western society. While Brown and Levinson (1987) describe an individualistic perspective of one seeking to enhance their own face through using polite actions and speech, to be polite in the Chinese sense is to be aware of and mutually enhance each other's face (M. C. Yu, 2003). This perhaps sheds light on why Chinese people can be very courteous and amiable when with acquaintances and strangers:

"Chinese people can be very direct with those close to them, but also indirect; they can rarely say "no", and are introvert, as they don't want to lose face."

Xifeng, a female PhD student

"I think I worry about face, and worry about causing trouble for others."

Zijuan, a female master's student

Therefore, as in a Western context, many Chinese students are also courteous, polite and considerate to others partly due to a desire to avoid the loss of face. However, even in this aspect, the effects of face are amplified in Chinese culture. Qi (2017) argues that in connected societies like Chinese society, one's face is dependent on the behaviour of those one is socially connected with, and therefore Chinese overseas students feel a responsibility to behave in a considerate and socially acceptable manner not only out of consideration of their own face (the focus of Goffman's (1972) discourse of face as one's self-image), but also out of consideration to the collective Chinese student body (one common expression from the overseas students Qi (2017) interviewed was "I cannot lose Chinese people's face" (p11)). Thus, unlike the politeness-focussed Western concept of face, the concept of face in Chinese culture is broader, more interpersonal and consequently much more prevalent and important in Chinese society.

As well as the breath of issues affected by face in Chinese society, the desire to gain face is so fundamental that it is often the explicit objective of social relations, thus further distinguishing it from the Western concept of face (Qi, 2011). In other words, in Chinese culture, face is of primary concern in social interactions rather than a side issue. This is illustrated by Wang and Spencer-Oatey's study (2015), which found that face enhancement was one of the primary goals of a three-week intercultural visit by a delegation of Chinese government officials to the US. Similarly, my study highlights evidence that face (or *mianzi* in Chinese, as the participants in my study often referred to it) can be part of the motivation for those partaking in Chinese international student mobility.

> *"Parents think that if they send a child to the UK, they will have mianzi."*
>
> Yuhuan, a female master's student

> *"If you want to get a higher education, and become richer, then people will respect you…. They are all about mianzi. Good house, good children, and a good job are all about mianzi, about how other people think about you. So if you want to get that, you must work hard for that."*
>
> Huang Zhong, a male master's student

One participant explained how having a child studying in the UK enables Chinese parents to gain face through appearing to have a successful child, which in turn is seen as a reflection of their performance as parents:

> *"Mianzi; this is really important for most of Chinese. Many parents care about their children, and they do a lot of things just for their children. So if their children is good enough is really related to their mianzi."*
>
> Miaoyu, a female undergraduate student

Hence, it was no surprise that a number of my participants expressed how their parents gained face through them studying in the UK, particularly if it was unusual for someone in their family to get the opportunity go abroad. This was particularly the case for students that came from less developed regions or were not from wealthy families, such as Da Qiao, a female PhD student:

> *"My parents are very proud of me. I am from the village, so not many people have the opportunity to go abroad, only one or two of those from richer families. So my parents are really proud of me."*

However, it would not be accurate to state that gaining face was the main objective of most Chinese students studying in the UK. As one of my participants explained:

> *"I think maybe just a few people* [study in the UK solely to acquire face]*. Studying abroad is a thing that gives more face. But I think just a few people come to the UK because they have this idea. Because I think, for myself, there are other reasons that are more important than just face. For example, for the future career, for some personal improvement, and for more education. So lots of reasons push people to come abroad for study, not just face. Coming to UK to study abroad costs a lot of money, so not many people come just for mianzi. I think it is a very small reason for some to study abroad. But I think it is not the majority reason."*
>
> Xiangyun, an individualist female master's student

Nevertheless, the interview data illustrates both the scope with which face affects Chinese society as well as the importance of face to Chinese society. This evidence is consistent with the differences between Western and Chinese perspectives on face, discussed by Qi (2017) and Yu (2003), and observed here in an empirical context related to international student mobility. Further, while face might not often be the sole goal for coming to the UK, it is nonetheless a direct aspiration for many, particularly for traditionalist students: it is revealing that all the students for whom gaining face was part of their motivation for studying in the UK were those clustered as traditionally-orientated. Moreover, face underlies some of the

motivations and experiences of these traditionally-orientated Chinese students in multiple ways, as is shown in the next two sections.

6.2 Motivations of Chinese students that are shaped by face

Having a child studying in abroad can be an important source of face in and of itself (Qi, 2017). Furthermore, this desire to acquire face can shed light on two common motivations of Chinese international students in the Chinese international student mobility literature: the pull factor of the reputation of an HE institution (or country) and the push factor of failing to get into an elite Chinese university. A third motivation of acquiring a better *hukou* (that is, a better household registration certificate) is also indirectly related to gaining face.

6.2.1 Reputable HE destinations give face

It has been widely observed that more reputable HE institutions attract more Chinese students (Bamber, 2014; Bodycott & Lai, 2012; Cebolla-boado *et al.*, 2018; Fang & Wang, 2014; M. Li & Bray, 2007; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; Mcleay & Wesson, 2014). However, it is less widely noted that the desire to be associated with the world's most famous and prestigious institutions often appears to be an end in itself, instead of merely the means to achieve some other end (Cebolla-boado *et al.*, 2018). Yet, for some of students in my study, the relatively high rank of their chosen universities in the UK was directly linked with a direct goal to obtain face, rather than primarily with employability prospects. This is particularly striking in Xiao Qiao's (a female master's student) case, whose preference (without consideration of face) would have been a less highly ranked university:

> *"Mianzi is also very important. If I didn't care about mianzi, I wouldn't choose such a highly ranked university, I would choose study in another university as I don't want to choose a high ranking university. So mianzi is very important."*
>
> Xiao Qiao, a female master's student

This desire to acquire face through having a child at a reputable, highly ranked university was particularly important for some of the parents of the students in my study.

> *"For my parents, they just care about the ranking. My father even doesn't care about the subject that I study, he only cares about ranking. For example, some universities are good at certain subjects. But my parents don't care about that, just*

the overall ranking, not the subject specific ranking. It depends on whether the university is well known or not. So reputation is a big part of this."

Liu Bei, a male PhD student

"Most Chinese parents think that higher ranked universities are better. They will concentrate in the rank. They feel they get more mianzi if their child goes there."

Xiao Qiao, a female master's student

Thus, the ranking, and in particular whether the university is well known, were taken into consideration by parents and students, not only for the sake of employability, but in some cases primarily because of the face that the family would gain by having a child in what was perceived as a famous global university. However, it was not just the reputation of the institution that was considered in this decision, but also the reputation of the whole country as a global education provider.

"I think face is a very big factor for all Chinese people, and it is a very big reason why Chinese students pick the UK… So it is very good mianzi if you get a degree from the UK."

Liu Bei, a male PhD student

"I think the key question between many Chinese parents in choosing university in the US rather than the UK is about mianzi... If we regard the mianzi as a variable, you will notice that mianzi in American has the highest level, and has a similar level to the UK… And then maybe Australia and Canada. And I think other countries are not considered in the same category, as they are not English speaking countries, and there are not as many students going to other countries like France or Germany."

Guan Yu, a male master's student

Therefore, the findings of other studies such as Bamber (2014), Bodycott and Lai (2012), Li and Bray (2007) and McLeay and Wesson (2014) can be enhanced through the link with reputation and face. The importance of face in Chinese culture sheds light on why the motivations of attending universities of a high ranking and a good reputation is so widespread among Chinese students, and could be a reason why Russell Group universities are so popular among Chinese students, as was found in the analysis of aggregate data reported in the fourth chapter.

6.2.2 The UK as a "Plan B" strategy to regain face

Another reason why students chose to come to the UK was due to failing to get into a top-tier Chinese university, and subsequently going abroad was considered more advantageous for employability prospects than attending a second-tier Chinese university (Cebolla-boado *et al.*, 2018; Tsang, 2013; Wu, 2014; Xiang & Shen, 2009). However, my study showed that explaining this merely as a strategy to increase employability is not the whole picture: studying abroad can also be a strategy to regain the face for those who could not obtain a place at a top-tier university.

> *"The reason* [I came to the UK to study] *is complex because I did not have a very good mark in the gaokao; I failed it; it is not too bad, but I can't go to the university that like. So I wanted to change my life; not continue to always be in China. I want to have experience of being in the UK or other countries. So I chose the 2+2 mode of study* [2 years in the UK and then 2 years in a foreign country]. *So I chose this mode, and come here to study. Because when I failed the gaokao, I just want to, in my heart, I don't accept this result, so I want to prove that I am not a loser; I can do better. So I come to the UK to get the chance to continue to study and work hard."*
>
> Zijuan, a female master's student

If a student cannot study at their desired elite Chinese university as their *gaokao* (the Chinese National Entrance Examination) score is not high enough, they may feel shame and disgrace for failing to meet the entry requirements, which can be taken as evidence they did not work hard enough, as in Zijuan's case. Zijuan's description of not getting a sufficiently high score in the *gaokao* to get into her preferred Chinese university as "failing the exam" is particularly revealing. In this situation (assuming one's parents can afford to do so), the opportunity of studying abroad can go some way to recover some of the face that was lost.

6.2.3 Achieve internal migration to gain face

A third reason ultimately linked with the objective of gaining face behind the decision to study in the UK was connected with gaining a better *hukou*. In Chinese governance, to limit internal migration, every citizen has their place of residence (their *hukou*) recorded (Tsang, 2013). If one has a *hukou* in a big city such as Beijing, Shanghai or Guangzhou, then they will have more opportunities, for the best schools and universities are considered to be these big

cities, and so gaining a Beijing, Shanghai or Guangzhou *hukou* will give one's children a better chance of getting into the elite schools and universities.

> *"Most of the poor families will live in countryside, and the schools in the countryside will be a bit worse than the schools in the city. So it is very hard for them to get into the top universities. Most of the people think that if a family have a hukou in Beijing, it will be much easier for their families to go to university in Beijing. Some parents even will try to change their hukou to Beijing or Shanghai, just to get a better university for their children."*
>
> Qinzhong, a male undergraduate student

> *"In some cities, like Guangzhou, only the students who have graduated from a foreign university* [that] *has a ranking of at least 150 or 200 can get you a hukou and a job in that city."*
>
> Cao Cao, a male master's student

Therefore, it has been observed in both this study and the literature that one motivation for studying abroad is to get a job in a city like Beijing or Shanghai, which can increase the chances of gaining a *hukou* in that city (Bodycott & Lai, 2012; Cebolla-boado & Nuho, 2018; Martin, 2017; Tsang, 2013). However, one additional finding of my study is that this desire for a *hukou* in one of the big Chinese cities is not merely to increase employability, but is also a goal for gaining face, as one participant explains:

> *"If you have a Beijing hukou, you will have "invisible wings"* [the ability for greater social mobility]*, and all the things are the best. Hukou is not just a registration of your citizenship, it is something very honourable. If you have a Beijing hukou or a Shanghai hukou, it is an honour!"*
>
> Zhou Yu, a male master's student

Therefore, for traditionalist Chinese families, one motivation for studying abroad is to gain face. This desire to gain face can be working in the background behind other motivations, but it can also be an outright objective in itself. This focus of face as a primary objective is consistent with other evidence about how Chinese perspectives on face differ from Western perspectives (Qi, 2011; J. Wang & Spencer-Oatey, 2015). Overall, the interview data provide strong evidence that face both directly and indirectly influences the motivations of some Chinese students to study in the UK. However, face is also intertwined with many other

Chinese concepts that affect the everyday experiences of Chinese students in the UK. The following section reveals how face shapes the daily lives of Chinese international students.

6.3 Types of pressure regulated by face affecting Chinese student experiences

As was explained in detail in the second chapter, the intimacy and interconnectedness within Chinese society enables face to flourish. Central to the concept of face is that one cannot directly give face to oneself, but rather one's accumulation of face is dependent on how one is seen by others (Qi, 2011). Thus, when there are many intimate connections within a society, it is easier for one to gain face (amongst other things such as support), as one's successes are well known. Conversely, the interconnected structure of Chinese society also means that it is also easier to lose face. This is explored in this section through looking at how face (specifically, the desire to avoid the loss of face) plays a vital role in the lives of Chinese international students.

6.3.1 Face and the pressure to conform

The structure of Chinese culture enables face to regulate social behaviour to a greater extent than some other societies, such as Western society (Qi, 2011). Due to the closeness of families within the tightly connected Chinese culture, the shame associated with the risk of losing face combined with the Chinese value of filial piety gives pressure to behave in certain ways for many Chinese students, as Diaochan, a female PhD student illustrates:

> *"In our society, everyone is supposed to get married, everyone is supposed to have a family. So if one refuses to get married or family, then everyone around her and her family will gossip about her and her parents. But even if her parents do support her, it still will be difficult for her. If she wants to make this kind of decision, she will not feel shame, but the big problem is that her parents will. Because most parents live with other people's comments, suggestions and criticisms, and parents really care what people around them think and say about themselves, and what they say about their families. So it is their parents who will feel the most shame and disgrace."*

Thus, through the fear of losing face when one does not conform to social standards, face maintains the Confucian ideal of social harmony (Qi, 2011), a key Chinese value (Fan, 2000; Hsu & Huang, 2015). The desire to save face is therefore a mechanism that serves to promote social harmony in Chinese society (Qi, 2013). As unity is prioritised over diversity, if someone resists the prevailing cultural norms and acts differently to everyone else, then the cost of disturbing the harmony is shame and disgrace. Those that are connected with them (particularly their family) will also share in that shame, which for many is unthinkable due to the value of filial piety. Therefore, there is pressure to conform and maintain behaviours that will preserve social harmony and stability, even when individuals wish otherwise.

> *"In your culture, you will encourage people to speak about what they want and what they don't want, and you will encourage people to be unique and to be different from others. But in Chinese culture, our idea is to keep uniform, to be the same as everyone else. We are discouraged from being unique, and instead told to be in the middle, to be average. The one who stands out, the one who speaks out for others, will be killed, like that kind of idea. So most people won't speak out, they will just say yes to what most people say and do."*
>
> Diaochan, a female PhD student

To illustrate this point within an international student mobility context, Qingwen (a female master's student) shared with me how she felt when, during a group assignment in her UK university, one of the members in her group was perceived to be lazy and did not contribute to her group's project:

> *"Chinese students feel it is very difficult to go to a professor to complain about unfair practice. Some of them will think that if you didn't do a thing on time, you will make the whole group suffer, which is wrong. But we won't complain about these unfair things, however. If there are things not right, we will choose to accept it in our work or our studies. We not only feel embarrassed to complain, but also feel we will break the relationship and break the harmony of the group. We can't do that!"*
>
> Qingwen, a female master's student

Therefore, the fear of losing face is one of the mechanisms which serve to maintain social harmony and stability in Chinese society, even at the cost of individual sacrifice and unhappiness (Qi, 2011). This can affect Chinese students in the UK in several ways, such as

preventing them from speaking out when they encounter problems. This can be serious, as it can make them feel more vulnerable and helpless where they are already far from home and without their usual support networks (Bamber, 2014; Gu, 2009; Henze & Zhu, 2012; Hotta & Ting-Toomey, 2013; Lillyman & Bennett, 2014; Schartner, 2015; Spencer-Oatey *et al.*, 2017; Y. Yu & Moskal, 2018).

6.3.2 Face and peer pressure

Further, the pressure to avoid losing face ensures that one feels compelled to match, and even surpass, the achievements of others. It was noted in the literature that there is a link between face and the competition to acquire objects that give status or give evidence of one's successful and stable life (C. L. Wang & Lin, 2009). One way this is displayed is in the desire to express one's wealth (Faure & Fang, 2008). In Chinese society, face and social status are proportional to displays of wealth: the more wealth one has, the more successful one appears, and therefore the more face one acquires (Qi, 2017). This leads to competition in acquiring high prestige products, such as luxury items (Wang & Lin, 2009). Consequently, the desire to maintain and gain face gives pressure to students to "keep up with the Joneses" (Hsu & Huang, 2015, p236).

> *"When it comes to weddings, to buying houses, Chinese people really want to do better than other Chinese people. I think that weddings, for some people, they fall in love and want to celebrate that. But for Chinese people, they want to show off for other people. This is kind of show off is also mianzi."*
>
> Xichun, a female master's student

For many Chinese students, therefore, the competition to acquire face creates an often unwelcome yet compelling peer pressure.

> *"I think we really care about mianzi. We even do some really stupid things to keep our mianzi. If someone buy a dress, and it looks really beautiful, but Chinese people will criticise you or laugh at you, then we will not wear that dress."*
>
> Qingwen, a female master's student

> *"The girls who buys bags will see another girl who has a nice bag, and then they want that brand. So it not about culture or tradition, it is about society, and common human nature. Just like, they cannot stop comparing themselves with others. We see the children in other families, and we feel peer pressure."*

Chapter 6

Guan Yu, a male master's student

In a very connected society, it is easy to see the details of the lives of others, and thus the universal trait of human nature to compare ourselves to others is amplified within the interconnected Chinese society, which provides the basis for the underlying pressure (Qi, 2017).

"I think when people talk with each other, they will compare their jobs, their lives, their house, and how much money they make, and if you are doing well you gain mianzi, and if you aren't doing as well, you lose mianzi."

Huang Zhong, a male master's student

One way this phenomenon of peer pressure affects the everyday lives of Chinese students is through the high expectations parents sometimes impose on their children:

"Comparing with other children around the family is what causes the pressure. Your family with have their friends, and their friends will have their influence on your family. And now, I think children around three years old have to have classes, as their friend's son has a class to learn piano, but your son doesn't have that, so parent's fear that their son will lose out, as their son does not have that class and know how to play piano. So they will make their son go to the class too. So the parents will make the children learn very, very hard. When I was in primary school, I sometimes I had to study until 11:00 or 12:00 in the evening."

Qinzhong, a male undergraduate student.

Thus, this pressure also remains with Chinese students during their study, and pushes them to work hard, leading to stress (Spencer-Oatey & Xiong, 2006; Su & Harrison, 2016; Tian & Lowe, 2012; Zhou, 2015).

"I think the peer pressure is not only about economic pressures, it is also about their own reputation. If you are just living in a group of people, and all their children went to very good universities, it becomes a pity if your children just dropped out of high school. So it is the same even with modern parents, if they have some friends whose children have gone to universities like Harvard or Oxford or Cambridge. So maybe this is a different type of peer pressure. Maybe their own children should work very hard, they should have many more opportunities to travel around the world, so it is better for them to get a university degree from a foreign university. So if the friends or the parents of their colleagues also have children who studied at

overseas universities, so they think "It is better for my son or my daughter to also get a similar degree as well, even though it is very hard for my family support that. After all, it is only one year, so maybe we can just struggle to do that.""

Yuanchun, a female PhD student

"Parents will see how excellent other children are, and ask, "Why can't you achieve this?" This is also a factor when Chinese parents send their children to foreign country. I have experienced this. Because I used to study in a non-famous and non-status university, but my father studied in a famous university, Tsinghua University. So I think there is peer pressure, and it is about mianzi. I want to choose a sound university just like Tsinghua, but I went to an ordinary university. But the students in Tsinghua university, their parents will think they have a lot of mianzi compared to other parents."

Guan Yu, a male master's student

Thus, if one feels inferior to someone else, if they perceive another family is better or more successful or more stable than they are, then they will feel shame and a loss of face. Hence, the more one cares about face, the more one is influenced by peer pressure (Qi, 2017). The consequence of this abundant supply of peer pressure in Chinese society sheds greater light on why Chinese students go abroad to study, but it also can lead to Chinese students constantly being compared to their peers, which can lead to feelings of inadequacy, frustration and shame when one is judged to compare unfavourably.

6.3.3 Face and the pressure to reciprocate favours

There are also other types of pressure that are influenced by face in Chinese society, such as the pressure of *renqing*, that is, the pressure to reciprocate a gift or favour. This pressure was observed by several students in my study.

"When I went back to China the last time, my parents asked me if my English language ability is now very good, and I said, "No!" And they said: "Why? I give you all this money to study abroad, and yet you still cannot speak English very well." They think this is my fault, so this is another pressure."

