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THE VALUE OF OVERSEAS STUDY FOR CHINESE INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS: A LIMINAL EXPERIENCE

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to identify the value sought by Chinese International students (CIS) from their overseas study experience, to examine how that value is created, and determine what influence culture has on that process. The study is grounded in the marketing discipline and draws on literature relating to Value, Internationalization of Higher Education, and Liminality to provide a novel understanding of the value creation process within the intercultural context of UK higher education.

I adopted a social constructionist approach to my study based on a growing body of research which suggests that value is a social construction rooted in a cultural perspective. I interviewed twenty CIS, at different stages of higher education study within the UK, about their own individual experience and about their thoughts on the experience of other members of the CIS community. I adopted a hermeneutic phenomenological approach to data analysis based on emerging data which resonated with my own previous experience.

My study identified a number of socio-cultural drivers behind the increasing number of CIS studying in the UK, including rising affluence and increasing competition for jobs and university places within China. The study theorizes a link between these socio-cultural drivers and the value sought by CIS from their overseas study experience. In particular, I posit a link between CIS' time in the UK and the value it presents as a 'liminal' practice, a concept derived from van Gennep's (1960) anthropological work 'The Rites of Passage'. Essentially, liminality defines a transitional state between two more fixed points. In addition, my study also draws on Turner's (1982) concept of a 'liminoid' experience, a development of van Gennep's (1960) work.

By considering value from different areas of research the findings contribute to a greater understanding of how both value and culture are socially constructed within an intercultural environment, my findings also provide valuable insights into the drivers and value creation of CIS

studying within UK higher education institutions (HEIs). By conceptualizing a link between value and liminality the study provides a new perspective by which researchers and HEIs can better understand the experience of CIS within UK HEIs.

Acknowledgements

Completing this study has been a difficult challenge, one that at times I did not feel up to. That I have finally reached this stage at all is in no small part down to my lead supervisor, Professor John Nicholson. John's support and guidance have been critical and the seeds for many of the key ideas within this study were planted during our conversations. I would therefore like to thank him, along with the other members of my supervisory team, both past and present, who have all contributed to my completion of this thesis: Dr Simon Kelly, Professor John Anchor, Dr Jameson Gill, & Dr Murray Clark.

I am grateful too for the assistance and support of a number of colleagues and fellow doctoral candidates and would therefore also like to thank the following: Dr Phil Coombes, Dr Marc Duffy, Dr Tina Harness, Dr Debbie Hill, Dr Fazila Hussain, Dr Paul Johnston, Dr Khalled Kesseba, Dr Shqiperam Reka, Dr Andrea Subryan, John Woods, and the rest of my fellow colleagues within Sheffield Hallam's Marketing Subject Group.

I would like to thank each of the participants of my study for sharing their experience and observations. Having found studying in my own language such a challenge I am in admiration of those who are able to overcome the difficulties of doing so in a second language.

Finally, I would like to thank my family without whose love and support this would not have been possible. Whilst I have no regrets about taking this journey it has taken some considerable time that I would have otherwise dedicated to my family. Therefore, I dedicate this work to them, in particular to my two children, Jada (8) and Aron (6), and promise to be more present during the rest of their childhood.

List of Original Publications

I declare that the following papers were developed as a part of the production of this thesis but were published prior to its submission. As these papers were produced as a part of this thesis they are not cited but sections of this document may appear to be from these published works.

Conference Papers

HATTERSLEY, David J. (2019), 'The Value of Overseas Study as a Liminal Practice for Chinese International Students'. Conference Paper presented at the Huddersfield Business School Conference.

HATTERSLEY, David J. (2017), 'An Investigation into the Effects of Cultural Difference on the Co-creation of Value'. Developmental Paper presented at the British Academy of Management Conference.

A copy of these published works are not attached to the thesis but copies are available to the examiners on request.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Chapter Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of my study. I first set out the background to my study and explain how the motivation for my research topic was a result of my personal experience. I then explain why this study is important from both a practical and an academic perspective before setting out my research aims and questions. Finally, I conclude this introductory chapter with an overview of the structure of my thesis.

1.2 Background to my Study

This is a study of value, considered from a marketing perspective, specifically of the value of an overseas study experience for Chinese International Students (CIS). The motivation for this study derives from my personal experience, in particular my time spent living, working, and teaching in China and then later my experience as a mature student studying a master's degree in the UK alongside a predominantly Chinese cohort. My initial interest in value was sparked by the introduction of Service Dominant (S-D) logic (Vargo & Lusch, 2004, 2008, 2016) in one of my master's degree seminars. S-D logic was not a recognised part of the curriculum but was an area of interest of one of my seminar tutors who made passing references to it during his teaching. Further reading around the topic of S-D logic led me to reflect on my experience working in China.

I arrived in China in 2007 prior to which I had spent 15 years working in the UK's financial services industry. Upon my arrival in China I spent a few months getting oriented and learning some basic language skills before starting freelance work as an English language instructor. My previous business experience meant that I was able to gain work teaching business English within a number of large multi-national enterprises. Predominantly this work was gained through agents or through larger, established language schools. However, I soon realized that my combination of language teaching skills and a good business background made me a relatively valuable commodity in a marketplace where the demand for such skills was ever increasing. I therefore established my own company so that I could recruit my own clients, both individual and corporate.

In setting up my business I relied on the traditional marketing approach, centred on the 4Ps (Product, Price, Promotion, & Place) that I had learned during my undergraduate education and which had previously served me well in the UK. However, this approach initially failed to yield results and on reflection I now realise that this was because my idea of what might be considered of value differed from that of my Chinese clients. My business was helping individuals and company employees improve their business English skills. I thought that the value of what I offered lay in helping people improve their English language and communication skills and thus, potentially: help individuals improve their employability within an increasingly globalized environment; and help the international companies for whom I worked improve their employees' effectiveness.

However, my clients were not predominantly interested in learning grammar or vocabulary, improving their pronunciation or their presentation skills. They were interested in finding out about Great Britain and the west, they wanted cultural enrichment. They wanted to meet likeminded people and socialize. My role was not that of an English teacher but rather a friend, counsellor, problem solver, status symbol even, as being able to refer to your 'British English teacher or friend' provided an element of *face* (Gao, 1998). English was the language in which we communicated, and no doubt this did improve my clients' English language abilities, but it wasn't why they chose to *study* English. The value they sought from their engagement with myself and my other trainers was substantially different from what I had originally envisaged.

By the time I left China in 2013 my business had been running successfully for a number of years and I was able to sell it as a going concern. However, after being introduced to S-D logic I realised that, with its emphasis on value and value co-creation, it might have been a more suitable model than that which I had initially applied and might have made my first few years of business in China much easier. This thought led me to reflect on my experience at the time, as the only UK student in an international cohort of master's students of which more than half were Chinese. Whilst the context of such a classroom should have been ideal for building an understanding of international markets and cultural backgrounds, key elements of my master's course, my personal experience was that this was not the case.

Having spent time in China and having gained some experience of Chinese culture I was surprised at the lack of interaction that was taking place. It made me wonder why some of my Chinese classmates had decided to come to the UK and what it was they were hoping to gain from their experience as it seemed to me that some might not have been there for the education. I therefore decided that this was an area which I wished to study further and subsequently chose this as the focus of my PhD study.

1.3 Why is this a Worthy Study?

A worthy topic can arise from many areas and although these can often relate to disciplinary priorities they can just as easily be related to societal or personal events (Tracy, 2010). As I explained in the previous section, I arrived at my choice of study as a result of my own personal experience. However, there are two other significant reasons why this particular topic is worthy of study. First, from a research context point of view, the revenues generated by UK universities from their international students, and in particular those from China, is becoming increasingly important to the financial stability of the sector. Therefore, any research that can increase the understanding of why CIS choose overseas study could be of benefit to the HE industry. Secondly, from a theoretical point of view the concepts of value and value creation are currently the subject of much discussion and there have been a number of calls for further empirical work to support conceptual ideas that have emerged. In addition, the role of culture in value creation is a little explored area and presents opportunities for further study. I will address each of these areas in more detail below.