Yuhuan, a female master's student

> *"Most of China is still not very rich now. And most of the students who come from middle-class families. Maybe they don't need to borrow some money from bank, but they may need to borrow money from relatives, and this is a very big amount of money. And when they return, they face a very big pressure, because of this amount of money paid by their parents and relatives."*
>
> Liu Bei, a male PhD student

One characteristic of Chinese culture is an obligation or duty to repay the help of those who have helped you (Fan, 2000; Qi, 2011, 2013). Therefore, while one is not expected to directly repay the money Chinese parents and relatives spent to send their child abroad, there does exist an unwritten expectation for the student to ensure that the sacrifice and help of the parents and any relatives who helped fund their study is not wasted.

> *"For myself, I do not care so much about salary. But because of what other's think, I do care. I have paid a lot for this PhD, so I want to make it worth something! If I get a scholarship, I don't mind getting a lower paid job, but because I paid for this PhD, I definitely need a higher paid job! My parents won't want me to pay back the money, but I still want to get a high paid job so that them funding me is worth it. If I got a job in a primary school after my PhD, my mother might just want me to be happy, but even I would feel diu mianzi* [lose face] *if I had a job like that."*
>
> Ping'er, a female PhD student

Thus, if it were perceived that the investment of the parents and relatives was not sufficiently repaid, then the student would experience shame and lose face:

> *"If my relatives, who know that I have gone abroad to study for higher education, if after I go back to my country, I get a bad job compared to my classmates or my friends who have not gone abroad, they will ask "why? You have spent so much money to go abroad, and then you are still not better than others?" "*
>
> Xiren, a female master's student

Consequently, in the interdependent Chinese society, face is the mechanism to ensure that debts of *renqing* are repaid, and so consequently many Chinese students feel the pressure of *renqing* to do well in their studies and thus acquire a job of sufficient status that will allow them to feel their parent's investment in them was worthwhile.

6.3.4 Face and the pressure to succeed

The fear of losing face by making mistakes also affects Chinese students. The area where this fear is most often expressed is with regard to language, particularly using spoken English. The fear of making mistakes (and subsequently losing face) was frequently quoted as one of the reasons why Chinese students find it difficult to talk to other non-Chinese students.

> *"Face has a very high influence on Chinese students. Especially when we are talking to a foreigner. If I am in the middle of a conversation with foreigners, and they say something, and I am the only one who doesn't understand what they have said, I will feel afraid to ask them, because then I will lose mianzi. So I even am afraid of asking foreigners to join a conversation because of this."*
>
> Zhang Fei, a male PhD student

> *"I think my English is not good enough to communicate with foreigners without any problems. Sometimes I have to ask them to repeat themselves, and sometimes, although I thought I spoke English very clearly, they just can't understand me, so it is a little embarrassing."*
>
> Qinzhong, a male undergraduate student

Even when the disadvantages of not talking with foreigners were well recognised, the shame of potentially being considered as a poor English speaker was still restrictive.

> *"I am afraid to communicate with foreigners because I am afraid to make a mistake. My English is so poor; I don't know so many words. When I was chatting with you, I had to transform in my mind all the words, and I have to think about the words and sometimes make mistakes. This is a problem the Chinese don't like; they don't like making mistakes. We know that if our English is so poor, we will avoid to communicate with others at the beginning, because we think if we do not communicate with you, I will not make a mistake. But I think this is not good for the language improvement; it is not good for understanding the other country's culture, and not good for building friendships."*
>
> Zijuan, a female master's student

Another reason given why Chinese students often may not invest the time and effort in making friends with students from other cultures was the fear of failing in exams. For some students, the time and effort required to navigate through language and cultural barriers to

develop deep intercultural friendships would potentially endanger their studies, and the consequences of that could be severe (Mcmahon, 2011; Zhou, 2015).

> *"For people who study from less wealthy or less educated families, they only care about grade they need passing exams, because they will have massive loss of face to fail in the exams. So they don't communicate with people so actively."*
>
> Liu Bei, a male PhD student

Hence, these findings shed some light on the commonly observed phenomenon of social groups of exclusively Chinese students within UK universities (Gu & Schweisfurth, 2015; Schartner, 2015; Spencer-Oatey *et al.*, 2017; Su & Harrison, 2016; Y. Wang *et al.*, 2012; Y. Yu & Moskal, 2018). While students from cultures where face is not as important may be willing to risk making mistakes in order to practice their spoken English, Chinese students can have a greater reluctance to display their linguistic shortcomings (however minor; some of the students who expressed this fear to me in the interviews were among the most competent English speakers I interviewed).

There are other aspects of university life that illustrate how face, and the fear of losing face, affects Chinese students in a UK classroom. While in UK educational culture, it is seen as normal to ask questions in class, this is rarely done in the Chinese classroom (Gu, 2009; Jin & Cortazzi, 2006; Mcmahon, 2011; Spencer-Oatey & Xiong, 2006). In the literature, this reluctance to ask questions is often seen as a pedagogical difference relating to Confucian teaching methods (Jin & Cortazzi, 2006; Su & Harrison, 2016). However, the fear of looking ignorant or foolish is also behind this reluctance.

> *"[In the UK,] we can also ask question in the class, as soon as you don't know something, you can put your hand up and ask the teacher something. But in China, that is seen as a little rude, to be honest, just like you interrupt the class. Also, as there are so many people, maybe they already know that, only you don't know that."*
>
> Qinzhong, male, undergraduate

Therefore, whether through pressure to conform, through peer pressure, through *renqing* pressure, or through the pressure to succeed, many Chinese international students feel under pressure. The interview data illustrate how the fear of losing face is in part responsible for creating these different types of pressure. Therefore, this study adds to and complements the findings of other studies in the pedagogical literature (which focus more on how teaching

and learning styles relate to the experience of Chinese international students) by revealing something of how deeply face permeates the everyday lives of Chinese students. Recognising the nature and the sources of these pressures may help us better understand the stress that some Chinese students frequently experience in the UK. This understanding may provide helpful context for UK universities seeking to promote the well-being of Chinese students in the UK, particularly those who struggle with mental health issues[4] (Gu & Maley, 2008; Y. Yu & Moskal, 2018).

6.4 Conclusions about face

This study has shown that face is very important in Chinese society, and affects the motivations and experiences of Chinese international students in multiple ways. Thus, face shapes Chinese society both to a greater degree and more broadly than face does in Western society. Face can affect the motivations of Chinese students either as a motivation in itself, or through being a factor affecting other motivations for leaving China (such as being unable to enter one's desired Chinese university) or for choosing to study in the UK (such as the reputation of UK universities in general or of a particular UK HE institution). Face can indirectly influence motivations to study in the UK through its role in maintaining peer pressure within Chinese society combined with the increasing trend of studying abroad. Face can also affect the experiences of Chinese students, through the pressure (be that the pressure to conform, peer pressure, the pressure to repay parents' investment or the pressure to succeed) caused by the fear of losing face.

However, while face may be both highly influential and widespread in Chinese society, it does not influence everyone from China in the same way. There did not seem to be any discernible pattern in terms of personal characteristics: face does not appear to predominate amongst male students more than female students, or PhD students more than master's or undergraduate students. However, it seemed that face affected individualistically-orientated students less than it affected more traditionally-orientated students. As one participant observed, younger people, being more independent and less group orientated than their

[4] It is possible that students are more likely to experience mental health issues when studying overseas: a study from the US suggests the prevalence of depression within the Chinese international student population in Yale (45%) is nearly four times higher than the prevalence of depression within university students in Harbin (11.7%), a city in northeast China (J. Chen *et al.*, 2015).

parents' generation, were not influenced by face as much, and even resisted the effect face had on their lives.

> *"In my opinion, in my generation, I think we will despise mianzi in our lives. I think my independence is the most important thing. So mianzi will affect people in my generation less, as people will focus on themselves more, instead of focussing on others' opinions and judgements of them. So maybe mianzi is one factor, but there are other things factors like social harmony and stability that are shaping the cultural aspects of Chinese students."*

Xiren, an (individualistic) female master's student

As was established earlier in the chapter, choosing to study in the UK specifically in order to gain face is a motivation that appears to relate exclusively to the Chinese students I classified as traditionalists. Conversely, the students that I identified as individualistic, while admitting that Chinese people cared about face more than British people, argued that Chinese people should not be so influenced by face.

> *"But people should not show off to others to get face. I think in the UK, people concentrate more on themselves, and don't care about what others think of you. But in China, maybe many people consider what they look like in other's eyes."*

Xichun, an individualistic female master's student

While some people like to think of themselves as not influenced by face and do not care what other people think of them, this is often an illusion (Cooley (1964), as quoted by Qi (2011)). These conflicting desires applied to some of the Chinese students in my study:

> *"I do not think you should be concerned about it [face], because it is other's opinion, so you should not be that worried about it. For me, I do not want to struggle because of others' opinions. I have experienced a lot of things [in coming to the UK to study], and then you consider the mianzi stuff, it feels like you have earened a lot of mianzi in front of your friends and relatives because of that experience. But in my mind, I am not comfortable with this. I am not satisfied if I have paid money in order to gain mianzi in front of other people. I have had very simple experiences, like actually you cannot afford a bag, but you still want to get mianzi in front of your friends, so you buy the luxury bag, and pay for it, and reduce your budget on living, and then you will not be satisfied with that bag. So I don't think mianzi is worth it."*

Xiren, a female master's student

Thus, the participants who are consciously aware of (and hoped to resist) the effect of face on their lives admit it affects Chinese people more than British people, and further admit that face is still influential in their own lives. Yet, if face is greater for those from more connected, group-orientated backgrounds, then Chinese students who are more independent and individualistic should feel the pressures that are caused by face to a lesser degree. This is reflected in discussion about how face affects Chinese society through pressure; while a few of the individualist Chinese students mentioned the role of face in the pressure they experienced, overall the pressure appeared to affect both a greater proportion of traditionalist students and to a greater extent. Therefore, this chapter adds important knowledge to the sparse existing literature on these themes through examining not only how face affects Chinese students, but also how it affects various subgroups of Chinese students to different degrees.

Chapter 7 *Suzhi*

"It takes ten years to establish a tree, but 100 years to establish a man [十年树木，百年树人]*"*

Ancient Chinese proverb

For most of the last two thousand years, the concept of *suzhi* referred to the "unadorned nature or character of something" (Kipnis, 2006, p297); in other words, *suzhi* originally related to the natural essence or inborn characteristics of a person or object. However, the discourse of *suzhi* referring to an inner, human quality that can be nurtured appears to have begun in the late 1970s when the Chinese Communist Party declared its goal of improving educational quality in order to increase the *suzhi* of Chinese people (Kipnis, 2006). After this, in the 1990s the Chinese Communist Party described the policies designed to cultivate labourers to meet the requirements for a modern economy as a push to increase the *suzhi* of the labourers (H. Yan, 2003). As this term migrated into everyday usage, *suzhi* became seen as a quantifiable variable, with someone who possesses a low amount of *suzhi* likened to an inefficient "peasant" who is lazy, uncultured, uneducated and uncivil (H. Yan, 2003). In contrast, transnational mobility and exposure to intercultural environments is believed to lead to a growth in *suzhi* (H. Yan, 2003). *Suzhi* is now used in Chinese literature to describe various qualities that are deemed one should cultivate, including both educational and moral qualities (Kipnis, 2006), and has connotations with the qualities of civility, self-discipline, and modernity (H. Yan, 2003). Thus, while the discourse of *suzhi* is relatively recent, *suzhi* is linked with longstanding Chinese values listed by Fan (2000) such as virtue (德) and self-cultivation (修养), which are rooted in ancient Confucian, Buddhist and Taoist teaching (Jin & Cortazzi, 2006). This is an important point: in contrast to arguments that societies like China are Westernising as they modernise (Fukuyama, 2009), while there are young people in contemporary Chinese society who embrace some supposedly Western values like independence and self-interest at the expense of older values such as conformity and solidarity with others (Hsu & Huang, 2015), other Chinese values such as being virtuous and self-cultivation remain important, perhaps increasingly so. Therefore, while there is evidence of changes within Chinese society, it would be inaccurate to assume that Chinese modernising is equivalent to Westernising (C. L. Wang & Lin, 2009). Thus instead of, as is common in the literature, using a Western or global framework (such as Bourdieu's theory of

convertible capital) or concepts (such as human or cultural capital) to understand Chinese international student mobility, there is a need to consider Chinese concepts like *suzhi* and the associated Chinese values in order to understand the motivations and experiences of contemporary Chinese students more clearly and accurately.

This chapter seeks to address this need firstly by examining how these concepts differ from established theoretical frameworks (namely Bourdieu's theory of capital) and Western concepts (namely human or cultural capital), and secondly by exploring the extensive role of *suzhi* in the motivations and experiences of Chinese international students studying in the UK thus addressing the third research question of this thesis. Through examining student reflections on the concept of *suzhi*, the types of Chinese students particularly affected by *suzhi* and how *suzhi* underpins particular motivations and experiences of Chinese students that have been established in the literature (such as broader horizons, intercultural skills, and to a lesser extent, travel), I argue that a conceptual framework that seeks to explain the motivations of Chinese students should include *suzhi* as a vital component.

7.1 Suzhi in an international student mobility context

It was observed in the literature review in chapter two that *suzhi* is a very broad concept, and that while both the concept of *suzhi* and Bourdieu's (1986) concept of cultural capital are similar in certain ways (for example, both include the desire to improve skills and obtain useful knowledge), these two concepts are not equivalent (Z. Li, 2013). This section uses the students' reflections of *suzhi* to explore different aspects of this broad concept, thus establishing a context in which to analyse its influence on Chinese students' motivations and experiences.

7.1.1 Educational and skill aspects of suzhi

One particularly relevant aspect of *suzhi* for Chinese international students in the UK is the link between education and *suzhi* (Anagnost, 2004; H. Yan, 2003), although many interviewees acknowledged that education is only one part of *suzhi*.

> *"To some extent, the more education we have, the higher suzhi we have."*
>
> Zhang Fei, a male PhD student

The importance of higher education in improving one's *suzhi* can be deduced from how one student viewed those who do not have university degrees, such as older people (who lived through the disruptive Cultural Revolution in the late 1960s and 1970s) and their peers who chose to directly enter the workforce after compulsory education:

> *"The last generation, they didn't get enough education – I know it is a little bad to say this but it is true – so most people will do something bad, and not be good parents to teach their children. What I think and what I saw in China is that students in university have very good suzhi, but those who just go to work, they are totally different from the students who go to university."*
>
> Qinzhong, a male undergraduate student from a rural province

In particular, the skills and abilities one acquires while studying abroad are thought to increase the *suzhi* of Chinese students, as Li (2013) noted in her study on the employability of Chinese students. This included language skills as well as excelling in extra-circular activities:

> *"One aspect of this* [*suzhi*] *is people with a high education background. If someone can speak, not just English but any other foreign language, this person will be regarded as having high suzhi."*
>
> Cao Cao, a male master's student

> *"Chinese people also think that suzhi is very important, and can be related to education. They think suzhi is many different abilities in many different things, such as getting good results in your academic life, in the meanwhile you can cook food, you can play the piano, or you do very well in sports. If you have more ability and do well in these many things, your suzhi is higher."*
>
> Miaoyu, a female undergraduate student

Specifically, it has been argued that the skills and knowledge obtained overseas are held in higher esteem by Chinese students than the educational qualifications themselves (Li, 2013). This view was acknowledged by some of my respondents when considering their long-term employability prospects:

> *"I also think suzhi is important because having more abilities and more skills is more useful* [than the master's degree certificate]*. When we graduate from the UK university, we can use English speaking skills, even though they are still not very good, and we will still may be able to find a very good job. So suzhi gives more long-term benefit."*

Xiao Qiao, a female master's student

In this respect, therefore, the pursuit of *suzhi* can be seen as a strategy to potentially improve one's employability, and thus *suzhi* can be linked with the concepts of human capital or embodied cultural capital, as *suzhi* includes the embodiment of educational knowledge, skills and qualifications as human capital and cultural capital do (Anagnost, 2004; H. Yan, 2003). It is noteworthy that the students I identified as traditionally-orientated, like Xiao Qiao, were more likely to link *suzhi* with education, skills and employability. However, even these students hinted that there was much more to *suzhi* than merely acquiring education and skills, as Huang Zhong (another traditionally-orientated student) suggests:

> *"If you have higher suzhi, you will respect other people, and people will feel comfortable around you. Most students who come to the UK have high suzhi, because they come from Chinese families with money to invest in their children to study in the UK. So a good family will have a good education for their children, so most of them will have a high suzhi. But not everyone is good, so you can't say all Chinese students in the UK have high suzhi."*

Hence, Huang Zhong acknowledges that one does not automatically gain high *suzhi* by coming to the UK, indicating that education is only a factor, not a prerequisite condition, to gaining high *suzhi*.

Therefore, this sub-section gives evidence that *suzhi* is a concept which includes the skills and knowledge equated with forms of cultural capital (Li, 2013), which can be converted into financial, social or political capital (Xiang & Shen, 2009), in line with Bourdieu's (1986) theory of capital. However, *suzhi* is broader than merely a form of capital as it is used to judge the value of a human being according not only to his or her knowledge and skills, but also according to his or her morality and manners and hence is not restricted to one's transition to the labour market (Li, 2013), an aspect that is explored in the next section of this chapter.

7.1.2 Moral or self-improvement aspects of suzhi

One key way *suzhi* is considered broader than cultural capital is that *suzhi* relates to other aspects of an individual besides their skills and knowledge, such as their morality and manners (Anagnost, 2004; Li, 2013; Yan, 2003). Similarly, Xiang and Shen (2009) note that while those who possess more human capital have a higher *suzhi*, *suzhi* is also an individual

attribute in its own right. A key aspect of Bourdieu's theory of capital (1986) is that it is necessary that capital can be converted from one form to another (Waters, 2008). However, moral objectives, such as self-improvement and civility, are goals that are ends to themselves rather than strategies employed for achieving more capital. Indeed, Hansen & Thøgersen (2015, p6) reflect that Chinese students often refer to self-development and personal change as a form of "life change" that is "broadly ethical in the sense that it concerns the perceptions of the self, ways of life, and life purposes", and that the desire for life change is a fundamental aspiration that fuels the decision of young Chinese people to study abroad, as opposed to "an accidental by-product of a rational project of accumulating cultural capital abroad". Consequently, these moral objectives that are common among Chinese students (as the analysis of interview data in the next section demonstrates) move away from both employability narratives of cultural capital (including Waters (2008)), as well as narratives of cultural or human capital that focus on non-economic outcomes to get ahead in life (Findlay *et al.*, 2012; Findlay & King, 2010; Waters & Brooks, 2012), and instead focus on "lived cultural experiences" as an end in and of itself (Cebolla-boado *et al.*, 2018, p368).

In the next section, then, I examine the motivations and experiences of Chinese students that relate to attempts to gain higher *suzhi* through becoming a more moral and virtuous person, demonstrated by the themes of broadening horizons, self-improvement and improving etiquette. I also examine how this approach differs from an approach to gain *suzhi* through obtaining skills, which relates more closely to accumulating convertible cultural capital. This demonstrates my argument that while there are similarities between cultural capital and *suzhi*, *suzhi* has a wider scope than does cultural capital. Therefore, given the importance of the moral aspects of *suzhi* for Chinese international students, *suzhi* is a more suitable concept to use when establishing a theoretical framework for understanding the motivations of Chinese international students.

7.2 Motivations and experiences influenced by the pursuit of suzhi

The most common motivations in my study related with the non-convertible, moral dimensions of *suzhi* were broadening horizons, self-improvement and improving etiquette. Additionally, developing intercultural skills was another common motivation that I argue can be linked, to some extent, with an underlying desire for *suzhi*. Gaining *suzhi* appears to be important for the majority of Chinese students in this study, and a key factor in their

motivations to study in the UK regardless of whether students are traditionally or individualistically-orientated. Having said that, similar to how face seems to be universal for all types of Chinese students but is particularly important for traditionalist Chinese students in my study, *suzhi* appears to be universal for all types of Chinese students but particularly important for individualistic students in my sample.