1.3.1 The Value of Chinese International Students to HE

International students are of significant financial value to UK HE Industry and to the UK economy in general. In 2014/15 international students represented £25.8bn in gross output to the UK economy through on and off campus spending, £4.8bn of which went directly to HEIs in tuition fees (Universities UK, 2017a). Chinese International Students (CIS) represent the largest group of non-EU students, in 2017/18 there were 106,530 CIS studying in the UK and this represented 40% of the total non-EU students. Since 2012/13 the number of students from China has exceeded the number from the EU countries combined (HESA, n.d.). However, the global market for international students is becoming increasingly competitive and it has therefore been suggested that UK HEIs might benefit from adopting strategic marketing and marketing theory to become more successful (see Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka, 2006).

Value plays a crucial role in marketing activity (Holbrook, 1999) and there have been specific calls for the application of concepts such as value co-creation to higher education (see Naidoo, Shankar, & Veer, 2011; Nixon, Scullion, & Hearn, 2018). Whilst there have been a few studies that have looked at the value of student experience in higher education it has been noted that value has often been conflated with service quality and satisfaction (see Woodall, Hiller, & Resnick, 2014). However, in some studies within HE contexts value has been identified as an antecedent to satisfaction (see Arambewela, Hall, & Zuhair, 2006; Ledden, Kalafatis, & Mathioudakis, 2011; Ledden, Kalafatis, & Samouel, 2007; Santini, Ladeira, Sampaio, & Costa, 2017) with suggestions that the value dimensions can account for over 60% of variation in satisfaction (Ledden et al., 2011). Therefore, value is clearly an important factor that needs to be considered in itself.

Ng and Forbes (2009) have argued that whilst a higher educational experience can be transformative this is very much dependent on value being co-created between universities and students. However, the lack of research on value creation and higher education, in particular regarding the context of CIS, means that while we know the value these students bring to the UK economy our understanding of the value that CIS seek from UK HE is less clear which makes this an interesting area for further study and presents an opportunity to conduct original research.

1.3.2 Topicality of Value and Value Creation Research

The concepts of value and value creation have received increasing attention within marketing literature in recent years and this has been driven partly by the emergence of Service Dominant (S-D) Logic (Vargo & Lusch, 2004, 2008, 2016) within which value and its creation play a central role. However, it has been widely suggested that there is a lack of conceptual clarity around the concept of value (e.g. Gummerus, 2013) and there are ongoing debates around how value is created, in particular between the research streams of S-D Logic (Vargo & Lusch, 2004, 2008, 2016) and Service Logic (Grönroos, 2017; Grönroos & Ravald, 2011; Grönroos & Voima, 2013). There have therefore been a number of calls for further empirical research into the value creation process (Frow & Payne, 2019; Helkkula, Dube, & Arnould, 2019; Vargo & Lusch, 2017).

Furthermore, a number of recent studies on value have highlighted the important role that culture plays in value creation (Akaka, Schau, & Vargo, 2013; Akaka, Vargo, & Lusch, 2013; Chandler & Vargo, 2011) yet there have only been a limited number of studies that have investigated this role (Voyer, Kastanakis, & Rhode, 2017). The intercultural nature of the research context therefore presents an opportunity to investigate the role that culture plays in co-creation.

1.4 Research Aims and Questions

The overall aim of this study was to develop a better understanding of the role that value plays in the overseas study experience of CIS and to consider the influence that culture has on how that value is created. In order to gain a better understanding of the role of value I first needed to establish what value it is that CIS seek from their experience. Once I had a better understanding of the value that they seek I can then consider how this value is created and to what extent culture might influence the value creation process. I therefore identified three questions around which to frame my study:

- Research Question (RQ) 1 – What value do Chinese International Students (CIS) seek from their overseas study experience?