7.2.1 Broadening horizons

The most common aspiration for Chinese students in my study was to broaden one's horizons: 24 of the 27 interviewed students mentioned that this was one of their motivations to study abroad, a finding which is consistent with other studies of Chinese international students, including Bamber (2014), M. Li & Bray (2007), Z. Li (2013), Martin (2017) and Wu (2014). One aspect this study adds to these existing findings is in highlighting the prevalence of this aspiration. The motivation to observe and learn about non-Chinese students was common to undergraduate, master's and PhD students of both genders, as is illustrated with the quotes in this sub-section. One aspect of broadening horizons relevant for certain students in my study was to experience a very different culture and explore foreign practices, as with Qiaojie, a female undergraduate student:

> *"My horizon must be wider than those students who are in China. Because I have some friends from other countries and talk with them I can know other countries' culture and their habits and many other things."*

For others, the attraction of broadening horizons was related to knowledge and gaining new perspectives and ideas:

> *"There are different people in a different country, so your mind might be different. In China, you might be in a small circle. But when you study abroad, you may think things differently, that you didn't think about before. So you can tell me your story, and so I can know more. Because you are very different from China. So, broadening horizons, this is very important."*
>
> Huang Zhong, a male master's student

It is notable that for both Qiaojie and Huang Zhong, intercultural friendships were seen as key to achieving this aspiration. For yet other students, the appeal of broadening horizons lay in the exploration of the unfamiliar education system and history of the UK:

"As this is my first time [to go abroad]*, it is good for me to go to a European country, to see how the education is, how the country has developed, so I suppose they* [my parents] *think it is a good way to broaden my vision."*

Zhuge, a male PhD student

The history and culture of the UK and Europe was one of the factors that encouraged students to study in the UK as opposed to other common destination countries for higher education such as the US, Australia or Canada, complementing other findings (Bamber, 2014; R. Huang & Turner, 2018):

"But for me, I want to go to Britain because I like the culture and the history in Britain. And when I was young, I was very keen on art and performance and drama in Europe, so I think if I go to Britain it is easier to travel in Europe and easier to get culture than in the USA. So I chose UK."

Sheyue, a female master's student

The popularity of travel among Chinese students can therefore also be linked to broadening horizons. This is likely to be related to the phenomenon of young Chinese people possessing a particular excitement about the outside world and highly esteeming foreign things (崇洋) (Hansen & Thøgersen, 2015; Hsu & Huang, 2015). In my study, eleven students expressed a desire to travel while in the UK, nine of whom were female, of whom six were master's students. Yuanchuan, a female PhD student, shed light on why travelling may have particularly appealed to female master's students:

"For some parents, they have daughters, they are softer to them than the sons. If a daughter just wants something, she just asks something from daddy, and her daddy will not say no if it is reasonable… So, particularly for master's [students]*, the woman may feel, "I want to travel, I want to broaden my horizons and I want to experience the world, please pay for me to go to the UK" and her parents will be happier to fund her."*

The majority of these female students were among those I classified as individualistically-orientated, including Xiangyun, a master's student:

"I always want to see more and travel more, and from my previous job experience, it was a very pressured job, so I have little time to travel around. So actually this one year study, I very appreciate it, as I can focus myself to learn something I want to learn, and the most important this is that I can relax myself… I

think [that] *this year I will use my eyes to view many new places that I have never been before. So I think travelling is very important thing for me. And another reason I think the UK is better than Australia or Canada, maybe one factor is that the UK is a country full of culture, like China."*

Broadening horizons also has links with Chinese values reflecting self-improvement such as expanding one's knowledge and achieving a wide range of experiences (Hsu & Huang, 2015) in addition to moral and interpersonal Chinese values such as tolerance of others, courtesy and humility (Fan, 2000). Therefore broadening one's horizons is seen as important for nurturing human quality as well as moral development. This is demonstrated by Zhang Fei, a male PhD student, who felt students who studied abroad could increase their *suzhi* by becoming more open and tolerant:

"If you go abroad, you do broaden your horizons, and become more open to new ideas, so there is some additional suzhi you can get by going abroad."

Similarly, Xiren, a female master's student, illustrated how she learnt to become more considerate and, instead of judging others on their appearance, through observing aspects of UK life decided to aspire to treat all people equally:

"Meeting different people from different countries, and learning different cultures, and experiencing all these Western things that change your mind. It is hard to say how they benefitted me, but I think this has helped me to become a better person. This is related to getting a higher suzhi… Because I think disabled people get the same treatment here, because you have the pathway for here, so I think it is really considerate, all the help provided for disabled person. But in China, if I was a disabled person, it would be hard for me to get a job, hard for me to walk on the street, and hard for me to get the same treatment as a non-disabled person. So you learn to treat all the persons equally, instead of looking at what they wear, what the luxuries they have, and judge people on those stuff. I would not like to judge a person because of her or his outlook. And I will not judge a person because of the their outward appearance. So I think it is one aspect of higher suzhi, because you treat all people equally."

Therefore, through broadening their horizons by experiencing an unfamiliar culture in the UK, some of the students in my study felt they had made personal and moral progress as they became more open minded and tolerant, particularly of people and cultures different to

themselves. This self-improvement is explicitly linked by these students with gaining a higher *suzhi*, indicating the importance of relating the aspiration to broaden horizons with the motivation to gain higher *suzhi*.

7.2.2 Improving oneself

As hinted at within the previous section, the desires for broadening horizons and self-improvement are interlinked. Li (2013, p488) notes in her study of Chinese postgraduate students in the UK that *suzhi* implies "whole-person development" (not just the development of skills that can improve one's chances within the labour market) through observing that students were often motivated by personal development more than earning higher salaries. Similarly, Yan (2003) noted that *suzhi* can lead to self-development, while Martin (2017), in her study of female Chinese students in Australia, found that that students used the concept of *suzhi* to describe their aspirations of broadening horizons, of becoming more independent and of becoming more self-confident (a phenomenon also observed in my study, with seven of my 27 respondents claiming they had become more self-confident since coming to the UK). This desire to improve oneself was a common theme in my study. For example, for Miaoyu (a female, undergraduate student), one motivation behind her decision to come to the UK was to pursue her own independence:

> *"I want to study in the UK, I will have a different life from before. I will live alone. Because in Chinese universities, there are four to six people in a room. It is very different from the UK. And it is interesting to cook meals for myself, and I have to buy something for daily life."*

Similarly, other students told me their main motivation in coming to the UK was to change their outlook on life and improve themselves.

> *"I think after this experience, I will change my identity and change my outlook to see the world. Getting a master's degree is also important, but to change my inner ability is more important."*
>
> Xichun, a female master's student

> *"I want to improve myself, but job is secondary. Some of my friends want to find job here... But most of us just want to improve ourselves."*
>
> Qinzhong, a male undergraduate student

Hence, these students reveal that motivations such as the pursuit of independence and self-improvement can be the primary reason to study abroad for many students, further differentiating *suzhi* from cultural capital, which is, by its definition, convertible to other forms of capital (Bourdieu, 1986). This was particularly salient for many individualistically-orientated Chinese students in my study (of the ten students who told me that personal development and improving themselves was important to them, eight were individualistically-orientated), who did not primarily wish to gain skills to find a better job, but instead aspired to develop their character and skills so that they could become a more developed, more cultured and even a more virtuous individual.

7.2.3 Etiquette

It has been observed that Chinese students who have studied in the UK have felt they have become more polite during their time in the UK (Gu & Schweisfurth, 2015), and that courtesy is an important Chinese cultural value (Fan, 2000; Hsu & Huang, 2015). Specifically, obtaining harmonious social relationships is often deemed necessary for acquiring virtue in Confucian ideals of morality, and consequently etiquette, which governs social relationships, is a key component of Chinese morality (Cardon & Scott, 2003). In my study, the perception that Britain is viewed as a generally polite country was sometimes key to the decision as to which country to study:

> *"I think I want to study in the UK because British people are very gentleman* [绅士风度, or gentlemanly manner]*, and British culture has a very long history."*
>
> Tanchun, a female master's student

> *"I have found the suzhi of the British people is better than the people in China... Not everyone, of course, but for most people… Because I have been to America, and I think the people here are less rude… So I like the suzhi of British people more than American people."*
>
> Yuhuan, a female master's student

Thus, the perception that this politeness meant that British people possessed a high *suzhi* gives the UK an edge over some of its competitors in the global higher education market. Further, many students felt that their experience in the UK was enhanced through the high *suzhi* of many British people:

> *"In the UK, the most thing I like is that everyone is really polite to you. They will be quiet in big crowds; not a lot will break this rule. But in China, people will sometimes talk loudly* [in public]*… So perhaps we don't have a good atmosphere about suzhi. Suzhi is related to being polite, and not speaking too loudly in public. And queueing!"*
>
> Qingwen, a female master's student

The experience of living in a society perceived as possessing high *suzhi* not only contributed to a positive individual experience, but also could enable students to fulfil their goals of improving their own *suzhi*:

> *"When students go travelling abroad, they may see people with high suzhi, they will learn. So travelling doesn't automatically give you high suzhi, but it gives you the opportunity to improve your suzhi and make it higher."*
>
> Jia Lan, a male undergraduate student

Similarly, seven students in my study felt that their experience in the UK had improved their etiquette, one of whom was Diaochan, a female PhD student:

> *"During the year of living here, I have become more open to different cultures… For example, I like how everyone says "Sorry", no matter what happens. And people here are more polite. And life here is slower. So for both of these parts I like it. I have improved my suzhi."*

It is noteworthy that all seven students who mentioned they had become more polite since coming to the UK linked this increase in courtesy with gaining a higher *suzhi*. Consequently, as well as being common phenomena in both the literature and my study, self-improvement and improving etiquette are directly related with the improvement of one's *suzhi*.

7.2.4 Foreign skills

There were also motivations relating to *suzhi* emerging from the analysis of interview data that correspond with cultural capital and better fit into an employability discourse. One such factor that attracts Chinese students to the Western higher education institutions is the chance to obtain "Western" skills (Henze & Zhu, 2012, p92) or "intercultural" competencies (Z. Li, 2013, p488), as has been observed in the literature (Gu & Schweisfurth, 2015; Hansen &

Thøgersen, 2015; Song & Mccarthy, 2018; Ye & Edwards, 2015). Overseas Chinese students often feel foreign education is superior to Chinese education (Hansen & Thøgersen, 2015), and Chinese students value the opportunity to add skills (which are usually harder to develop in China) such as independent and critical thinking to their skill set (Gu & Schweisfurth, 2015). This phenomenon was also observed in my study, with one student choosing to study abroad to gain experience in using a broader, intercultural set of skills to enable him to have more choice in his career:

> *"I think* [I decided to study outside China] *because I have a lack of experience. Because Chinese students don't have so much experience. So if I study outside, I will have more experience. And I think this is good for the rest of my life. I can respect differences more than before, because I have seen many different cultures and ways of doing things. And working, I don't think it needs to be fixed. I can choose different jobs to do before I select the final one to continue. So I am gaining more skills and more choice."*
>
> Jia Lan, a male undergraduate student

One foreign skill of interest to Chinese students is language: 16 out of the 27 students in my study told me that the desire to come to the UK was in part to improve their language ability, a seemingly common motivation for Chinese students studying in English-speaking countries (Gu & Schweisfurth, 2015; Henze & Zhu, 2012; Wu, 2014). Another common skill students felt they had gained in the UK was to analyse critically information they were presented with, a skill they intended to use not just in their careers, but also in everyday life:

> *"I learnt in the UK, not only for my career but also for real life, is about critical thinking… Now, I think I will use critical thinking when reading about news or articles. When I hear the news, I won't totally trust it until I have enough evidence to trust."*
>
> Cao Cao, a male master's student

Furthermore, three students in my study appreciated the opportunity to learn independently (without over reliance on teachers). One of these students was Yuhuan, a female master's student:

> *"The study methods* [in the UK] *have also been very helpful. Our teachers won't tell us how to do it, only what to do. So we need to find out ourselves how to do that."*

However, in contrast with Waters' (2006) study of Chinese international students in Hong Kong, the consensus in this study appeared to be that the advantage within the Chinese job market for students who gained such skills through studying in the UK was relatively limited, particularly at master's level (Li, 2013):

> *"In recent years, many, many students study abroad. So studying abroad is no longer a very big advantage for the students. But it has a little advantage compared to the students who study in China."*
>
> Xiangyun, a female master's student

> *"It is quite pressured for the family to support a daughter or son to spend a year here, only for obtaining a master's degree which may be useless for a student to obtain a job in the Chinese job market."*
>
> Yuanchuan, a female PhD student

Nonetheless, although some of the foreign skills Chinese students acquired may be of limited use in the Chinese job market, the students I interviewed commonly appreciated the skills they had developed in the UK, which, as discussed in the previous section, potentially enables them to achieve a higher *suzhi*. Consequently, the link between these foreign skills and developing a higher *suzhi* gives further evidence of how *suzhi* influences the motivations of Chinese students.

7.2.5 Summary of key motivations and experiences related to suzhi

In summary, I argue that behind many of the most common motivations for Chinese students to study in the UK (such as broadening horizons, developing foreign language and skills and travel) is the desire to gain a higher *suzhi*, and this is particularly evident among the motivations of female and individualistically-orientated students. Indeed, I argue that many of the similar motivations observed in other studies of Chinese international students (Cebolla-boado *et al.*, 2018; Martin, 2017; Wu, 2014) are enhanced when interpreting them within a *suzhi* narrative. Therefore, both through facing and overcoming challenges as well as experiencing different cultures, many Chinese students in my study (both traditionally and individualistically-orientated) reported that they had gained new skills, broadened horizons, become more independent and improved their etiquette. As discussed earlier in the chapter, these skills, experiences and personal developments suggest that many students are seen to

gain *suzhi* while they study in the UK, fulfilling the aspirations that were common among many of the individualistically-orientated students in the fifth chapter.

7.3 Conclusions regarding suzhi

Therefore, I argue that narratives of human capital or cultural capital (Huang, 2013; Li, 2013; Ma, 2014; Tsang, 2013; Waters, 2006; Xiang & Shen, 2009) are insufficient to explain the motivations of Chinese students. For individualistically-orientated students, cultural capital neither captures the motivation to broaden horizons as a primary goal in its own right, nor captures the moral dimensions associated with improving oneself and improving one's standards of courtesy. Even for traditionally-orientated students, to which cultural capital narratives may be slightly more suitable, the perception that studying in the UK only has a limited effect in increasing one's employability prospects suggests that this approach is also deficient for this group. Hence, Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital does not adequately explain the desires to broaden horizons, to develop skills and to improve oneself that were so prevalent among the students in my study. In contrast, I argue that the concept of *suzhi*, while it overlaps with cultural capital to a certain extent, is nonetheless a more suitable concept for understanding the motivations of Chinese international students than human capital or cultural capital.

Moreover, the concepts of suzhi and face are related to each other. The last chapter noted that etiquette and face are related: one of the main reasons why people abide by etiquette is to avoid the loss of face. It therefore follows that cultivating a higher *suzhi* results in a larger gain in face. This was reflected by the interview data:

> *"If you don't have a good suzhi, other people will say that you are not a good person; you are not polite, you do not care about their feelings, and things like that. If you want people to think that you are a good person, that you have a higher suzhi, then that is about mianzi."*
>
> Huang Zhong, a male master's student

This link was particularly relevant for traditionally-orientated students who feel pressure to behave in a way consistent with those with higher *suzhi*. If they do not, then they risk making the collective Chinese international student body lose face (Qi, 2017):

"Suzhi is very, very important to us. Because we are Chinese, and we study abroad, maybe other Chinese think you are ok. But sometimes, waiguoren [foreigners] *they will get a little detail from you regarding China, because they haven't been to China before. So they will just use you to know about China. If you do something bad, maybe they will think Chinese are all like this, and I think this is not good. There are so many people in China. Maybe you can't get everyone to have high suzhi, but you can do your best. For example, don't throw litter on the street, don't talk so loudly in the library or study area."*

Zijuan, a female master's student

The pursuit of *suzhi* may be of particular focus for younger, more modern students from wealthier backgrounds:

"At the end of the twentieth century, Chinese people are poor, and they do not care about what they do could impact others. For example, they just throw away rubbish everywhere, they didn't think about this. But later, when Chinese people have more focus on the environment, because Chinese people are rich, and now they need to get respect, so they focus on suzhi. So if you have more suzhi you will also have more mianzi. But… mianzi is more important and more fundamental."

Jia Lan, a male undergraduate student

Consequently, *suzhi* and face are able to coexist in a conceptual framework, and a conceptual framework of the motivations of Chinese international students should include both concepts.

Furthermore, many important motivations and experiences of Chinese students in the UK are more clearly understood through the lens of *suzhi*. I have argued from the interview data that the aspiration to broaden one's horizons and the experiences of improving one's etiquette are both strongly influenced by the desire to gain *suzhi*, and that this is particularly relevant for individualistically-orientated students. In contrast, most traditionally or academically-orientated students' primary motivation is their future job or their academic study, with motivations related to *suzhi* generally playing a less crucial but nonetheless important role.

Overall, this study shows that improving *suzhi* is one of the most important factors that influence the decision of Chinese international students to study in the UK, and that it is vital

to include *suzhi* into a conceptualisation of the motivations of Chinese international students. This represents a contribution to the literature on Chinese international student mobility: while other studies on international student mobility have briefly alluded to the concept of *suzhi* (notably Hansen & Thøgersen (2015), Li (2013), Martin (2017) and Xiang & Shen (2009)), this study argues that *suzhi* should be considered as a key concept underpinning the motivations of Chinese students.

Chapter 8 *Guanxi*

"With guanxi, nothing matters; without guanxi, everything matters [有关系就没关系，没关系就有关系]*"*

Chinese saying

The term *guanxi* refers to interdependent, carefully constructed and maintained relationships which carry mutual obligations and benefits (Qi, 2013). The literature about *guanxi* is well established: in Chen, Chen and Huang's review of *guanxi* within the various fields of research in both the West and in China, they found 235 journal articles relating to *guanxi* (C. C. Chen *et al.*, 2013). Faure and Fang (2008) argue that *guanxi* is possibly the most frequently discussed Chinese value. Indeed, within the international student mobility literature, it has been commonly observed that using *guanxi* is particularly important for Chinese students seeking to find a job once they have returned to China (Cheung & Xu, 2015; Hao, Wen, & Welch, 2016; Huang & Kuah-Pearce, 2015; Li, 2013). However, the role of *guanxi* as a motivation for Chinese students to study in the UK and to help understand their experiences in the UK has been much less thoroughly researched, although a few studies consider the role of social capital, notably the occurrence of overseas mainland students in Hong Kong and Taiwan building social networks with local residents (Gao, 2014; Ma, 2014; Waters, 2006).

This chapter begins by examining the concept of *guanxi*. During this first section, I address the second sub-question of the third research question (relating to the distinctive value of Chinese concepts), arguing from the analysis of the interview data that, while there is considerable overlap, the Chinese concept of *guanxi* in a Chinese context is not equated with social capital in a Western context, and further that *guanxi* is a more suitable concept to use when seeking to understand the motivations and experiences of Chinese international students. This provides the background to address the first sub-question of the third research question (relating to how *guanxi* affects the motivations and experiences of Chinese students), which are respectively discussed in the following two sections of this chapter: to examine the role of *guanxi* in encouraging Chinese students to study in the UK and to examine how *guanxi* shapes the social experiences of Chinese students in the UK. Consequently, this chapter builds a clearer understanding of both the concept of *guanxi* in a Chinese international student mobility context, and explains how it shapes and affects

Chinese international students in the UK, thus demonstrating why *guanxi* should be included in conceptual frameworks of Chinese international student mobility.

8.1 Chinese student reflections on the concept of g*uanxi*

Qi (2013) identifies two different types of *guanxi*: "primary" or personal *guanxi*, which is "characterised by moral obligations and emotional attachments" (p310), and "extended" or professional *guanxi*, which refers to a "strategy for forming advantageous relationships" (p310). This section uses the perspectives and reflections of the students I interviewed to demonstrate firstly how Chinese international students (and parents) in the UK can use professional *guanxi* as social capital (illustrated in Tsang's (2013) article about Chinese parents' quest for upward social mobility, where Tsang observes how parents used their *guanxi* networks to help their child get into an elite Chinese university), and secondly to show how personal *guanxi* is functionally different from social capital in a Chinese international student mobility context. This will set the context to investigate how both personal and professional *guanxi* can affect the motivations and experiences of Chinese students in the UK in the following sections.

8.1.1 The synergy between guanxi and social capital

Within the Chinese international student mobility literature, the use of *guanxi* as a strategy to increase employability prospects is the most prominent context in which *guanxi* is viewed (Cheung & Xu, 2015). Thus, Li (2013) argues that it is essential that *guanxi* be considered when contemplating the employability strategies of Chinese students, given the importance of *guanxi* in the Chinese workplace. The use of professional *guanxi* to further one's employability was also a phenomenon that was observed by students in this study.

> *"Guanxi you can use to get something. The people your parents know can give you a better platform to get a job. If your father is really, really rich, and works for Apple, you can easily find a job to work in Apple or a similar company. But it is not because of your abilities, but it is your relationship to get unfair advantage. This is guanxi. This is really common in China! Particularly in medium or small cities."*
>
> Qingwen, a female master's student

Similarly, a law PhD student who hoped to work as a practitioner commented:

> *"Guanxi is very important, particularly when you want to advance your career... So having guanxi definitely makes it easier to find a job for us, because if we have a reference from someone who is well known in the field, we can get a really good job."*
>
> Zhang Fei, a male PhD student

Thus, one way *guanxi* helps Chinese students acquire future jobs is through forming connections with influential and reputable experts within a particular field or industry. The practice of utilizing these previously built social networks (both directly and indirectly through parents) to develop a business or acquire a job position is common in China (Huang & Kuah-Pearce, 2015; Li, 2013). The converse also applies. One of the disadvantages for returnees is that they have lost their opportunity to develop *guanxi* in China during their time overseas, potentially leading to difficulties in acquiring a suitable job (Huang & Kuah-Pearce, 2015). For example, one's connections with a well-known business expert or supervisor are not effective if this potential employer has not heard of or is not connected with that business expert or supervisor. Yuanchun, a female PhD student, similarly commented:

> *"If you have a broad network of guanxi in the UK, you cannot transport that network back into China… If that person* [whose help you need to obtain a position or job] *is in the UK, they can only contact* [China] *through emails, and it is really hard to maintain that guanxi. But if it someone who is in the next office, it is very easy. Maybe the person helping you can meet up with the person you are trying to reach and treat them for lunch one afternoon... So I think less distance is crucial for maintaining guanxi."*

Yuanchun sheds light on the mechanics of how one can use one's connections to increase one's employability prospects within Chinese society and on the effort that is required to establish and build these relationships. There are similarities between this use of professional *guanxi* to further one's career (whether inside or outside academia) and the use of social capital in the West, such as the phenomenon of middle-class parents in the UK using the inside knowledge of their friends who work within elite UK universities to increase the chances of their children attending those elite universities and thus reproducing their social and cultural capital (Ball, 2003). The use of social capital as professional *guanxi* within a UK context suggests that *guanxi* within academia is common both in Western and Chinese contexts, as was noted by a couple of students in my study:

"Previously, I thought guanxi was more important in China than the UK, but recently, I don't think so. Because in Western academia, guanxi is really important, actually. For example, if there is a post doc vacancy here, only those who know that professor well already are likely to get it. So this is also a kind of guanxi. So this happens in all cultures, and doesn't just apply to China."

Diaochan, a female PhD student

"It is the same for being an English PhD student in the UK. If you go to a conference, some people are very good at networking, they know many people like them, many professors and many other PhD students in the similar fields, so this may take more opportunities for further collaboration. So to some extent, networking is a type of building guanxi network."

Yuanchun, a female PhD student

For these Chinese students, then, professional *guanxi* is seen as a commonly used form of social capital, which can be used with the aim (at least partially) of converting that social capital to economic capital in the form of a salary, thus gaining various benefits. Those that have cultivated effective *guanxi* networks are thought to have substantial advantages in acquiring jobs or promotions in China, and in acquiring academic opportunities in both China and other countries like the UK. Thus, *guanxi* is a global concept (Qi, 2013), and *guanxi* applies to Western societies in multiple ways, such as through the cultivation of social networks in order to achieve advantages (such as better access) within elite universities (Ball, 2003), or in acquiring a post doctorate or opportunities for future collaboration. However, there are other aspects of the use *guanxi* in a Chinese context that distinguish it from the use of social capital in a Western context.

8.1.2 The differences between guanxi and social capital

Guanxi is preferred in the conceptual framework of this thesis to social capital for two reasons. Firstly, from a global perspective, *guanxi* is a broader concept than social capital. While building up social capital (in any society) could be considered as building up *guanxi*, in this section I argue that there are many instances when building up *guanxi* could not be considered as accumulating social capital. Secondly, in a Chinese context, the structure of Chinese society enables *guanxi* to be both widely prevalent and particularly effective in a way that would not be as possible in other societies (particularly Western societies). In this way,

the particularities of *guanxi* within a Chinese context, and how they distinguish Chinese students from those from other cultures, are demonstrated.

8.1.2.1 The wider applications of guanxi

The Greek philosopher Aristotle is alleged to have described three types of friendship: utility friendships (friendships built for the purpose of obtaining benefits of some sort), friendships built on sharing mutual pleasures or delighting in the same things and virtuous friendships (friendships built on unconditionally seeking the good of another, such as desiring to help another through sharing resources or knowledge with them) (Melé, 2009). The analysis from the interviewee data suggested that for Chinese international students in the UK, the second type of friendships (building friendships with those one gets along and has common interests with) were common among Chinese students in the UK, as Qingwen, a female master's student, illustrates:

> *"Most students have better hearts; "I talk to you, I am really happy, we can be friends". For people we can't get along with, we won't try to be friends. Most people are like this. They are people who follow their heart. They think to get along with people they don't like is a harsh thing!"*

Similarly, another interviewee, who shared the same preference for friendship as Qingwen, was keen to distance herself from those who use *guanxi* for utility, the type of *guanxi* Qi (2013, p310) labels as 'extended' or professional *guanxi*:

> *"I think that guanxi doesn't affect me at all. I do not care at all about that, and never think about that. I make friends because they are good and we get on with each other and enjoy our time together. But I don't think they will help me, or anything like that. When I will go back to China, I will just forget about my friends here, even if they are from China!"*

Diaochan, a female PhD student

It can be deduced from the way Diaochan views (professional) *guanxi*, therefore, that professional *guanxi* and utility friendships are similar, in that professional *guanxi* networks are also focussed on acquiring benefits (Qi, 2013). The use of language ("most students have better hearts" and "I do not care at all about that") used by Qingwen and Diaochan, however, indicates that a number of Chinese students possess a belief that one should not build up social ties (or personal *guanxi*) with others for utility purposes. Of course, it is possible for one to build friendships with those one naturally gets along with, and yet ultimately acquire

future economic benefits from that relationship. Bourdieu argues that although people do not develop social ties only for instrumental reasons, social ties of the privileged tend to facilitate social reproduction (Bourdieu, 1984). However, as explained in the second chapter, due to the non-privileged background of some Chinese students (Soysal & Schneider, 2018) and the apparent lack of economic, cultural and social benefit to many Chinese students upon their return to China (Hao *et al.*, 2016; Li, 2013), the phenomenon Bourdieu describes of unintentionally accumulating social capital through personal relationships should not be assumed for Chinese international students. Therefore, the attitude some respondents displayed of distancing themselves from the practice of building relationships for utility purposes implies the need to distinguish between beneficial social ties (those that ultimately yield economic benefits through the cultivating of social capital) and personal social ties (naturally occurring friendships without any discernible future economic benefit). Further, one student I interviewed argued that trying to make friends solely for the purposes of acquiring social capital would normally fail in Chinese society, as the mutual reciprocity is a key feature of *guanxi* (Smart, 1993):

> *"The reason I make friends is not because of guanxi. I make friends because I want to be friends with you. But after we have become friends, we can have a good guanxi, and it can be helpful. If you selfishly tried make friends because of guanxi, it might work for a short while, but it wouldn't work really."*
>
> Qinzhong, a male undergraduate student

Therefore, social capital has particular synergy with utility friendships, and consequently social capital is more closely associated with professional *guanxi* (in which the ties are more distant, more objective-orientated and impersonal (C. C. Chen *et al.*, 2013)) than personal *guanxi* (which is more intimate, more emotion-orientated and more informal (C. C. Chen *et al*., 2013)). This distinction between the two different forms of *guanxi* was made by one of the students I interviewed:

> *"I think guanxi is not only about professional relationships or social networks, it is also affects personal relationship. I think when you are talking about guanxi in a Chinese context you are applying some kind of benefits like emotional support. So almost all relationships in China, there are some unwritten rules about the benefits that such relationship can bring to you. It is not only about professional relationships, but it is true that the relationship with your professor also has benefits, such as publishing papers or potential jobs in the future."*

Yuanchun, a female PhD student

Yuanchun suggests that the benefits of professional *guanxi* can be objective, such as publishing papers or obtaining jobs, while the benefits of personal *guanxi* are more social and personal, such as gaining emotional support. The importance of personal *guanxi* for gaining emotional support when arriving in a new place was further alluded to by Xifeng:

> *"I think the personal network, or the social network in China is more vibrant than the UK. If you are living in a very metropolitan city like Shanghai or Beijing, it is very easy to find someone to help you through other friends or families. In China, almost all the vibrant communities exist in the migrant communities, because they don't have much connection with their original families. They have to rely on each other to support each other."*

Xifeng, a female PhD student

Bodycott (2009) also observes Chinese students supporting each other while at university, noting how Chinese university students in China built *guanxi* networks within which they invested time in each other, made promises to each other and showed a readiness to help, support and advise each other. It has also been observed that migrants cultivate social capital with fellow migrants to obtain emotional and practical support when moving to a new destination (Cebolla-boado & Nuho, 2018), and that international students are similar in this respect (Gao, 2014; Ma, 2014; Spencer-Oatey *et al*., 2017; Waters, 2006). However, I argue that the concept of social capital is not suitable to be used in this context of personal *guanxi*. Bourdieu (1986) defines social capital as "actual or potential resources which are linked to… membership in a group, which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectively-owned capital" (p249). Thus, social capital refers to resources that can be potentially converted into assets or credit, which is why it is particularly functional within utility networks (Melé, 2009). On the contrary, non-utility networks (relationships built out of mutual affection or to meet the needs of others) do not require countable investment, as the effort, time and (in some cases) money required to establish and cultivate them is instead spent out of the satisfaction and enjoyment of belonging to that network or relationship (Melé, 2009). Therefore, when the relationship is built on common interests and mutual affection (as is often the case with personal *guanxi* (C. C. Chen *et al.*, 2013)), any practical or emotional support exchanged between the parties is generally considered and treated as a gift given without conditions, as opposed to an investment that is convertible to other assets

or resources. This is particularly the case amongst Chinese personal relationships, given the Confucian ideals of commitment to the relationship regardless of extrinsic costs and benefits (C. C. Chen *et al.*, 2013). Thus, there are aspects of *guanxi* (particularly personal *guanxi*) that are distinct from social capital.

8.1.2.2 The greater prevalence and effectiveness of guanxi

I also argue that the structure of Chinese society allows for more widespread and more effective use of *guanxi* than is feasible in most other societies (particularly in the West). Within China's interconnected society, *guanxi* solely operates within long-term relationships, is based on trust, mutual obligation and reciprocity and is policed by face (Qi, 2013), as was discussed in more detail in the second chapter. Since building up *guanxi* is a long-term process for both parties, establishing trust and commitment is essential (Buckley *et al.*, 2006). This is particularly true for personal *guanxi*, where there is greater trust, a stronger interdependence and a deeper duty of obligation between the parties than with professional *guanxi* (C. C. Chen *et al*., 2013). Therefore, *guanxi* is particularly effective within the interdependent structure of Chinese society due to the quality as well as the quantity of mutually dependent connections that enable the practice of *guanxi* to flourish (Cheung & Xu, 2015). The analysis from the interview data suggest that this can also apply in a Chinese international student context:

> *"In China, because of the history, you have to solve some questions just by guanxi. If you have a really powerful guanxi in China, it is true, you can do everything more conveniently or better. So I think it is not the main goal [of Chinese international students], but everyone will think that if I can have some good guanxi with a professor or a friends, that will be helpful."*
>
> Qinzhong, a male undergraduate student

Therefore, while building *guanxi* may not be the biggest factor in the decision for Chinese students to come to the UK to study, it is nonetheless a desire many Chinese international students will consider. Indeed, more generally, "building and maintaining *guanxi* networks is a dynamic and lifelong process of every Chinese person" (Tsang, 2013, p660) and personal relationships are of paramount importance in Chinese society (C. C. Chen *et al*., 2013).

Furthermore, the relative lack of maturity of China's legal and economic institutions means that the practice of personal *guanxi* is not only common and necessary, but also an effective strategy (C. C. Chen *et al.*, 2013). In Western societies, rules, laws and legal

contracts shape behaviour and are fundamental to business practices (Qi, 2011), whereas in Chinese society, face and trust shape behaviour and are fundamental in both business and social practice (Bedford & Hwang, 2003; Qi, 2011). More specifically, the interconnected social structure of Chinese society explored in chapter two combined with the lack of clear property rights, the lack of an independent judiciary and the lack of predictable, impersonal enforcement of regulations within the Chinese state provides an environment where a system based on relationship and trust is needed to regulate behaviour and business practice (Qi, 2013). This is not to say *guanxi* corresponds to corruption (although if corruption occurs then *guanxi* is likely to be one of the mechanisms enabling it), as the concept of *guanxi* is underlined by long-term obligations and focuses on relationship, whereas corruption is focussed on achieving material interest (Qi, 2013). Nonetheless, the risk of using *guanxi* for corrupt practices was noted in both the literature (C. C. Chen *et al*., 2013; Qi, 2013; Smart, 1993) and among those I interviewed:

> *"I think if you use guanxi and give others a chance, then it is ok. But if it is used to get an unfair advantage it is not good. When you make friends for specific purposes, in order to get some job or something, then I think that is not so ok. Some students really want to get something, so they can make use of others to get the result they want. So they don't care, they will make friends with people they don't like in order to get the things they want as they think it will be helpful."*
>
> Qingwen, a female master's student

> *"Guanxi sometimes is not a very positive thing. Even if we said this word, it has a relationship with the concept of people trying to promote themselves very quickly in a company, something like that."*
>
> Xiangyun, a female master's student

When one uses *guanxi* to gain a role or position, causing a more suitable person with higher merits to lose out, one violates principles of justice and fairness, as those who do not have the privilege of possessing the *guanxi* connections are disadvantaged. It may also harm the productivity of the company, organisation or social group (C. C. Chen *et al.*, 2013). Gift-giving is a commonly associated practice with building *guanxi* within Chinese culture (Smart, 1993), yet the line between the acceptable practice of giving gifts for the purposes of the establishing and cultivating genuine relationships and the unethical and corrupt practice of giving bribes to gain an intended benefit is not always apparent (Qi, 2013). For example, one

student observed how some teachers and students in Chinese universities used *guanxi* with their heads of department or teachers to acquire unfair advantages within an education context:

> *"The reason we choose to study abroad is because in China the educational system is bad… In China, guanxi is really important, and so relationships with their heads of departments are more important for teachers…* [Further,] *in China, the teacher will show preference to some students, but other students, maybe they are not of bad ability, but they have less guanxi with the teacher, so they are at a disadvantage. This is not fair, but in the UK, it is more fair. So this is a problem with the Chinese education environment."*
>
> Yuhuan, a female master's student

This corresponds to findings in the literature where grants are given or university staff appointed based on their *guanxi* connections more than on merit, which is seen as a negative aspect of Chinese culture by some Chinese students (Cheung & Xu, 2015). However, among other students, the necessity of using *guanxi* in Chinese culture combined with the opportuning for using *guanxi* provided by the structure of Chinese society meant that they viewed *guanxi* in a more positive light:

> *"Guanxi is really important. Because in China, we are not merely a law country; the rules are not always fixed. Because if you have guanxi, a close relationship with someone, you get what you want more quickly. Others may spend one year trying to get something, but you can just spend one day, and solve all the problems. So we may want to find someone who has a good background; maybe in China we can seek some help from him."*
>
> Zhou Yu, a male master's student

The Chinese value of pragmatism has been observed both in the literature (Fan, 2000; Hsu & Huang, 2015) and in my study: for example, ease of entry was frequently quoted by my respondents as a reason why UK universities were considered instead of universities in the US. Similarly, *guanxi* fundamentally is a very practical way to achieve goals in an interconnected society where one is frequently pushed to improve oneself (Tsang, 2013). It was noteworthy that the most common advocates for using *guanxi* were PhD students, for whom *guanxi* was a practical tool necessary to acquire academic positions and funding:

> *"Maybe some people of the young generation are more dreamy and less practical. They think they can walk on their own, they think they do not want to depend or rely on this guanxi. Because I think guanxi is unintentionally related to benefits, so they would not like to make benefits of their social relationships. These people want to solely make friends because you are interesting, not because they can bring something to them. So they don't like to use this guanxi."*
>
> Yuanchun, a female PhD student

Perhaps the tension between the practical need to use *guanxi* and the moral dilemmas of using *guanxi* can be resolved by the following approach: the practical use of *guanxi* can be deemed ethical providing that trust is maintained and honoured, that principles of justice and fairness are not violated and that using *guanxi* does not achieve wrongdoing (Melé, 2009).

In summary, while few Chinese students choose to come to the UK for the purposes of gaining *guanxi*, there is evidence that for some, building *guanxi* networks is a practical necessity for them. This section has highlighted aspects of personal *guanxi*, such as building relationships for emotional and practical support, that may not fit into Bourdieu's narrative of privileged students (either intentionally or unintentionally) investing in social ties to maintain certain privileges and distinctions or of his concept of convertible social capital. Furthermore, the legal and social structure of China's society promotes the effectiveness of *guanxi*, affecting a broader range of aspects of social life (including personal as well as professional relationships) than social capital in a Western context. Therefore, while *guanxi* is a Chinese word for a universal phenomenon, the types of the relationship as well as the intensity of their application differentiates *guanxi* within a Chinese context from other societies (Qi, 2013) and the use of *guanxi* by Chinese students distinguishes them from students from other countries.

8.2 Guanxi as a factor for choosing to study in the UK

Now that the context of *guanxi* within a Chinese international student context has been examined, this section examines how *guanxi* shapes the decision of Chinese international students to study in the UK. When analysing the interview data, there seemed to be two recurring motivations relating to *guanxi* that attracted students to the UK: having friends and family living in the UK that could potentially help support and settle Chinese international

students while they were studying in the UK, and building professional links (particularly within an academic setting). Both these motivations have been noted by other studies in the literature (Bamber (2014) and Hao *et al*. (2016) respectively), but this study builds on these studies by directly linking these motivations to the practice of *guanxi*.