- Research Question (RQ) 2 – How is the value that CIS seek created?

- Research Question (RQ) 3 – What influence does culture have on value and the value creation process?

I will now discuss how considering these questions enabled a number of significant contributions to knowledge.

1.5 Contributions of the Study

Of critical importance in any PhD study is to ensure that it makes a significant contribution to knowledge (Tracy, 2010) and it is therefore essential that I clearly set out my understanding of what makes a contribution and show how my study does so. Corley and Gioia (2011, p. 15) consider that a contribution "rests largely on the ability to provide *original insight* into a phenomenon by advancing knowledge in a way that is deemed to have *utility* or usefulness for some purpose". Original insight can be either *incremental* or *revelatory* and utility can relate to either the *practically useful* or the *scientifically useful*. Corley and Gioia

(2011) draw these ideas together in a useful 2 x 2 matrix, see Figure 1, below).

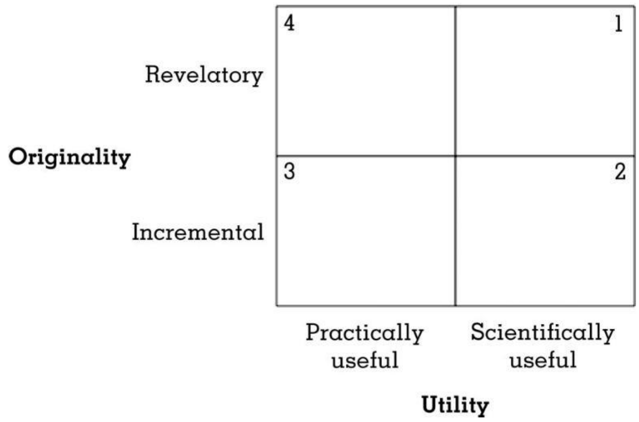

Figure 1 - Dimensions of Theoretical Contribution
Source: Corley and Gioia (2011, p. 15)

In this thesis I make a number of significant contributions. In answering my first research question I have made a number of original findings around the value that CIS seek from their overseas study experience. In particular I have identified a number of ways in which the value that CIS seek is socially constructed and how a significant aspect of value seeking relates to status and identity. I therefore contend that I have made an *incremental contribution* (Corley & Gioia, 2011) which is significant in two ways: first, it is scientifically useful in extending extant literature relating to value in HE, Chinese international student mobility, and value creation; secondly, it is practically useful as it presents a greater understanding of what drives CIS to the UK which may assist universities in driving future recruitment and achieving higher levels of CIS satisfaction. These contributions correspond with boxes 2 and 3 respectively of Corley and Gioia's (2011) 2 x 2 contributions matrix, see Figure 1, above.

In order to answer my second research question I have applied Vargo and Lusch's (2016) narrative and process of S-D logic model and a service ecosystems approach (see Akaka, Vargo, et al., 2013; Frow & Payne, 2019) to my study. To the best of my knowledge this is the first time that this model and approach have been used to study the value that international students seek from their overseas study experience. By applying these models I was able to consider value creation at macro, meso, and micro levels and provide valuable insight into the role of culture in value co-creation and thus make a scientifically useful *incremental contribution* (Corley & Gioia, 2011) to value creation literature, which corresponds with box 2 of Corley and Gioia's (2011) contributions matrix, see Figure 1, above.

The contextual nature of value and the extent to which ideas of value and its creation are influenced by socio-cultural circumstances played a significant role in this study. In considering my third research question I was able to identify specific ways in which culture influenced ideas of value and how this value was co-created, as discussed above. However, my study also highlighted how value co-creation activity in turn influenced culture and led to some CIS exhibiting behaviours and ideas that suggested they were developing a more hybridized, global cultural perspective. By highlighting the extent to which culture at the macro level and value co-creation taking place at the micro level are interrelated I make a scientifically useful incremental contribution (Corley & Gioia, 2011) to the developing literature on service ecosystems (Akaka, Vargo, et al., 2013; Frow & Payne, 2019).