8.2.1 Making use of friends and family already in the UK

It has been observed in the context of Malaysian students in Australia that having family members in Australia, and the associated possibility to be given advice and settlement assistance, were instrumental to the students' decision to study there (Waters & Brooks, 2012). Social links with family or friends living in the destination country can also be a pull factor for Chinese students (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002). Similarly, as explained in the previous section, the practical and emotional support procured through personal *guanxi* can be a factor in the motivations of Chinese students to come to the UK. Personal *guanxi* is particularly effective among Chinese students as they often rely on the advice, support and finances of others to achieve their goals (Jin & Cortazzi, 2006). In this study, I found that almost a third (eight out of 27) of the students I interviewed had some form of social connection with the UK. In particular, two students had relatives who currently lived in the UK and another two students chose to study in the UK because their romantic partner was in the UK. Further, two students had family members who had lived or studied in the UK previously (including in the same university in the UK), while another three students chose to study in the same UK HE institution that their friends (who had previously studied there) recommended. One student explained the importance of this connection to him arriving in the UK:

> *"My cousin got her degree in the University of Southampton, so that was another important factor that influenced my choice, so I choose here. Because sometimes, if a close friend or family members has experienced information from the same source, you can get more information. As this is the first time I will leave China, and I have no idea what I will experience, and don't know what to wear even."*
>
> Guan Yu, a male master's student

Thus, one important implication for universities is that university prestige is amplified by returnee students connecting with prospective students (Cebolla-boado *et al.*, 2018). Therefore, given the prevalence and importance of social relationships in Chinese culture,

students that possess personal *guanxi* with people who live in the UK (or who previously studied in the UK) are likely to make full use of it, demonstrating the potential importance of Chinese diaspora communities in the UK for university recruitment agencies. Moreover, the example of Guan Yu's cousin demonstrates the importance for universities to provide positive experiences for Chinese students, and further maintain good relationships with their alumni who return to China.

8.2.2 Professional links

While the importance of *guanxi* in an employability context has been well observed in other research (Buckley, Clegg, & Tan, 2006; Chen *et al.*, 2013; Cheung & Xu, 2015; Huang & Kuah-Pearce, 2015), this study adds to the literature by showing how *guanxi* is particularly important for Chinese students in an academic context. Even before starting a PhD, having *guanxi* with potential supervisors was deemed important to acquire a place on a postgraduate research programme:

> *"I think PhD is different from a master's, it doesn't apply so much on the university, but more on the supervisor. My main supervisor has visited China before, and my master's classmate had attended a lecture delivered by him, so my classmate talked with me, telling me he is very humorous, and did very excellently in this area. So that is why I chose him."*
>
> Xifeng, a female PhD student

> *"I didn't do my master's in China, so I do not know many professors. Because even in terms of applying for a PhD in China, guanxi is very important. Everywhere guanxi is very important in China, but especially in universities."*
>
> Ping'er, a female PhD student

Thus, the interview data show that professional *guanxi* with potential supervisors is a key consideration for prospective PhD students who wish to study their for PhD degrees (whether in the UK or in China) as well as for their future academic career. Students like Xifeng used her personal *guanxi* network to meet her future supervisor, so she could build up professional *guanxi* with him, thus enabling her to enrol on her desired PhD programme. The popularity of *guanxi* among PhD students (most of whom are academically-orientated, as shown in the fifth chapter) is of particular interest: just as face is universal but particularly relevant for traditionally-orientated students and *suzhi* is common to nearly all Chinese

students but particularly relevant for individualistically-orientated students, so *guanxi* is also universal, but particularly relevant for academically-orientated students.

This section highlights why it is important to consider *guanxi* when building a conceptual framework for theorising the motivations of Chinese students. While utilising personal *guanxi* and building professional *guanxi* in an academic setting may not be unique to Chinese students, I argue that the importance of *guanxi* in Chinese culture increases the opportunities to build and utilise *guanxi* networks. Therefore, it may be more common for these *guanxi*-related factors to influence the decisions of Chinese students to study abroad than students from other countries (particularly Western ones).

8.3 Guanxi operating in everyday lives of Chinese students in the UK

The use of *guanxi* also sheds light on everyday experiences of Chinese students in the UK. This section explores how some Chinese international students seek to build personal *guanxi* to gain emotional support when they arrive in the UK, as well as how some students also seek to build personal and professional *guanxi* networks to help them when they go back to China.

8.3.1 Gaining emotional support from personal guanxi

The intimate, interconnected nature of relationships within Chinese society are particularly useful in providing practical help and emotional support. This is especially prevalent when Chinese students find themselves in a new, unfamiliar environment away from their families and friends (Gao, 2014; Ma, 2014; Spencer-Oatey *et al.*, 2017; Waters, 2006). This is illustrated by the interview data, with 17 out 27 students in my study informing me that most of their closest friends in the UK were Chinese. One of whom was Xiangyun, a female master's student:

> *"When I was in China, my friends were not a group of friends. I knew this friend and that friend, but they didn't know each other, so I just come out with one or two friends. But in the UK, the thing that makes me very, very appreciate is I have a group of* [Chinese] *friends, and we can always have party together and study together. So maybe this is one of my social objectives."*

Xiangyun, therefore, intentionally sought to develop a group of close Chinese friends for both emotional friendship and for practical reasons such as to study and socialise together,

thus illustrating her pursuit of personal *guanxi*. Another example of a Chinese student in my study who made use of her personal *guanxi* for the purposes of practical help is Sheyue, who knew of a friend's friend studying in the same UK city as her, and so was able to utilise this link to find someone to live with:

> *"My roommate is a primary school student with my closest friend in my university, so my friend introduced her to me, and we live together."*

Personal *guanxi* relations contain strong expectations of mutual cooperation and support, with the strongest *guanxi* ties operating as if one is part of their family (Bodycott, 2009; Tsang, 2013). As a consequence, personal relationships are differentiated in terms of importance: with family and close friends in the closest circle, those one is familiar with in the second circle, and acquaintances in the outer circle; and with the requirements and strength of *guanxi* links stronger within inner circles (C. C. Chen *et al.*, 2013). Thus, Chinese students are often accustomed to having and building intimate (or inner circle) relationships with each other that mutually provide substantial help and support, which may partially explain why the primary social networks of most students in my study either mainly or exclusively consisted of Chinese students, a phenomenon commonly observed in the literature (Gu & Schweisfurth, 2015; R. Huang & Turner, 2018; Yang, 2014; Y. Yu & Moskal, 2018).

8.3.2 Building guanxi for the future

These mutually supportive, personal *guanxi* relationships are not only relevant to Chinese students during their time in the UK, but also in the future after they go back home:

> *"For guanxi, I think that I meet a lot of people from my own country, and they* [also] *want to go to Shanghai afterwards, so I think I can build a good relationship with them."*
>
> Keqing, a female master's student

> *"Guanxi is important to some students, particularly among students from the same province, so they can help each other when they go back."*
>
> Li Wan, a female master's student

Many students in my study, like Keqing, had some idea of which city in China they would move to after they completed their degree in the UK, and therefore were able to

intentionally cultivate personal *guanxi* relationships so they could help and support each other as they settle into their future Chinese cities.

Moreover, this study also gave evidence of Chinese students using their time in the UK to build professional *guanxi* relationships for potential future use, particularly among the eight PhD students in my study. As alluded to in the first section of this chapter, cultivating *guanxi* with supervisors or stakeholders is vital for PhD students or for those who wish to have an academic career. This reflection was widely acknowledged among the PhD students I interviewed:

> *"For PhD students, they have to find some way to be building guanxi networks, whether in the UK or China or ideally both, or else cope with the having less guanxi and therefore fewer job opportunities when they go back to China."*
>
> Yuanchun, a female PhD student

The necessity of *guanxi* for future jobs puts returning Chinese international students at a considerable disadvantage, as they do not have the time and means to cultivate the relevant *guanxi* links, unlike those who instead studied at Chinese universities.

> *"If you are a student who studies in a Chinese university, he or she has more opportunity to get in touch with local business or local industry or local companies, and get internships. And if so, then he or she will find it is much easier to get an official offer once the internship finished. So for international students, Chinese returnees, they are facing this kind of competition."*
>
> Liu Bei, a male PhD student

Due to this potential difficulty, a number of Chinese PhD students sought to build professional *guanxi* through their supervisor (whether directly through their supervisors introducing them to other academics with similar interests, or indirectly through being associated with an expert in their field):

> *"I think my supervisors have helped me a lot. They will help me because they know more people in this research area, so they may help me by recommending me job opportunities."*
>
> Da Qiao, a female PhD student

> *"My research supervisor is excellent in my area, so maybe he can introduce me to some opportunities."*

Xifeng, a female PhD student

Therefore, this section presents evidence that students sought to build *guanxi* networks while they were studying in the UK both for the purposes of emotional and practical support, as well in order to prepare for their future careers. The discussion of personal *guanxi* in the first sub-section is instructive for understanding cultural-specific reasons for how and why Chinese students invest time and energy into emotional and practical support for each other: Chinese students are accustomed to building intimate, long-term relationships with each other when separated from their previous social and familial links (Bodycott, 2009; C. C. Chen *et al.*, 2013), and the Confucian or traditional ideals of being committed to close friends gives impetus and a moral obligation to actively help and care for one another (C. C. Chen *et al.,* 2013; Hsu & Huang, 2015). Moreover, understanding the structure of Chinese society and professional *guanxi* networks (as explained in the first section) sheds light on the importance and necessity some Chinese students (particularly PhD students) place on cultivating professional *guanxi* networks.

8.4 Conclusions regarding *guanxi*

In conclusion, this chapter demonstrates that *guanxi* is an important consideration for many Chinese students. While other authors have briefly mentioned the role of *guanxi* within Chinese international student mobility (Bodycott, 2009; Cheung & Xu, 2015; Hao *et al.*, 2016; Ma, 2014), this study explicitly states the case for *guanxi* to be widely used as a component of the theorisation of Chinese international student mobility. This chapter adds to the literature concerning the ways in which Chinese uses of *guanxi* differ from Western uses of social capital. I argue that professional *guanxi* (which, as Chen *et al*. (2013) and Qi (2013) argue within the less-developed legal structure of China is both a practical necessity for furthering employability prospects as well as an opportunity) can be seen as broadly equivalent to social capital. However, I further argue that personal *guanxi*, with its emotive and others-focussed nature, is often distinct from social capital, and therefore *guanxi* is more appropriate to be used in a conceptual framework of Chinese international student mobility. Including *guanxi* within our conceptual framework is also beneficial because it synergises with other Chinese cultural and social concepts. It has been observed that building *guanxi* networks with non-Chinese students increases the cultural capital and *suzhi* of Chinese students (Wu, 2014). Further, the interaction between face and *guanxi* is one of the

characteristics of Chinese society (St. André, 2013). For interdependent and mutually beneficial relationships to be established, the commitment of both parties to build up each other's face is required (Buckley *et al*., 2006). Additionally, face is related to possessing *guanxi*, and developing connections is easier when one is respected[5] (Smart, 1993). As Jia Lan, a male undergraduate student explained:

> *"If you have more guanxi, you will have more mianzi. Because Chinese society is a society with a lot of guanxi. If you know more people, you will have more guanxi, and then your friends will come to you for help, because they know you have guanxi with others, and then you will get more face because they come to you for help."*

Using the concepts of professional and personal *guanxi*, then, this chapter helps explain phenomena observed in other studies (Bamber, 2014; Gao, 2014; Hao *et al.*, 2016; Ma, 2014; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; Spencer-Oatey *et al.*, 2017; Waters, 2006) more clearly. For those that have (or had) social connections with the UK, these personal *guanxi* networks can be utilised to provide practical help and support, which can be a key motivation for choosing to study in the UK. Further, for many Chinese students, building up mutually beneficial personal *guanxi* networks is a common strategy for acquiring practical and emotional support and hence *guanxi* is also a common feature within the experiences of Chinese international students in the UK. It is also worth noting that g*uanxi* seems particularly important for academically-orientated students, with six out of eight PhD students (most of whom I had classified as academically-orientated) pointing to the importance of building professional *guanxi* networks either for coming to the UK or for their future careers. In contrast, attitudes towards *guanxi* did not noticeably differ according to gender or whether traditionally or individualistically-orientated, or between master's or undergraduate students. Therefore, this study not only adds to the Chinese international student mobility literature by showing how a detailed understanding of *guanxi* can shed further light on the motivations and experiences of Chinese students in the UK, but also demonstrates the attributes of the Chinese students that appear to use it the most.

[5]On the other hand, it is worth considering that for some students, for whom *guanxi* (particularly *guanxi* in a professional context) has negative connotations associated with unfair practice, the inverse could apply: they intentionally distance themselves from the practice of *guanxi* partially to earn face in front of like-minded peers.

Chapter 9 Conclusion

The policy salience of studying international students has grown as their numbers have increased and as universities in the UK have become increasingly reliant on their tuition fees. Chinese students, in particular, have grown in number in the last decade. While in recent years there has been a surge of articles relating to the motivations and experiences of Chinese international students, one of the most overlooked aspects of this research thus far is who exactly these Chinese students are and the diversity between them. Chinese students are often considered as a homogeneous group in the literature: Bodycott & Lai (2012), Chao, Hegarty, Lu, & Angelidis (2017), Chen, Liu, Zhao, & Yeung (2015), Fang & Wang (2014), Gu & Schweisfurth (2015), Huang & Turner (2018), M. Li & Bray (2007), Mathias, Bruce, & Newton (2013), Mcmahon (2011), Spencer-Oatey, Lifei, Dauber, & Jing (2017) Waters (2006) and Xiang & Shen (2009). Further, when attention is paid to particular sub-groups of Chinese students (such as postgraduate students (Hao *et al.*, 2016; Z. Li, 2013; Tian & Lowe, 2012; Wu, 2014; Ye & Edwards, 2015), females students (Martin, 2017) or both (Bamber, 2014)), it often focusses solely on that particular group at the expense of the other groups of Chinese students. This thesis therefore contributes to the literature through exploring patterns within the characteristics such as level of study and gender of Chinese students.

Having set the context through describing the Chinese international students in the UK, I then sought a deeper understanding of this population through interviewing Chinese students. During this process, I discovered previously overlooked aspects relating to the motivations and experiences of Chinese students, the most important of which concerned the relationship between certain subsets or types of Chinese student and certain dominating motivations. Further, upon recognising the shortcoming in the literature of applying Western concepts and theories to Chinese international students (as shown in the second chapter), this thesis sought to establish a more suitable framework that incorporates Chinese concepts to better comprehend the motivations and experiences of Chinese students in the UK. This chapter, therefore, summarises the findings of this thesis and revises the conceptual framework proposed in the second chapter in light of these findings. The policy implications of these findings will then be discussed before the limitations of this thesis and areas of further research are appraised.

9.1 Summary of key findings

I argue that this thesis develops a nuanced, China-focussed understanding of the population of Chinese international students studying within the UK through examining the trends in Chinese international student mobility and the structure of the Chinese international student population

(answering the first research question), identifying the different types of Chinese students and examining the primary motivations of Chinese students with each type (answering the second research question), and using a Chinese concept inspired framework for explaining the motivations and experiences of Chinese students in the UK (the third research questions). This understanding forms the basis to inform university policies needed to sustain the interest of Chinese students in UK Higher Education.

9.1.1 First research question: Female students on master's degrees fuel the increase in the UK's Chinese student population

Despite the tightening UK immigration policies throughout most of the last ten years (Choudaha, 2017; Hung, 2010), the numerical decline of the demographic cohort of people aged 15-25 in the Chinese population in the last ten years due to China's declining birth rates (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2018b), the reduction in value of most UK qualifications in the eyes of Chinese employers in the last ten years due to growing global HE competition (Hao *et al*., 2016; Z. Li, 2013), and the cost of UK degrees, the numbers of Chinese students in the UK have dramatically increased, particularly at master's level (the numbers of Chinese undergraduates and PhD students have been relatively steady), as the analyses of the aggregate data showed. Female students also have contributed to this increase in numbers more than male students have, especially at master's level. It is rare to provide an in-depth overview of the trends of in international student mobility by exploiting the range of available secondary quantitative information, and so these findings are a helpful contribution to highlight how important the Chinese students, and in particular, female Chinese master's students, are to UK universities.

The interviews suggested some reasons for this increase. The rapid increase of Chinese master's students in the UK (regardless of gender) seems to be largely due to the short-duration of the UK's master's courses; 11 interviewees reported that the short duration of their programme was a factor in choosing the UK. This is important for students of both sexes due to the cheaper costs of only one year of tuition fees and living costs (as a opposed to, for instance, the three years of tuition fees and living costs of doing a master's in China), but there are also gender-specific reasons. For male students, there is often pressure to earn money to provide financial support for their future families (such as owning a flat before marriage), and so while many consider a master's a necessary qualification for entering the workforce, entering the workforce at the youngest possible age is greatly preferable, hence the attraction of a one-year master's degree. For female master's students, the preference for one-year master's degrees can

be seen as both a result of cultural opportunities and of cultural limitations. In contrast to male students, the interviews revealed that female students had less pressure to earn money to support their families, which gave them more freedom to treat the master's programme as a gap year where they were able to explore the outside world. However, female students often experienced pressure to limit the time they spent abroad due to the societal expectations for them to marry, which sheds light on why the one-year master's programme is particularly popular for female Chinese students. Thus, level of study and gender are significant factors shaping the increase of the Chinese international student population in the UK.

9.1.2 Second research question: The diversity within the heterogeneous Chinese student population

There are also more subtle factors shaping the Chinese student population. One of the most important contributions this thesis makes is identifying three different types of Chinese students: those that are heavily influenced by Confucian ideals of family and gender roles (whom I labelled as traditionalists), those who resist Confucian ideals of family and gender or are heavily inspired by self-improvement ideals (whom I labelled as individualists), and those who are focussed on study and knowledge (whom I have labelled as academics). The literature alludes to the need to consider the heterogeneous nature of the Chinese international student population (Gu & Maley, 2008; Wu, 2015; Ye & Edwards, 2015), yet few studies account for differences in the background and worldviews of Chinese students. In contrast, I consider this explicitly using this systematic typology.

The differences between these students can be most clearly seen when examining the primary motivations of these three types. One common reason traditionally-orientated students (at undergraduate, master's and PhD level) come to the UK to study is to obtain a degree from a reputable university that will help them enter the workforce. This group of job-focussed students included both male and female students, although males were much more likely to belong to this group than their female counterparts were. For many of these students, their ideal choice would be to go to a "top-tier" university (what the Chinese refer to as a *jiubawu* university or a 985 university after the date (May 1998) in which a government project was launched to cultivate the leading 39 Chinese universities into global HE leaders). However, if their national college entrance examination (*gaokao*) grade was not sufficient to get into one of these *jiubawu* universities, then their strategy was instead to study in a foreign university perceived to be considered elite (that is, high ranking) by their prospective employers in China. If their parents were wealthy enough, they would be able to study in the UK for their entire undergraduate programme. However, if not, (which is often the case), then they would instead attempt to either come to the UK on a "3 plus

1" programme if their university allowed it (which allowed them to study the final year of their undergraduate programme in the UK relatively cheaply), or else (sometimes additionally), they would come to the UK to study their master's programme at a UK Higher Education (HE) institution. Studying solely a master's in the UK is considered cheaper overall in terms or both money and time, and therefore the UK is a particularly common HE destination at master's level, even though the UK is sometimes seen as inferior to countries with longer master's degree programmes like the US or indeed China. Thus, for traditionally-orientated students, a key reason they continue to come to study in the UK (despite the many barriers) is that getting a degree, and in particular, a master's degree is considered a necessity for well-paid employment (employment that allows them to make sufficient money to support parents, to marry, and to raise children).

For other Chinese students, however, getting a job is not the main priority. For many individualistic-orientated students (most of whom were female master's students), one of their most common reasons for studying in the UK is to increase their *suzhi* by improving themselves. This contrasts with frameworks of international student mobility based on Bourdieu's theory of capital, which assume the driving motivation for international students is to acquire cultural capital that can potentially be converted into economic capital through a job market. For these individualistic-orientated students, they primarily sought to use the time in the UK to broaden their horizons, increase their skills and escape the familiarity and pressures of life in China, and have a year of fun and exploration before returning to a busy life of jobs, marriage and raising and supporting children. Thus, particularly for the master's students in this category, studying in the UK can be seen as equivalent to an English student taking a gap year or participating in a working holiday, as a couple of the interviewees suggested.

Additionally, another finding from this thesis is that there is a third group of Chinese students (including, but not limited to, most Chinese PhD students) whose main motivation for coming to the UK is also not to gain exchangeable capital, but to study for the enjoyment of studying. These students chiefly sought to increase their knowledge within global leading universities in in their specialised area and work alongside the global experts in their area of interest.

Thus, while other studies, notably Bamber (2014), Cebolla-boado *et al*. (2018), Li (2013), Martin (2017) and Xiang and Shen (2009), concur that these motivations are common to Chinese students, this study adds to the findings of these authors by linking these key motivations to different subgroups of Chinese students.

9.1.3 Third research question: Developing a "Chinese" conceptual framework

Another key contribution this thesis makes is to use relevant Chinese concepts to develop a framework that more clearly considers the motivations and experiences of Chinese international students than existing frameworks do. The push-pull theory, while gives a useful overview of the motivations of Chinese students, provides a less clear understanding of the nuances within the complex decisions of a diverse body; it does not fully describe how the different factors relate to one another nor how those factors are related to various subsets of students differently. Further, the push-pull framework tends to focus on merely the motivations of students while overlooking their experiences, which should not be separated (Raghuram, 2013). Meanwhile, Bourdieu's theory of capital, while useful to a certain extent for understanding the international student mobility of some Chinese students, is not appropriate for many others. The group that Bourdieu's theory of capital best applies too are the job-focussed, traditionally-orientated students. Often with the encouragement, support and leadership of their parents, these students seek to produce or reproduce various forms of their family's capital, with the primary concern to earn money, as was discussed in the fifth chapter of this thesis. However, even for these job-focussed students, there were other factors that played a substantial part in their decision to study in the UK, such as a desire to go to a country perceived as safe (such as the UK instead of the US), factors that Bourdieu's theory does not incorporate. Further, their motivation for increasing their employability prospects was not to gain capital as an end of itself (Cebolla-boado *et al*., 2018), but was linked with other goals such as face and stability. Thus, as was argued in more detail in chapter 2, there is need for a conceptual framework that does incorporate these aspects.

With this in mind, the diagram of the revised conceptual framework (figure 9.1) helps explain the factors (and their relationships with each other) that I believe (based on this study) are most important to consider when studying the motivations and experiences of Chinese students in the UK. As for the factors themselves, these remain almost identical to the factors in my proposed conceptual framework (figure 2.5), the only difference being the factor "accumulating capital through future jobs" is now labelled "accumulating stability and capital through future jobs", to take into account the importance of stability that emerged from analysing the qualitative interview data; seven of the students I interviewed cited the importance of stability in Chinese culture, particularly those from traditional backgrounds. Thus, I argue that while gaining capital is important to some students and their families, one of the most important aims behind accumulating capital is to obtain stability, and consequently I changed the label to reflect this. Elsewhere, the factors the students mentioned matched those in the literature. For instance, 14 of 27 students told me that the ranking or reputation of the institution they attended, or the reputation as a UK as an education provider were influential to their decision to study in the UK,

while 11 students made the inference that their parents directly gained face through them attending a prestigious university or studying in the UK. Thus, this gave strong evidence that "gaining face directly" was an important factor behind the motivations of Chinese international students. Similarly, 14 students told me that their experience in the UK was shaped by pressure they felt of not wanting to disappoint their parents or pressure to compare themselves to others and act in a similar manner to others. As I argued in chapter 6, these pressures are related to face, which is why I argued it is necessary to consider indirect ways face shapes the experiences and motivations for international students. Ten interviewees mentioned how safety was a factor of consideration for choosing to study in the UK, or was a consideration during their experiences in the UK. Relating to the factor of *suzhi*, 24 students told me how the desire to broaden horizons was a factor in their decision to study in the UK, while eight students told me that improving themselves was an important aspiration for them while they were in the UK. Meanwhile, eight respondents told me that knowing people who already lived in the UK (and therefore having either personal or professional *guanxi* with them) was a factor for them studying in the UK, while seven interviewees told me that they hoped to build *guanxi* with others while they were in the UK for future use.

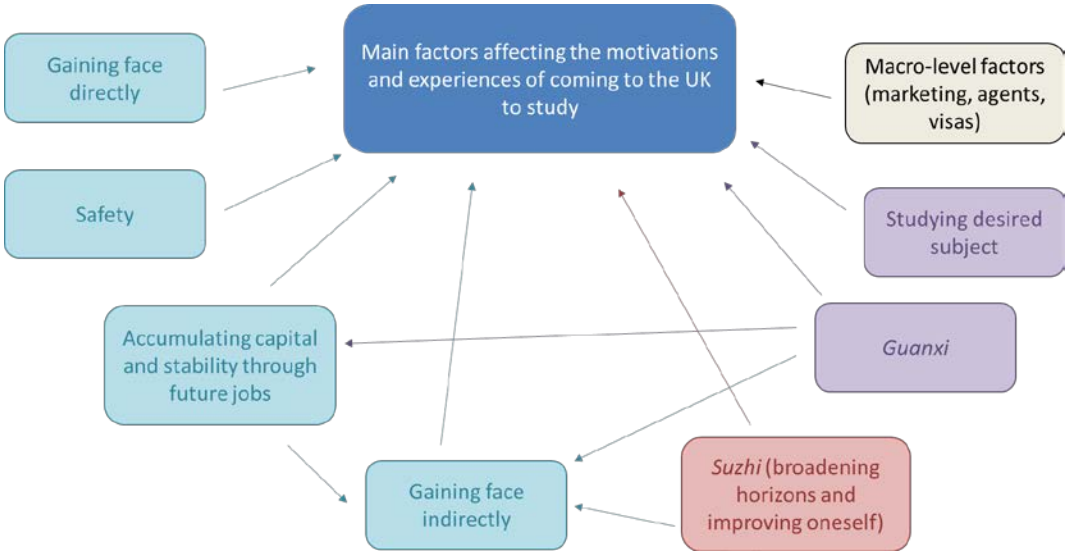

Figure 9.1 Author's own revised conceptual framework[6]

It is also noteworthy that nine students told me of their interest in the subject they studied, which is likely to have influenced their decision to study in the UK as well as their experience in

[6] Factors in a teal bubble represent those most popular with traditionalistic types, those in a red represent those most popular with individualistic types, those in purple represent academic types and grey-coloured factors can equally apply to all types of Chinese students

the UK. Thus, there is strong evidence that the hypothesised conceptual framework proposed in the second chapter of my thesis is a suitable framework for conceptualising the factors affecting Chinese international student mobility, and incorporates the most pertinent factors in the minds of Chinese international students and their families. However, not all of these factors are important for all Chinese students.

The main change in the updated conceptual framework is acknowledging that various factors are important for some groups of students, while do not apply to other students, or at least are much less of a consideration. To reflect this, I coloured-coded the factors according to the types of students that best correspond to those factors. Thus, factors coloured teal are those most important to traditionalistic students, red factors are those most important to individualistic students, and purple represents those that apply best to academic students. Especially for traditionalistic students, there is evidence for some of the students I interviewed that their motivations for studying in the UK included desires to reproduce capital (often for the sake of supporting parents and future family in the future), so this factor is associated with them, along with safety. However, the accumulation of capital can also be a factor in acquiring face (Qi, 2017), which is why I have linked the factor "accumulating capital" to " gaining face indirectly". Additionally, as I explained in the previous two chapters through evidence from students whom I categorised as traditionalistic, building *guanxi* and gaining higher *suzhi* could also indirectly produce more face for Chinese students and their families, so these factors are also linked to "gaining face indirectly". As for individualistic students, while they may also partly consider factors like face, safety and stability, their *suzhi*-related aspirations for broadening their horizons and improving themselves (which consequently shaped their motivations and experiences) are more important. However, as none of the eleven individualistic students in my sample's main motivation for coming to the UK was job related, I decided against linking *suzhi* with accumulating capital as the evidence suggested they were not intending to convert any cultural capital they acquired from broadening their horizons or gaining intercultural skills into improved job prospects: a change from the original proposed framework. As for academic students, their main motivation for coming to the UK was because they wanted to study, but they were also most likely use *guanxi* through building and maintain social connections with supervisors, and focussed the most on using *guanxi* during their time in the UK, particularly in acquiring jobs in academia. The only factor that had little relation to any of my proposed three types of Chinese student were the macro-level factors. While the fourth chapter raised the possibility that macro-level factors could be partially responsible for shaping patterns of Chinese international student mobility, only three students told me that factors such as agents or advertising employed by the university they attended were influential to them choosing which university to attend, and one student

mentioned how visa restrictions adversely affected her experience in the UK through giving her pressure to finish her PhD within three years. Thus, while macro-level factors therefore had some influence over the motivations and experience of Chinese students in my study, there was insufficient evidence to suggest one group was more impacted by macro-level factors than the other groups.

Therefore, incorporating face, *suzhi* and *guanxi* into the conceptual framework (along with other important factors found both in this study as well as in previous studies) yields a richer and more comprehensive social theory to explain Chinese international student mobility than either the push-pull theory or Bourdieu's theory of capital. This thesis, then, builds a theoretical framework that I argue is suitable for Chinese students, and provides a clearer insight into the decision-making of Chinese students. The usefulness of this conceptual framework can be demonstrated by reviewing the existing literature in light of this conceptual framework. For example, one rare study that observed and highlighted the influence of parents in the decision-making of Chinese international students' decision to study abroad was Bodycott and Lai's study (2012) of Chinese international students in Hong Kong. However, by considering how face governs the relationships of many Chinese students (particularly those influenced by Confucian ideals like the students in their study) even within families, the findings of Bodycott and Lai's study are enhanced. I therefore assert that this improved conceptual framework is a more suitable conceptual framework than either the push-pull theory or Bourdieu's theory of capital alone when dealing with students from mainland China in Western universities, and should be considered as a basis for other research into the international student mobility of Chinese students as it yields a deeper and clearer understanding of Chinese students.

9.2 Summary of policy recommendations

The final research question of this thesis sought to use these findings to inform policies aimed at sustaining the attraction of Chinese students to study in the UK and at improving the quality of life of Chinese students studying at UK universities. It is of integral importance to universities seeking to market themselves as global universities to consider the strategies of international students, the diversity within the international student body, the social, emotional and cultural experiences of international students and the expectations of students studying abroad (Bodycott, 2012). Therefore, the findings of this thesis together with various policy recommendations that were made by the students in the interviews provide the basis to inform and enhance university policies both in recruiting as well as in caring for Chinese international students during their time in the UK. All the policy recommendations in this section were

discussed in a meeting with representatives from both the University of Southampton's international office (which seek to recruit Chinese international students) as well as from the University of Southampton's Student Services Centre (who ensure students are given the assistance they need), and written up for university staff in a report. Both representatives told me they were grateful for our discussion, and said they would be discussing with their teams how to implement them. This section will suggest policies relating to: recruitment, social integration, the safety and wellbeing of students as well as students' educational and cultural expectations.

9.2.1 Concerning the recruitment of Chinese students

The UK HE sector receives one-eighth of its income from international students' tuition fees (Universities UK, 2014), illustrating the importance of international students to the financial health of UK universities (Y. Yu & Moskal, 2018), of which almost a quarter are now from China (Higher Education Statistics Agency, 2019). It is therefore imperative for UK universities to continue to attract students from China (as well as other destinations). This is particularly pertinent given the demographic situation in China: as the Chinese birth rate continues to fall, the pool of student aged people in China (those aged from 18 to 25) will continue to subside in the next five years (Chinese Ministry of Education, 2016).

There is a range of policy considerations that those seeking to recruit Chinese students either to the UK or to a particular university should consider. Given the popularity of one-year master's programmes in China for male and particularly female students, those seeking sustain the numbers of Chinese students in the UK or UK university should focus on highlighting aspects (such as the short duration of the programme) that would be especially attractive to master's students. Further, Bodycott and Lai (2012) emphasise the importance of engaging with the parents of prospective Chinese students given the importance of familial relationships in China. One finding from this study (for traditionalistic students in particular) is the importance of safety for Chinese parents, as chapter five showed. Therefore, a feasible strategy for those marketing particular HE institutions is to draw attention to the safety of the city or local area in which their HE institution is situated. Further, as there are different types of Chinese students, it is advisable to market different aspects of the university and surrounding area to attract these different types. For example, highlighting the ranking and reputation of a university is likely to attract traditionally minded students or those who are particularly influenced by face or employability prospects, while emphasising the historical or cultural attractions in the local area or the range of university clubs and societies available may attract those who are more experience-focused or want to improve themselves, and drawing attention to areas of academic excellence and expertise is likely to attract more academically inclined students.

Policy makers should also seek to limit reverse-pull factors that may produce barriers to those who otherwise would choose to study in the UK. At a government level, Bodycott (2009) found that complex visa applications and a lack of work experience opportunities reduced the effectiveness of recruiting Chinese students, a phenomenon that propelled Universities UK to call for the reintroduction of the post-study work visa (Universities UK, 2018). Similarly, in my study, six students told me of the importance of foreign work experience for Chinese employers and their frustrations at how hard they found it to obtain internships or part-time jobs in the UK. Additionally, a couple of students told me they considered countries like Canada, Australia and the US had friendlier immigration policies and were more welcoming towards international students. Thus, UK universities are likely to find it easier to recruit international students (of all nationalities) if the UK government if the government reintroduced post-study work visas (or allowed graduates to stay for longer to look for jobs once they complete their studies, as a recent white paper proposed (Home Office, 2018)), or simplified the working restrictions on Tier 4 visas for students to make it easier for students from countries like China to gain valuable work experience. Moreover, at university policy level, universities can proactively help students engage with career services and give guidance on how to acquire internships or part-time jobs in the UK (R. Huang & Turner, 2018). Access and value for money were further important issues for students in my study that should be considered by those recruiting Chinese students. One student admitted that the UK tuition fees were "very high," and suggested that UK universities could help students from less privileged families by offering more scholarships. Another PhD student suggested that UK universities could provide more teaching hours for master's students, so that students received better value for the investment they or their parents had made.

9.2.2 Concerning the social integration of Chinese and non-Chinese students

Many studies in the pedagogical literature draw attention to the phenomenon of the lack of social integration of Chinese and non-Chinese students within Western universities, specifically Huang & Turner (2018), Mcmahon (2011), Schartner (2015), Spencer-Oatey *et al.* (2017) and Yu & Moskal (2018). However, the qualitative data obtained for this thesis suggested that there this phenomenon did not apply to all groups of Chinese students equally: the majority of Chinese undergraduate and Chinese PhD students appeared to have multiple friendships with non-Chinese students (often people they knew from their course or office or whom they shared accommodation with), while master's students appeared less likely to make friendships with non-Chinese students, particularly on Chinese dominated courses such as business, creative arts and design management and teaching courses.

Several of the master's students in my study expressed some form of dissatisfaction or regret regarding their lack of intercultural friendships, and told me the lack of opportunity and a lack of confidence were key reasons preventing them making the international friends they desired, as has been found in other studies (Mcmahon, 2011; Spencer-Oatey *et al.*, 2017; Y. Yu & Moskal, 2018). There is evidence that social integration has many benefits: integration can lead to psychological and social benefits as well as higher grades (Spencer-Oatey *et al.*, 2017), improved language skills (a motivation that 16 out 27 interviewees stated was important for them) and achieve a greater sense of belonging to the host society (Schartner, 2015), and aids the personal development of Chinese students (Y. Yu & Moskal, 2018). Further, intercultural connections within a culturally diverse student population also benefits home students (Y. Yu & Moskal, 2018). Based on the discussions in chapters seven, I also argue that social integration can help students further broaden their horizons, leading to a higher *suzhi*. Moreover, it can be implied from the findings of the eighth chapter that social integration would result in Chinese students building *guanxi* networks with fellow non-Chinese students. Utilising these intercultural *guanxi* networks could benefit both the Chinese students (for example, through acquiring useful and relevant information or advice about a location, project or industry based outside of China if they want to work internationally (or even transnationally) in the future) as well as non-Chinese students (for example, through providing information and assistance regarding opportunities in China).

In light of these benefits and the desires of many Chinese students to build intercultural friendships, I suggest universities (and university departments) consider initiating some of the events and activities suggested by the Chinese students I interviewed (these are outlined later in this subsection). While many students mentioned various events organised by the university designed for encouraging intercultural interaction (suggesting that universities are already making effort to facilitate such events), it is also worth noting a couple of strategies suggested by some of the interviewees to increase the appeal and effectiveness of these events and activities. Firstly, a couple of interviewees suggested using WeChat (a very popular Chinese media platform) to advertise the events instead of emails, Facebook or WhatsApp. Emails are not used as much in China which means Chinese students are more accustomed to arranging social events on WeChat rather than by email (Booth, 2018). Additionally, Facebook and WhatsApp are blocked in China, which means that even though a number of Chinese students will get a Facebook account when they arrive in the UK, they will not be as familiar with it or check it as much as a Western student. Moreover, information on extra-curricular activities written in Chinese would further encourage Chinese students to attend such events (R. Huang & Turner, 2018). Secondly, Chinese students are much more likely to attend something if it is organised by someone they know, so it matters who invites them. If the event or activity is organised by a body they recognise like the Student's

Union or an official university event, this can reassure them, increasing the likelihood of attendance. Hence, organisers should bear these in mind if they want to promote an event or activity among Chinese students.

9.2.2.1 Set up cultural exchange events

One problem for a number of Chinese students of many of the university societies and clubs is the heavy drinking culture associated with them, which can lead those who do not enjoy partaking in such activities to cancel their membership of those clubs, despite their continued interest in the activity that the club or society supports (Ploner, 2018). Similarly, one of the most common barrier to building intercultural friendships for several of those in my study was the perceived lack of common interests, meaning they struggled to know what to talk about when talking with those who were not familiar with Chinese culture (for example, several students observed that Chinese and Westerners watch different TV programmes and listen to different music, thus limiting potential topics of conversation). Therefore, social activities based on cultural exchange within a particular hobby (such as literature, music or film) could facilitate intercultural interaction (Schartner, 2015). One student in my study, for example, suggested in a reading club where the group choose both a Western classic novel as well as a translation of a Chinese classic novel, and select some chapters to read and discuss together, thus enabling those from different cultures but with similar interests (in this case, classical literature) to draw together and learn about each other's cultures.

Another event that some interviewees suggested could be effective in helping Chinese students integrate is a "bring-food-from-your-own-culture" meal. Food is very important in Chinese culture, and the opportunity to show off food from their own culture as well as sample food from around the world was suggested by two of the students I interviewed. If events such as these were advertised on WeChat through the University, department or Student's Union, then there is a higher chance of Chinese students coming along compared with an event like drinks at a pub or clubbing organised by email.

It is also worth considering how to prevent people from sticking together during such events. A few students who attended university-organised social events told me attendees tended to stick with their friendship groups, including the Chinese students talking to each other. To help prevent this, icebreaker games may help shy Chinese students overcome their shyness, as some students informed me how they like playing games with their friends in Chinese social gatherings.

9.2.2.2 Initiate support of conversational English

In addition to a supposed lack of common interests, another common hindrance to making non-Chinese friends for students in my study was the language barrier, with over half of my interviewees claiming their poor English prevented them from making friends with foreigners as much as they wanted to. This matched findings of other studies that also found that language and a fear of making mistakes when using language was a barrier for students to form intercultural relationships (Heng, 2017; Spencer-Oatey *et al.*, 2017). To help students with this problem, four of my interviewees suggested that universities should start a language buddy system, a recommendation students in other studies also suggested (Heng, 2018; Mcmahon, 2011; Schartner, 2015). A similar suggestion could be to initiate conversation classes where local volunteers chat with international students for perhaps a hour per week, with a weekly topic discussion (such as the weather, sport, history, nature, films, literature or music), as this could help those struggling with their speaking and listening in English to improve their conversational English, which would help them have greater confidence to talk to non-Chinese people in their courses, accommodations or clubs, as well as have someone familiar with the local area to help them if they have questions.

9.2.3 Concerning the safety and well-being of Chinese students

Universities in the UK should not only provide high quality teaching but also ensure "an excellent experience on all aspects of student life, including their living and social environment and ensuring that students are effectively supported to reach their goals and aspirations" (Universities UK, 2015, p19). Safety and well-being policies, then, are particularly important aspects to address to ensure this "excellent experience". This is particularly pertinent given that one theme that emerged from the data was the importance of safety in Chinese culture. The majority of the students in my study gave recommendations that could be used to help improve the safety of Chinese students, and international students in general. In light of these recommendations, I therefore suggest that during the induction of newly arrived international students (of all nationalities), safety information should be given (perhaps in the form of an online safety course containing videos with subtitles in both English and Chinese) regarding mental health issues, responding to ill health, responding to abuse and traffic safety.