In addition to the contributions described above, each of which relate to my three research questions, one other significant contribution has been made from this study. This fourth contribution emerged from interview data which appeared to indicate that some CIS were *killing time* during their overseas study experience. Careful analysis of interview data and reflecting on my own personal experience led me to the concept of *liminality* (Andrews & Roberts, 2015) and van Gennep's (1960) theory on *The Rites of Passage* which I use to provide an overarching framework to CIS' overseas study experience. The application of this theory represents a *revelatory contribution* in that it "reveals something that we otherwise had not seen, know, or conceived" (Corley & Gioia, 2011, p. 17), in this instance that part of the value of an overseas study experience for CIS may be that it represents a liminal space within which they can kill time.

I will return to expand on the detail of these contributions at the end of this thesis.

1.6 Structure of the Thesis

This thesis is presented over eight chapters including this introductory chapter in which I set out the background to the thesis and its overall aims. The further seven chapters are set out as follows.

Chapter 2 presents a literature review of three broad streams of literature which cover the following areas: value, as defined in marketing; the internationalization of higher education; and, liminality. The first stream of literature reviewed, that of value, is the largest of the three and this reflects the fact that value research has been ongoing since at least the time of Aristotle and is influenced by a wide range of related areas, for instance culture, which forms a significant part of the value literature review. The second stream of literature reviewed relates to the context of the study, the internationalized higher education sector, and highlights the extent to which some parts of the sector are now dependent on international students for financial survival. These first two literature streams were reviewed in the early stages of my PhD journey. The third, that relating to the concept of liminality, was introduced during the data analysis stage as a result of an emerging theme and provides a framework within which the study can be considered. A theoretical framework is presented at the end of Chapter 2.

Chapter 3 describes my research methodology and discusses how this evolved during the data collection process. From the outset of my PhD journey I adopted a social constructionist epistemology as a wide range of extant literature suggests that value is a social construction (e.g. Edvardsson, Tronvoll, & Gruber, 2011; Karababa & Kjeldgaard, 2014; Peñaloza & Venkatesh, 2006). Whilst I originally adopted a social practice theory approach as a theoretical perspective (Crotty, 1998) an emerging theme from the data collection resonated strongly with my own prior experience and I subsequently adopted a hermeneutic phenomenological approach for my data analysis in order that I could draw on my previous experience to inform my findings. This led to the inclusion of van Gennep's (1960) concept of liminality and the 'The Rites of Passage' in my study. A conceptual framework is presented at the end of this chapter.

Chapter 4 is the first of four findings chapters and addresses the first of my three research questions: What value do Chinese International Students (CIS) seek from their overseas study experience? In this chapter I present seven different types of value that CIS seek from their overseas study experience. I argue that two of these types, status and esteem, are of a higher order than the others and that the importance of these value types is derived from the socio-cultural circumstances of CIS' home country, China. I also identify a number of sacrifices made in connection with an overseas study experience, however these are outweighed by the status benefits that such an experience can provide, not only the CIS but their family as well.

Chapter 5 is the second of my findings chapters and addresses the second of my research questions: How is the value that CIS seek created? In this chapter I use Vargo and Lusch's (2016) narrative and process of S-D Logic and identify a range of actors involved in resource integration and service exchange. I also identify a number of factors that influence the extent to which service exchange is either enabled or constrained. Within this chapter I address calls for more meso and micro level studies of value co-creation and support the argument within S-D Logic that value is always co-created (Vargo & Lusch, 2004, 2008, 2016).

Chapter 6 is the third of my findings chapters and addresses my third research question: What influence does culture have on value and the value creation process? In this chapter I address the link between values and value and the effect that rising affluence is having on traditional Chinese culture. I discuss how younger generations of Chinese are becoming more individualistic and how the Chinese government are trying to address this with a focus on Confucianism. The role that culture plays in constructing ideas of value and the parallel role that value co-creation plays in constructing culture are also discussed.