9.2.3.1 Loneliness and mental health

Universities have a legal duty of protect the health, safety and wellbeing of their students, and this duty of care is enhanced when the students have a particularly vulnerability, a category that includes international students (Universities UK, 2015). Given the heightened incidence of mental health difficulties during transition phases of life such as during higher education, one aspect in

which universities can act upon of this duty of care is by raising awareness of mental health issues, such as giving training to students to assist them in identifying mental health problems (Universities UK, 2015). Such training would be particularly useful to Chinese students, who are not accustomed to sharing mental health issues with others (partly because of the fear of losing face), and yet are likely to have additional stresses and anxieties that may be less common among Western students (J. Chen *et al*., 2015). As was discussed in the sixth chapter of this study, many Chinese students (particularly traditionalists) experience various forms of pressure, partly due to influence of face within Chinese society. For example, eight students I interviewed told me they felt pressure from their parents to perform well in their studies or to acquire a good job once they had completed their studies, a pressure enhanced by the moral obligation to repay the sizeable investment their parents have sacrificed for them. Further, loneliness is a common experience among Chinese students (Gu, 2009; Y. Yu & Moskal, 2018). Chinese students are accustomed to being surrounded by several intimate relationships in China and find the UK environment comparatively isolating. For example, one student told me that in his university in China, he used to share a room with five other students with whom he would eat every meal, while in the UK he lives in a room by himself, cooks by himself, and eats by himself. Likewise, a few of the students in my study (including all four undergraduates) told me of the relative loneliness they have experienced in the UK. Thus, loneliness appears particularly prevalent among undergraduate students (perhaps because they are both younger, and, unlike their master's level peers, are comparatively fewer in number and consequently have fewer Chinese friends). Therefore, as a result of the pressure and loneliness common among Chinese students, it is important to ensure Chinese students are aware of the support available to them through the university, and hence such information should be clearly presented to them during their induction. Further, Chinese students should be given clear guidance how to recognise the symptoms of common mental health illnesses as well as how to respond if they display those symptoms. In light of this, I suggest that universities spend particular effort to encourage Chinese students to attend any activities, events or training relating to mental health issues they may provide by advertising those events on social media that Chinese students regularly use such as WeChat.

9.2.3.2 Responding to health issues

In his study of the experiences of Chinese students in the UK, Mcmahon (2011) highlighted the difficulty Chinese students experienced when engaging with the UK health services, and the distress and concern this caused them. Some of the Chinese students in my study experienced similar difficulties and concerns. For example, one interviewee told me that one time he had a sore throat, and (as he would have in China) went to the A&E with the expectation of been seen

by a doctor and given medicine for it. However, when at the hospital it was deemed that his condition was not serious, and (much to his frustration) he was encouraged to make an appointment with a GP for a week later, by which point the student felt he would likely be better, in which case going to the GP would not be much use. Two other students mentioned similar situations, where their expectations of their symptoms being treated quickly were not met, which led to great frustrations with the NHS (and one student going back to China to be treated for a broken collarbone). Therefore, the use of health services is one area where there are sizeable cultural differences between British and Chinese culture. Given that Chinese students are accustomed to paying for health care and often desire to consult a medical professional regarding their health complaints, I suggest that during their induction they should be given clear guidance on how to respond to health issues in the UK, including the local provision of private health care in the UK where they can go if they want to pay in order to get a more efficient service.

9.2.3.3 Responding to abuse

One key point of concern that emerged from this study was the amount of students that had received some form of abuse during their time in the UK. Almost half the students I interviewed (12 out of 27) experienced some form of racist, physical or verbal abuse while living in the UK, often perceived to be due to their appearance or nationality. These included young people shouting loudly or throwing objects like eggs or ketchup at Chinese students as they drove past, British students intimidating Chinese students through aggressive actions or sexual harassment on campus, strangers (including drunk or homeless people) crudely insulting Chinese students in the city centre or shouting at them to “go back home”, as well as children making racist facial expressions at Chinese students. In many of these cases, my interviewees told me of their vulnerability, particularly of how they felt unable to confront those abused them. Therefore, while discrimination may not be an everyday experience for Chinese students, it does happen and is a common source of stress, upset and discomfort, and increases anxieties and loneliness (Y. Yu & Moskal, 2018). Therefore, during their induction, I suggest international students be given helplines they can call if needed, information regarding university services for emotional support and guidance on how to report abuse. Partly because of the value of social-harmony in Chinese culture (discussed in the sixth chapter), a couple of the students I interviewed told me they do not feel comfortable reporting such abuse, and did not know how to confront those that abused them. Therefore, guidance on how to confront perpetrators in a safe manner as well as encouragement to report these incidents may be beneficial. This guidance should be given to all international students, as it is possible that Chinese students are not alone in receiving such abuse. Further, diversity training could be given to all students when they first start at their universities to draw attention to acceptable and unacceptable forms of behaviour. This training

should highlight the benefits of being part of a multicultural student body, promote respect for other cultures and give guidance on how to interact appropriately with those from different cultures. Therefore, these policies could reduce the abuse international students receive, as well as guide students how best to react if they receive abuse.

9.2.3.4 Traffic safety

Lastly, a rather dangerous form of culture shock experienced by some of the students in my study was the unexpected behaviour of traffic (such as cars driving on the left in the UK when they are accustomed to cars driving on the right side of the road): one student had an acquaintance who was hit by a car while four other students told me that they had either nearly been run over during their first weeks in the UK or had found the different traffic rules problematic at first. Therefore, I also suggest that information on UK traffic rules (including cycling rules) should be given to international students of all nationalities as part of their induction.

9.2.4 Concerning the education and cultural expectations of Chinese students

It is vital for universities to address the expectations and cultural needs of Chinese students, as failure to do so can harm the reputation of the university back in China (Bodycott, 2012). If students hold inaccurate expectations of what is expected of them, then this can lead to disappointment, distress and the loss of face. Further, universities should seek to inform and address potentially unrealistic expectations of parents (Bodycott, 2012). As was noted in the discussion regarding face, students often feel an obligation to give face to their parents through ensuring that their parent's investment is worth the sacrifice their parents made for them. Hence, if universities can help parents understand what is achievable and unachievable for their child (for example, informing parents that a module score of 70% is very good and usually hard to obtain), it may help ease some of the enormous pressure Chinese students (particularly traditionalistic ones) are under. Therefore, in order to engage with both students and parents before the students leave for the UK, I suggest universities should seek to address various expectations through pre-departure talks where possible. I identify two common areas of expectation that should be addressed: education based expectations and cultural based expectations.

9.2.4.1 Expectations relating to education

It is well established in the pedagogical literature that Chinese students often struggle to adjust to Western learning behaviours (Gu, 2009; Wu, 2015). Specifically, gaps in expectation regarding learning experiences are a common source of a disappointment for Chinese students (Y. Yu & Moskal, 2018). For example, while Chinese students are familiar with methods such as learning by repetition, students often find the requirement of Western teachers to think critically difficult to grow accustomed to (Mcmahon, 2011) as in China it is seen as disrespectful to challenge a teacher or a source (Jin & Cortazzi, 2006). This is reflected in my study, where although some of the students had been introduced to critical thinking during a pre-sessional course for those that needed to come to the UK earlier to improve their English (which they largely found very useful), students appeared to nonetheless continue to struggle with how to learn independently and a couple of students were frustrated and perplexed that they despite their great efforts, they still were unable to obtain high grades for essays, and could not fathom why. Therefore, students would benefit through explicit instructions and information about how to excel within a Western education environment, such as the criteria required to meet in order to obtain a high grade for a piece of academic writing (Heng, 2018). Information regarding where to address the main point when presenting an idea would also be helpful; Chinese students tend to use a background-before-main-point approach when presenting ideas, an approach that could cost them academically if British teachers are not finding the main ideas where they expect them (Jin & Cortazzi, 2006). Therefore, by informing students of these differences before they come, students can be better prepared to adapt to a different education environment, which can potentially save them from losing face through receiving poor grades, thus improving their overall experience in the UK.

Another difference a couple of Chinese students in my study sometimes found challenging to adapt to was the relationship between teacher and student. Chinese students are often accustomed to ready access to their teachers outside class to ask questions and gain academic and emotional support (Cheng *et al.*, 2019), whereas in the UK teachers are usually only available to contact during office hours and tend to provide academic rather than emotional support (Mcmahon, 2011). Therefore explaining that the teacher-student relationship in British universities is more distant and where to get emotional support from in advance, as well as why office hours are necessary, will assist students in adjusting their expectations before they arrive in the UK, so they are better prepared to grow accustomed to the British system.

So far, I have considered how Chinese students can change in order to adapt to learning in UK universities, but as many universities describe themselves as global universities, efforts can also

be made by the university staff and teachers to be aware of these educational and cultural differences in order to better understand and serve Chinese students. For example, lecturers could encourage questions during the classroom by pointing out it is not rude to interrupt them, or (in classes of different nationalities) students could be encouraged to discuss ideas with their classmates through informing them there is no shame in making grammatical mistakes (Mcmahon, 2011). When marking essays or assignments, clear, detailed feedback about how students can improve will help Chinese students (who feel shame due to a poor grade) not lose too much confidence (a relatively common complaint arising from my study). Thus, cultural bodies such as the Confucius Institute can train teachers in understanding different cultures, which can further help students to adapt.

9.2.4.2 Expectations relating to culture

The requirement that universities enhance the whole student experience (Universities UK, 2015) necessitates universities to consider how to help students adapt to cultural environments as well as academic ones. One of the most common sources of embarrassment for Chinese students in the UK is through unintentionally committing *faux pas* through not understanding the accepted etiquette. Etiquette is extremely important in Chinese culture because face can so easily be lost through bad etiquette (Qi, 2017). Abiding by high standards of etiquette is particularly important to students aspiring to grow a higher *suzhi*, as the link between *suzhi* and etiquette discussed in the seventh chapter demonstrated. Based on the struggles of some of interviewees in this study, I would suggest it would be particularly beneficial to inform international students about the importance of queuing and talking quietly in public (such as buses) before they come to the UK, as this would potentially save Chinese (and non-Chinese) international students face in the future, as well as reduce the risk of local people experiencing irritation towards Chinese students committing such *faux pas*.

A couple of other cultural differences that are worth considering emerged from the interviews. Firstly, many Chinese students expect to find hot water stations around campus, particularly in buildings such as the library (Chinese schools and universities tend to have multiple hot water stations in each building). While installing hot water stations around university campus may be highly appreciated and help Chinese students feel welcomed, if this was not practical, informing students that obtaining hot water in public is difficult before students come could prevent disillusionment when students arrive in the UK. Secondly, there are also differences between Chinese and British expectations of ideals within romantic relationships (for example, one student told me that Chinese propriety expects those with a girlfriend to intend to marry her, an

expectation not necessarily reciprocated within British culture). Hence, informing students of this cultural difference might prevent misunderstanding and heartbreak later on.

Therefore, managing the expectations of students and parents through providing the information I have suggested during a pre-departure talk should better prepare Chinese students for some of the challenges that await them in the UK, which should improve their experiences; the ability of students to ease into the academic aspects of university life and into the cultural aspects of UK life largely determines their success or failure in settling into their new life (Ploner, 2018).

9.3 Limitations to this study

During this study, I encountered various hindrances and limitations which I sought to overcome or circumnavigate in order to ensure the findings of this thesis are as reliable as possible. One of the biggest challenges I encountered was the difficulty in recruiting undergraduate students in my sample of interviewees. Although I contacted the Chinese Scholars and Students Association specifically for undergraduate students, gave out undergraduate-specific flyers in different locations where I thought it was likely to encounter undergraduate students and contacted friends (and interviewees) that I thought may know undergraduate students, I was only able to recruit four undergraduates. This hindered my ability to make much inference regarding the differences between undergraduate and masters students or between different types of undergraduates (such as those who came over to study secondary education or A-levels in the UK). Nonetheless, even if I had been able to recruit more undergraduate students, I doubt it would have affected my conclusions greatly either regarding face, *suzhi* or *guanxi* or regarding traditionalistic, individualistic and academic groups of students, as my data was relatively consistent in this respect: on the whole, the motivations and reflections of undergraduate students were consistent with the motivations and reflections of master's or PhD students (although they did seem to differ more concerning experience, in particular regarding intercultural experience). Further, the lack of undergraduates in my sample would not necessarily distort from the overall Chinese international student population; while only 15% of the students in my sample were undergraduates, only 23% of the Chinese students enrolled at the University of Southampton in 2013/2014 were undergraduates (Higher Education Statistics Agency, 2015), which is roughly comparable.

Another limitation concerning the data collection process was that all the students I interviewed were recruited from the same university, which limits the inferences I can draw from this study to groups of Chinese students in other UK universities. However, to minimise the risk of selecting an unrepresentative sample, I interviewed students from three separate campuses

across two different cities, and tried to ensure students from a broad range of subjects were included in the sample. Having achieved this, I suspect that my findings would have been similar even if I had interviewed students across a range of similar universities (such as other Russell Group universities): when I asked interviewees which other universities they had applied for, the other universities were nearly always other Russell Group universities, suggesting that students similar to them would be found at other Russell Group universities. However, research among non-Russell Group universities (that typically have lower volumes of Chinese international students enrolled in them (Higher Education Statistics Agency, 2015)) and may cater to different types of Chinese students would be a particularly interesting area for further studies to focus on.

The fact that I am a Western researcher, interviewing Chinese students in English, could have led to both data measurement and data collection limitations. Language barriers will have prevented the students I interviewed expressing themselves as fully or as clearly as they would have liked. Similarly, when transcribing interviews, occasionally a word the interviewee used was not clear, or they had obviously used the wrong word in that sentence. In these cases, I used the context of the interview and my knowledge of similar sounding English words to transcribe the word I believed the interviewee intended to use, so that the transcription would be as close as possible to the assumed intended meaning. Nonetheless, this may have produced some measurement error into the data. However, this seldom happened, and so any potential measurement errors would not have affected any of the conclusions of this thesis. The language barriers could have also led to a biased sample; as most of those I interviewed self-selected themselves to take part, those with particularly poor English ability may have been less willing to volunteer themselves due to a lack of confidence. However, the synergy between this study and other similar studies regarding the motivations and experiences of Chinese students by fluent Chinese speakers (Z. Li, 2013; Martin, 2017; Z. Wang, 2010; Wu, 2014) gives confidence that any such bias had limited effect on the findings of this thesis.

Further, the importance of maintaining face in Chinese culture and the phenomenon of all Chinese students sharing a single, national face (Qi, 2017) could have also affected the data. It is likely some of the interviewees, viewing themselves as representatives of China abroad, would have made effort to ensure their responses in the interviews did not cause the loss of face not only for their own families, but also for the collective face of China. This is perhaps another limitation of me being an outsider. However, my knowledge of China and Chinese culture, my experience of living in China, and my informal knowledge of the Chinese language nonetheless helped relax my interviewees, and mitigated at least some of the disadvantages of being seen as

an outsider through reducing the distance between us. Thus, I believe that despite these limitations, the data is still accurate and of good quality, and the interpretations and conclusions drawn from the data are valid.

9.4 Areas for further research

This thesis forms the basis for many potential and interesting avenues for further research. Despite Cebolla-boado's *et al.* (2018) finding that marketing strategies developed by universities are of limited effect in recruiting Chinese students, this study showed that marketing strategies such as employing agents helped attract a least a couple of the students I interviewed, and consequently there is still a need to explore macro-level effects of Chinese international student mobility, such as the range of strategies employed by various universities for recruiting students from mainland China. Further, while this study highlights factors such as safety and stability as common considerations affecting the motivations and experiences of Chinese students, a study into the role of safety and stability (in addition to social harmony) within the wider mainland Chinese culture would be very interesting, particularly in relation to face (in this study, face, stability, safety and social harmony seemed to be particularly relevant for students from backgrounds that were more traditional). Similarly, another theme my study briefly drew attention to is the changing cultural values in China. There were some students in my study (who tended to be younger and from wealthier regions of China) that implied factors such as face, *guanxi* and stability were no longer as important for younger Chinese people as the previous generation, while factors like *suzhi* were becoming more important. While an analysis of the changing cultural values (if they are indeed are quantifiably changing) of China is beyond the scope of this thesis, this thesis sheds light on the need to investigate this phenomenon in detail. Additionally, while there has been Chinese sociological research on aspects such as face and *guanxi* (Qi, 2011, 2013, 2017), there appears to be limited sociological attention given to the Chinese concept of *suzhi*. A study into the pursuit of *suzhi* (particularly among young Chinese people) in mainland China could be both timely and significant for the development of Chinese sociology. Further, although *suzhi* originates from China, it can have implications in global sociology outside China. For example, it has been observed that young British people's motivation to undertake gap years or years abroad as part of their degree have little to do with increasing employability or cultural capital (Waters & Brooks, 2012). I argue that the concept of *suzhi* can be used instead to help explain this phenomenon, demonstrating the importance of considering concepts originating from non-Western countries within the development of global sociology (Qi, 2017).

Moreover, this study could be extended to clarify and broaden the conclusions. While this study draws attention to understanding the nuances of different subgroups of Chinese students and of important Chinese cultural concepts that affect Chinese international students in the UK, the study cannot claim to represent Chinese international students all over the world (or even in the UK). Therefore, it would be of great interest to develop a quantitative survey addressing the subgroups and key Chinese concepts highlighted in this thesis that can be sent to Chinese international students enrolled at different types of universities across the UK, as well as enrolled in universities within countries such as the US, Canada, Australia, Japan, Singapore, France, Germany, and any other country that may have a sizeable Chinese international student population. The results of this survey could give a clearer idea of the respective sizes of the different subgroups of Chinese students (traditionalists, individualists, academics and potentially others) around the world, and establish the prevalence of the Chinese concepts highlighted in this thesis among these different subgroups of Chinese students. Additionally, quantitative analyses such as cluster analyses could be applied to the survey data, which could perhaps clarify, modify or add to the typology of Chinese students I established in the fifth chapter. If these typologies and values such as face, *suzhi* and *guanxi* were found relevant and important to Chinese international students in different environments, then this would strengthen my conclusions substantially.

This thesis did not focus on social class due to the difficulties collecting data on it in a Chinese context. Tsang (2013), in her study of social reproduction within China's middle classes, argues that Western theories like Bourdieu offer analytical and theoretical perspectives on China's middle class, yet China's history, politics and society means that Chinese class formation is not comparable to Western societies. For example, *hukou* (registration of address), introduced by the Maoist government in 1958, is highly significant for Chinese class formation, as those with an urban *hukou* (particularly a *hukou* in a wealthy province on the eastern coast or cosmopolitan cities such as Shanghai or Beijing) have better access to and choice of education and employment opportunities, which then can use to reproduce their social privileges, while there is no equivalent to *hukou* in Western societies (Tsang, 2013). Tsang (2013) defined the Chinese middle class as those that have a minimum per-capita income of at least RMB9,000 per month, post-secondary education or above, hold managerial-level job positions, possess an urban *hukou*, own a house or a car, and have a disposable income of RMB300,000 or above. Ultimately, while I considered asking respondents for this information, I decided that the complexity of these questions and the risk of making the respondents uncomfortable through asking so many personal questions was not worth it, given that that the focus of this study being on the motivations of Chinese students

and families rather than the phenomenon of social reproduction in a Chinese context. Nevertheless, it would be interesting to investigate social reproduction in a Chinese setting. Thus, while a focus on privilege and social reproduction is beyond the scope of this thesis, this could be another important area for further research.

9.5 Overall conclusion

This thesis begun by asking whether reading 10,000 books or travelling 10,000 miles was more important for Chinese students in the UK. Considering the content of this thesis, perhaps the answer is "it depends". For some, it appears their preference is for studying books and articles. For others, their preference is for broadening their minds and becoming a higher quality person through their experience of sojourning on the other side of the world. Yet there are other Chinese students for whom the stability of future jobs, rather than knowledge or experience, is what drives them to leave home and study in a foreign country. For these students, perhaps international student mobility is ultimately an exercise in managing face.

Appendix A Glossary of Key Definitions

Many authors in this field tend to use "international student mobility" rather than "international student migration" as mobility implies the non-permanent nature of those crossing national boundaries in order to study a formal programme (Brooks & Waters, 2013; King & Raghuram, 2013). International student mobility may take many forms. These include dual degrees and online courses in addition to the more traditional forms of going abroad to study an undergraduate or postgraduate programme (Brooks & Waters, 2013). Consequently, there are multiple definitions as to what constitutes as an "international student". Frequently, quantitative sources of data do not match with other sources due to this mismatch of definitions, nor are secondary data equally readily available for different definitions of international students (UNESCO, 2018a). Hence, for the purposes of this thesis "international students" will be defined as those who travel out of their country of origin in order to enrol in another country because they are enrolled on a programme within a Higher Education institution in that destination country, in line with the definitions given by secondary data providers of international student mobility such as UNESCO and Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA). Unfortunately, this will mean that some of those whom other researchers define as "international students" will be missed. For example, there are two forms of international student mobility: credit mobility; that is, short term exchange programmes, and degree (or diploma) mobility; that is, undergraduate, masters, PhD programmes and diplomas (Brooks & Waters, 2013; King & Raghuram, 2013). I will mainly focus on degree mobility, namely those students who are on undergraduate, masters and PhD programmes, in line with secondary data sources such as Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA). Although metadata on the credit mobility of Chinese students is hard to find, the vast majority of international student mobility from China to the UK is the degree mobility kind (there appear to be no substantial differences in the totals from university international offices (which includes all forms of mobility) to the HESA totals (which just measures degree mobility)). Hence, the decision to focus on degree mobility of international student mobility for Chinese students is a sensible reduction of focus, and my chosen definition of an international student shall include the vast majority of all kinds of international students from mainland China to the UK.

Appendix A

Tertiary education (more commonly known as Higher Education) refers to the types of education that can be acquired at Higher Education institutions; primarily consisting of Bachelor degrees, Master's degrees and doctorates and is generally regarded as the highest echelon within education (Bailey, 2015). While international student mobility could technically refer to mobility within any level of education, the vast majority of international student mobility occurs within the Higher Education sector (Brooks & Waters, 2013). Therefore, the focus of this thesis will be international student mobility within Higher Education.

During this thesis, the part of the People's Republic of China that consists of what is commonly referred to as "Mainland China" will be referred to "China" throughout. Thus, the term "China" in this research will not include the Special Administrative Regions of Hong Kong and Macau, unless otherwise stated. The reasons for this is that secondary data providers tends to categorise mainland China, Hong Kong and Macau separately. While there are many similarities between Chinese people from mainland China and Chinese people from elsewhere, the significant difference that exist between them mean that they should not be treated as a homogeneous unit when possible (Wu, 2015). Additionally, mainland China accounts for by far the largest proportions of Chinese people both in the UK and worldwide (Higher Education Statistics Agency, 2018d; UNESCO, 2013).

Appendix B Questions asked during interviews

Introduction/Demographic Questions

I would like to start by getting know a little bit about you. Do you currently study undergraduate, masters or PhD? What major do you study?

- Which province in China are you from?
- What ethnicity group do you best identify with?
- Have you studied outside mainland China before starting your current degree?
- What would you like to do after you finish your current degree programme? Is this likely?
- If you don't mind sharing, what age category best suits you? Less than 20? 20-24? 25-29? Over 30? Prefer not to say?

In-depth Questions

Now, I would like to discuss your decision to study at this university in more depth. Remember, all questions are voluntary, which means that you can choose not to answer any question you wish, or stop the interview at any point. But if you are willing to help me understand, let us begin by you sharing with me how you came to study in Southampton?

- Why did you decide to study outside China? Why is this important to you?
- Why did you choose to study in the UK? Why is this important to you?
- Why did you choose to study in the University of Southampton? (Prompt: why not another university such as Bournemouth?)
- How will your whole experience in the UK help you when you go back to China? What do you hope to achieve this year?
- Statistically, there are many more female students than male students that come to the UK to study. Why do you think this is?
- Why did you want to study that particular major? Did you feel any influence from parents in this decision?
- Did your family influence your decision to study in the UK? If so, in what way?
- Some interviewees have told me that some Chinese students experience ya1li4 (压力) from their family and relatives. Is this common? What types of families will often

feel more *yali*? Why do students feel this pressure? Can the university do more to help these students? How does society cause Chinese people to be "fit in"? Is there a link with face?

Please can you tell me the story of your arrival in the UK?

- Did you know any people in the UK before you came? If so, how did that influence your decision to study in the UK?
- Did you experience any culture shock?
- How did you find the UK initially? Can you give some positive and negative examples? Have you changed your opinion at all since the time you first arrived?
- Do you think you have changed as a person since coming to the UK? If so, in what way? (What skills do you think you have learned? How has your character developed?) Networking? Future job opportunities? Suzhi? Passion for field?

How do you support yourself socially while in the UK?

- Where do you make your closest friends?
- Are you close to any non-Chinese people in the UK?
- Have you had any unpleasant experiences when you have interacted with non-Chinese people in the UK?
- Some students I have talked to observe that Chinese students tend to stick together. Why do you think this is?

If there were one aspect about your experience in the UK you would like to improve, what would it be?

- Would you recommend studying in the UK (or in the University of Southampton) to your friends who are thinking of studying abroad? Why or why not?
- What could the University of Southampton do to improve your experience in the UK?

The main purpose of my research is to help *waiguoren* understand Chinese international students better. Some students have said that 面子 (face) and 素质 (*suzhi)* are very important to understanding Chinese students. Which of these do you think are important for understanding Chinese students?

Regarding why Chinese student come to the UK, some students have told me that 关系 *(guanxi),* 相亲 (xiang1 qin1), 找寻自我 (finding oneself; zhao3xun2 zi4wo3) and 逃避

(escape; tao2 bi4) are also important to certain groups of students. Are there many different types of Chinese students? How do these different groups of Chinese students differ from each other?

Is there anything else you would like to add?

Appendix C Clustering interviewees

This appendix gives an overview of all the interviewees in my study, and sheds light on how I clustered them. This overview is displayed in tables 1-3 below, where table 1 lists those in the "Traditionalist" cluster, table 2 lists those in the "Individualistic" cluster, and table 3 lists those in the "Academic" cluster. For each interviewee, I recorded the pseudonym I allocated each student, as well as the basic characteristics of each interviewee, namely their gender, level of study (PhD, Master's and undergraduate, displayed as "UG") and their rough subject area. In most cases, I identified the subject area using the corresponding to the 19 subject groups listed on the HESA website (Higher Education Statistics Agency, 2018c). However, for very specific groups, I swapped the HESA subject group name with the department within the university that the respondent belonged to, in order to prevent any identity being exposed. Preventing disclosure was also my motivation for why I used subject groups instead of the subject the interviewees gave me in the interview; it was possible there would be very few (if any), other Chinse students studying that subject at that level, and thus, if this was the case, then their identity was at risk of being disclosed. Therefore, to prevent disclosure and be consistent with the aggregate data analysed in the first phase of my study, this method of classifying subject was chosen.

After recording the personal characteristics of each interviewee, I then clustered them depending on whether I thought them to be more traditionally-orientated, or more individualistically-orientated: this is recorded in the columns labelled "Belief". The next column (labelled "Motivation" records the primary motivation of the students; whether that was job-focussed, experience-focussed or academic-focussed. The next column displays which of the three clusters ("Traditionalist", "Individualist" or "Academic") I decided to group each interviewee, with the final column giving a concise explanation of the rough reason for that decision.

There are some data in the "Belief" and "Motivation" columns that have an asterisks (*) besides them. This represents situations where it was not clear how to label an interviewee, normally as they indicated evidence for both traditional viewpoints as well as individualistic viewpoints, or it was not clear what their primary motivations for studying in the UK was. For these interviewees, a careful consideration was given to decide which group best to allocate to that interviewee. For example, Qiaojie (table 2) was classified as an "Individualist" as

although her parents chose which subject she was to study, she insisted that she would study in the UK, not in China, until her parents gave in and let her on condition they choose what subject she was to study. Thus, I felt she was best classified as an "Individualist" for her independence and resistance to her parents rather than a "Traditionalist" for following her parents.

These eleven students were clustered as traditionalists. There were all influenced substantially either by accepting their parents' leading (they were highly influenced and limited by pressure from parents in matters such as choice of subject or how they spent their time in the UK), accepting pressure to act in accordance to traditional gender roles (such as pressure to get married at an early age for female students or earn money before getting married to buy a house for male students), or affirming traditional stereotypes of gender (such as the belief that women were less capable working long hours than men were). Conversely, factors such as independence or self-improvement were not important factors for students in this group.

In contrast to the first cluster of traditionalists, the ten individualists within this second cluster were not so obviously influenced or limited by their parent's decisions, or affected by pressure to, for example, get married by a certain age. Instead, either they denied being influenced by such pressures, or, if they acknowledged such pressures, they intentionally sought to resist them. In other cases, they displayed an appreciation and a desire for independence from families or teachers. They also could be focussed on their own ambitions, often particularly desiring to cultivate themselves. This does not necessary mean they broadly rejected Confucian ideals; indeed two of this group (Xiangyun and Xiren), despite strongly displaying these individualistic traits, were among the most filial people I interviewed. Although most people in this type were primarily interested in enjoying their experience in the UK, there were also four who were academic-focussed. However, these four were placed in this group I felt their individualistic traits were stronger than their academic traits, and they had more resemblance to the others in this group than to those in the last cluster of academics.

This third cluster consisted of six PhD students. At certain points in the interviews, these six students sometimes hinted at having either broadly traditional traits (such as being influenced by their parents) or broadly individualistic traits (such as enjoying a relatively independent life), or, in Diaochan and Yuanchun's cases, sometimes being affected by both traditional and individualistic traits. However, unlike the students in the first two clusters,

this was not very clear, and thus I felt unable to cluster any of them in either of the first two clusters. Instead, these six all shared a common desire for knowledge and research, which was highly influential in their reasons for coming to the UK initially. Therefore, as this differentiated them from all (except perhaps two) of the other students in my study, I formed a third cluster of these academic students.

Appendix C

Table C.1: Characteristics of interviewees clustered as a "Traditionalist"

Name	Gender	Level	Subject	Belief	Motivation	Cluster	Reason for clustering
Zhang Fei	Male	PhD	Law	Traditional	Job	Traditionalist	gender pressure
Cao Cao	Male	Master's	Business	Traditional	Job	Traditionalist	parent pressure
Guan Yu	Male	Master's	Business	Traditional	Job	Traditionalist	gender stereotypes
Huang Zhong	Male	Master's	Business	Traditional	Experience*	Traditionalist	gender stereotypes
Qingwen	Female	Master's	Engineering	Traditional	Job	Traditionalist	parent pressure
Tanchun	Female	Master's	Education	Traditional	Experience	Traditionalist	parent pressure
Xiao Qiao	Female	Master's	Creative arts	Traditional	Job	Traditionalist	gender pressure
Zhou Yu	Male	Master's	Education	Traditional	Job	Traditionalist	gender pressure
Zijuan	Female	Master's	Engineering	Traditional	Experience*	Traditionalist	family pressure
Jia Lan	Male	UG	Business	Traditional	Job	Traditionalist	gender pressure
Qinzhong	Male	UG	Engineering	Traditional	Job*	Traditionalist	gender pressure

Table C.2: Characteristics of interviewees clustered as an "Individualist"

Name	Gender	Level	Subject	Belief	Motivation	Cluster	Reason for clustering
Zhuge	Male	PhD	Creative arts	Individualistic	Academic	Individualist	self-focussed
Keqing	Female	Master's	Business	Individualistic	Experience	Individualist	independent
Li Wan	Female	Master's	Business	Individualistic	Experience	Individualist	independent
Sheyue	Female	Master's	Creative arts	Individualistic	Experience	Individualist	self-focussed
Xiangyun	Female	Master's	Business	Individualistic	Experience	Individualist	self-focussed
Xichun	Female	Master's	Education	Individualistic	Academic	Individualist	resist pressure
Xiren	Female	Master's	Business	Individualistic	Experience	Individualist	resist pressure

Yuhuan	Female	Master's	Creative arts	Individualistic	Academic*	Individualist	no pressure
Miaoyu	Female	UG	Business	Individualistic	Academic*	Individualist	independent
Qiaojie	Female	UG	Business	Individualistic*	Experience*	Individualist	resist parents

Table C.3: Characteristics of interviewees clustered as "Academic"

Name	Gender	Level	Subject	Belief	Motivation	Cluster	Reason for clustering
Da Qiao	Female	PhD	Geography	Traditional	Academic	Academic	not that traditional, wants academic job
Diaochan	Female	PhD	Engineering	Traditional*	Academic*	Academic	unclear beliefs, wants academic job
Liu Bei	Male	PhD	Engineering	Traditional	Academic	Academic	not that traditional, passion for study
Ping'er	Female	PhD	Law	Individualistic	Academic	Academic	not that individualistic, passion for study
Xifeng	Female	PhD	Social studies	Traditional	Academic*	Academic	not that traditional, wants academic job
Yuanchun	Female	PhD	Geography	Traditional*	Job*	Academic	wants a good job (not specified in academia or not), but enjoys research

For each type, I give a fictional case study example to help illustrate the nature of students within that type. However, although the characters portrayed in the case studies are fictional, the characteristics, attitudes and actions that I attribute to them (most of which are outlined earlier in the chapter) are directly transposed from actual interviewees in my study whom I clustered into that corresponding type. The advantage of these case studies is firstly that it helps bring these types to life; it illustrates the patterns in my data in a way that is very easy to understand. Secondly, it helps me portray a thorough account of three different but relatively common kinds Chinese international students by using real details but without risking disclosing the identity of those in my interviews.

Baochai (a female master's student from Jilin) is very focussed on ensuring she passes her degree; the idea of failing is considered so shameful it is almost unconceivable. She is very keen to secure good employment soon after she returns to China as she comes from a poorer, less developed province in northeast China. Further, she is strongly influenced by Confucian ideology and is consequently very aware of her responsibilities and duties towards her parents. She feels pressure to study well so as to repay the emotional and financial investment of her parents.

> *"Most of China is still not very rich now. And most of the students who come from middle-class families. Maybe they don't need to borrow some money from bank, but they may need to borrow money from relatives, and this is a very big amount of money. And when they return, they face a very big pressure, because of this amount of money paid by their parents and relatives."*

Liu Bei, a male PhD student

Baochai also feels pressure to marry in the near future. Thus, one of the biggest reasons she choose to study in the UK instead of other countries is due to the shorter master's programme in UK universities. She will be 25 years old next year, which means her parents and relatives are already beginning to ask her about when she will have a boyfriend. Therefore, she knows she cannot afford to spend more than one year to go abroad to study, as that would likely shorten her window of opportunity marriage; the longer she remains unmarried, the harder it will be to marry someone "suitable".

"In China there is another problem for girls. I am almost 25, and in older minds they think that girls at this age need to think about marry, not study."

Zijuan, a female master's student

Baochai studies with her Chinese course mates in the library most days, often coming back with them together before it gets too late. Although ideally she would want more friends from other countries, in reality she has very few intercultural friends as she does not have the time to spend in the university clubs and societies. Further, her business related course is about 90% Chinese students, and all her flatmates in the university accommodation are also from China. In the rare opportunities she does meet with native people, she feels a little shy of speaking, as she knows her spoken English is not that fluent, and fears losing face by making a silly mistake.

"For most of the students who come from China to study master's degree, most of them do not have that fluent English, so they are afraid of making some mistakes, so they don't actively make friends here with local people."

Liu Bei, a male PhD student

Further, she tends not to like clubbing and partying that much, which further limits social interaction opportunities with foreigners. Her preferred method of socialising is to have a meal with friends in her flat, chatting with them and then playing games with them. Thus, this fear of losing face coupled with limited opportunity means that Baochai does not have any intercultural friends, despite of the hope she had before she came that she at least would make a few British friends (Cebolla-boado *et al*., 2018).

Daiyu (a female master's student from Shanghai) values the freedoms she finds in the UK, such as the freedom of speech and the relatively liberal values that are not as common back in China. She also appreciates the relative lack of pressure within UK society. Thus, life in the UK seems relaxing and fun to her, and she enjoys the independence of being able to do what she likes without being bossed around by either her parents or her teachers.

"I enjoy the freedom and independence I have in the UK. I enjoy the freedom from my parents, as my relationship with my parents is not too good. You can be more free here. Because in China, in university, some teachers are very strict, and you don't have your own time. But in the UK, as foreigner, your horizons are more wide."

Qiaojie, a female undergraduate student

During term time, Daiyu does not always study as hard as some of her Chinese colleagues do as she sees study primarily as the means by which she is allowed to spend time in the UK rather than the main objective. During the holidays, Daiyu loves to travel around Europe with friends, and is always interested in any opportunity to visit London, whether that is to go shopping or to

spend an evening at the theatre. However, Daiyu is not only in the UK for fun. She is also determined use this time in the UK to improve herself. She wants to learn about other cultures and become more open-minded and tolerant to different ideas and ways of doing things. She is always seeking new experiences to broaden her horizons (Martin, 2017).

Daiyu's parents are relatively wealthy; they sent her to study her undergraduate in the UK too. They are also well educated. Her mother tends do not care too much about what Daiyu does; as long as she knows she will be happy. Daiyu's father is more protective, however, and shows his care through giving Daiyu lots of instructions and commands. While Daiyu respects and listens to her parents, she is not afraid to argue with their parents concerning their points of view, and does not always submit to their parents' opinions and instructions, often (unknown to her parents) coming back late at night from social activities after it is dark.

Although Daiyu originally found life in the UK very difficult and lonely, she learnt how to be look after and rely on herself through that experience. She overcame her initial shyness to talk to foreigners, and now has many friends from all over the world, most of whom she met through attending the several clubs and societies she signed up to at the start of the academic year. As she has adapted to the UK life and study culture, her confidence has increased. She is not shy to express her admiration for certain aspects of Western culture, and has grown to prefer some of these aspects to Chinese culture. Even though she knows it is unlikely, she hopes that she will be able to get a job in the UK after she has finished her studies, and at least work here for a few years.

Baoyu (a male PhD students from Zhejiang), has always loved studying. He originally came to the UK for his masters to study his passion, engineering. In contrast to many of his classmates, Baoyu wants to study for the sake of gaining knowledge, rather than to pass exams or achieve a good grade (Hansen & Thøgersen, 2015). Baoyu takes every opportunity to add to his knowledge, not just in his field, but in other fields too. One of the reasons he chose to come to the UK is because of the greater internet freedom, and during his free time, Baoyu likes to browse news websites and journals that would be much harder for him to access back home in China.

"You know, in China, the censorship is very strict, we even can't use Google, or many other online resources. But here, internet access is free, and we can get access to many new resources. So apart from what I am studying, I can also study a lot more additional stuff."

Liu Bei, a male PhD student

He has a few close non-Chinese friends he regularly engages in deep, philosophical debates with, and show great interest in understanding British history and culture.

Baoyu's main motivation for studying in the UK is because he wants to study in institutions alongside the world-leading experts in his field. He hopes for a career in academia, which is supported by both his traditional father (who hopes Baoyu will one day gain the status and reputation associated with becoming a professor), as well as his individualistic mother, who is pleased that her child is doing a career he really enjoys. As for Baoyu himself, he is harder to classify. On one hand, he resists what his parents tell him to do on occasions where he does not agree with them. On the other hand, he observes the trends of younger Chinese people becoming more individualistic, and distances himself from them. Baoyu is very observant, and pays close attention to the trends he observes in China as well as in the UK. One aspects of his life in the UK he appreciates most is learning to think critically, and is quick to analyse the news reports, journal articles and opinions he encounters.

As for the future, Baoyu has no real preference where he goes. He is aware of the experts in his field around the world, and hopes for the opportunity to collaborate with them in the future. Thus, although Baoyu assumes he will return to China ultimately, he is willing to move to wherever there is a research position available for him once he completes his PhD, whether that is to stay in the UK, move to another country or return back to China.

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