Chapter 7 is my final findings chapter and relates CIS' overseas study experience to van Gennep's (1960) theory on The Rites of Passage. This chapter provides an overarching framework to CIS' overseas study experience and considers how CIS experiment with their identities during their time in the UK with some CIS undergoing a liminal change and emerging in a different state from their post study selves. However, I argue that for some CIS their experience is mostly consumption based and offers only a "playful as-if experience" (Thomassen, 2009, p. 15).

Chapter 8 is my concluding chapter in which I set out my key findings and contributions. In this chapter I also discuss the limitations of the study and associated opportunities for further study. Finally, I end with a personal reflection.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.1 Chapter Introduction

In this chapter I review three broad streams of literature: value, as defined in marketing; the Internationalization of Higher Education (HE); and liminality. The first two streams of literature, those relating to value and the Internationalization of HE, were predominantly reviewed prior to data collection but continued to be reviewed up until the submission of this thesis. The third stream of literature, liminality, was reviewed as a result of emerging data.

My review begins by presenting an overview of value, a concept that is considered elusive and lacking in clarity (Gummerus, 2013). In my review I attempt to better capture its meaning and provide some level of clarity by discussing the previous research that has taken place in this area and in particular how the Service-Dominant Logic perspective (Lusch & Vargo, 2006; Vargo & Lusch, 2004, 2008, 2017), with its emphasis on value co-creation, has re-invigorated research in this area. As the context of this study has an intercultural element I also review literature that links value to culture and discuss research linked to national cultures and to transnational global consumer culture.

I then move on to discuss the extant literature regarding the internationalization of HE. I discuss the different forms that internationalization can take and how universities are increasingly being represented as commercial enterprises with suggestions that this has led to the commoditization of HE and an existential need to recruit increasing numbers of international students. I then expand my review to look at particular literature relating to Chinese International Students who represent a significant proportion of the international students in the UK and provide the context for the study. Finally, I will review the literature on liminality, a concept derived from the anthropologist van Gennep (1960) in his work 'The Rites of Passage'.

I present a Venn diagram showing my judgement as to where my study fits within these three broad streams of literature, see Figure 2, below.

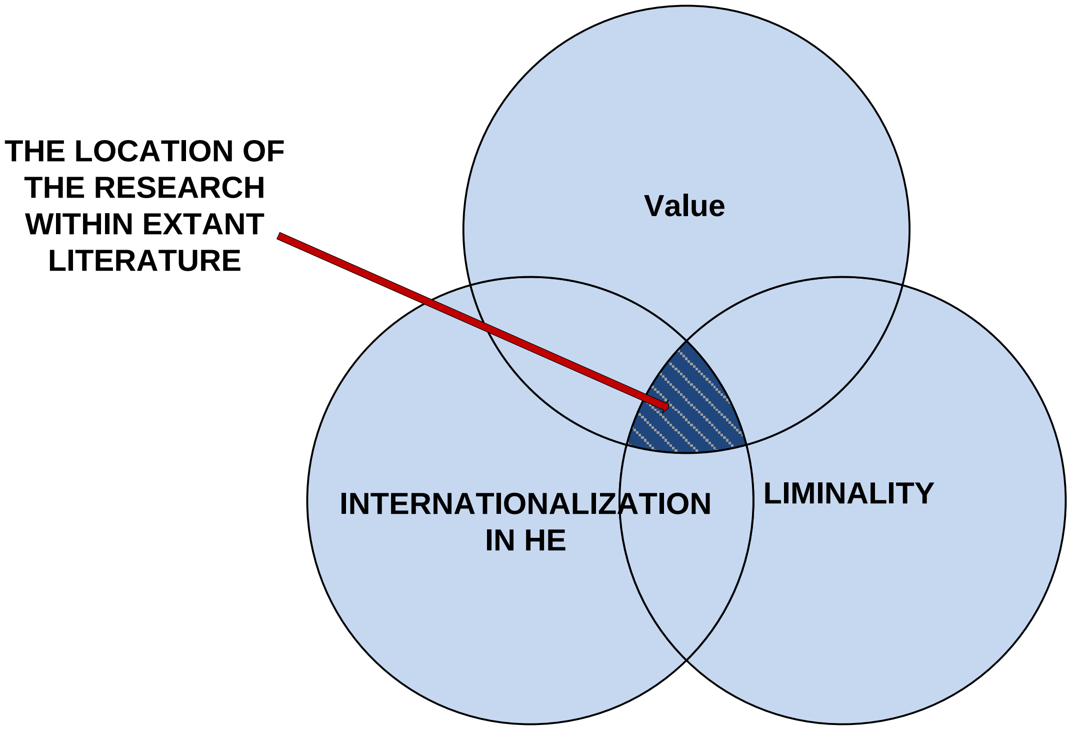

Figure 2 - Location of Research within Extant Literature
Source: Author

2.2 Value

Whilst value plays a crucial role in marketing activity (Holbrook, 1999) it has been widely suggested that the concept lacks clarity (Gummerus, 2013; Leszinski & Marn, 1997; Salem Khalifa, 2004; Sanchez-Fernandez & Iniesta-Bonillo, 2007; Woodall, 2003).

Traditional marketing paradigms viewed value as transaction-based, i.e. value-in-exchange, where value is created by the firm whose value propositions are either accepted or declined by customers (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004; Rod, Lindsay, & Ellis, 2014). Value could therefore be considered from either a firm-centric or customer-centric approach (Ng & Smith, 2012; Woodruff & Flint, 2006). However, recently there has been a partial shift in marketing towards the more encompassing view on value espoused by Service Dominant (S-D) Logic (Vargo, Akaka, & Vaughan, 2017) which sees value as something that is co-created between multiple actors and focuses more on value-in-use than the more traditional value-in-exchange perspective.

There have been a number of different theoretical frameworks and models developed to explain how consumers evaluate products and services (Huber, Herrmann, & Morgan, 2001), however despite numerous studies on value within marketing related disciplines (cf. Boksberger & Melsen, 2011; Gallarza, Gil-Saura, & Holbrook, 2011; Gummerus, 2013; Lindgreen, Hingley, Grant, & Morgan, 2012; I C L Ng & Smith, 2012; Salem Khalifa, 2004; Sanchez-Fernandez & Iniesta-Bonillo, 2007; Sánchez-fernández, Iniesta-bonillo, Morris, & Holbrook, 2009; Ulaga, 2003; Woodall, 2003) there remains ambiguity as to the definition of value and how it is created.

The purpose of the following sections is to provide an overview of the concept of value and I begin by providing historical background. My review then goes on to discuss some of the challenges faced in researching value due to its ambiguous nature before highlighting some of the key research that has taken place over the years to address this ambiguity and attempt to provide solid foundations upon which value can be studied. I then review key literature emerging from the S-D Logic perspective. My review of the value literature highlights the contextual nature of value and the importance of taking the sociocultural aspects of value creation into account. I therefore complete my review with a look at how the context of culture has been linked to the study of value.

2.2.1 A Historical Overview of Value

Discussions on the nature of value have been ongoing since at least the time of Aristotle who first came to differentiate between two commonly held types of value: value-in-use; and value-in-exchange (cf. Fleetwood, 1997; Ng & Smith, 2012; Ramírez, 1999; Vargo, Maglio, & Akaka, 2008; Woodall, 2003). Aristotle sought to find *"the common substance (value) that renders incommensurable use values commensurable by virtue of the capacity this substance has for assigning magnitudes (exchange value) to them"* (Fleetwood, 1997, p. 733). Although Aristotle considers a number of possibilities he is unable to solve the problem of commensurability and is therefore considered to have no theory of value.

Later discussions considered value from an economic point of view and the first attempts by scholars at explaining market value were made by Adam Smith and David Ricardo (McKnight, 1994). They viewed land, labour, and capital as the primary agents of production and considered value to be created by a combination of these three elements. However, whilst their theories went some way to provide a foundation for conceptualizing value there were significant flaws, for instance in terms of how they were unable to explain how greater quantities of labour sometimes resulted in lower values and it was only with the introduction of the concept of marginal utility that a clearer understanding of a product's value was established (McKnight, 1994). Economics then became the science of exchange value (Fleetwood, 1997, p. 742) from which originated the term value-in-exchange.

However, the introduction of utility as a proxy for use-value had the negative effect of de-contextualising and de-individualising value (Ng & Smith, 2012). Value, then, can not only be considered from an economic point of view, it must also be considered from a philosophic perspective and debates on value belong to a branch of philosophy known as axiology or the theory of value. Holbrook (1999, p. 3) suggested that axiology had tremendous potential for marketing and consumer research but had often been neglected by marketing scholars. However, there were a number of insights from the study of axiology that were later adopted within the marketing discipline. Considering value from an axiological perspective Hartman (1967) introduced three dimensions of Perceived Value: 'extrinsic value', reflecting the utilitarian or instrumental aspects of a particular product or service as a means to an end; 'intrinsic value', which is more focussed on the emotional aspects of consumption; and 'systemic value', which considers the relationships between different concepts within a rational or logical system of interaction. Mattsson (1991) built on Hartman's (1967) work to develop three perceived value dimensions: emotional value; practical value; and logical value. Later work (e.g. Holbrook, 1999; Sheth, Newman, & Gross, 1991a, 1991b; Sweeney & Soutar, 2001) adopted this idea of multi-dimensional concepts in proposing typologies of perceived value.

Perry's General Theory of Value (1926, cited in Hart, 1971) suggested that value does not only exist as a quality of an object nor as merely a mental quality of the subject but is instead based on the relationship between the two. Similarly, Husserl (1973) proposed a phenomenological concept of value whereby an object is conceived in the experience of it and thus value is formed in the interaction between subject and object. This phenomenological perspective underpins much of the work on Service-Dominant Logic.

We can therefore see that from a historical point of view value has been discussed and debated from a number of different perspectives, including the metaphysical, economic, philosophical, and experiential and we will see later how some of these different perspectives informed the development of some of the key conceptual frameworks on value.

2.2.2 Quality, Value, & Satisfaction

One of the key difficulties when researching value is that it is an abstract concept with different meanings in different bodies of literature (Gallarza et al., 2011). Therefore, it is important that we consider the interplay between those different meanings.

A number of these conceptual ambiguities have been highlighted within some of the extant literature. Zeithaml (1988), for example, suggested the terms 'quality' and 'value' were indistinct and elusive constructs which were not easily differentiated from each other. Woodruff (1997) discussed how more often than not literature on customer-oriented management practice offered only a vague understanding of what customer value meant.

However, these ambiguities have been addressed in a number of studies. Zeithaml (1988), for example, in considering the difference between value and quality suggested that *"value is more individualistic and personal than quality and is therefore a higher level concept"*. Bolton and Drew (2002) also linked value and quality and suggested that quality could in fact be considered an antecedent of value.

It was suggested by Woodruff (1997) that there was a strong relationship between desired customer value and customer satisfaction: the former representing customers perceived preferences for products and services based on the extent to which they might meet customers' needs; and the latter representing the extent to which they do in fact meet those needs. Other studies suggested that service quality was a significant antecedent of customer satisfaction (Brady, Cronin, & Brand, 2002; Cronin & Taylor, 1992) and that there was a significant link between service quality, service value, and satisfaction that could be directly related to behavioural intentions (Cronin, Brady, & Hult, 2000).

Within the limited research on value within higher education it has also been noted that the concepts of quality, value, and satisfaction are often conflated (Woodall et al., 2014) and that there are strong relationships between the different elements, for example between value and satisfaction (see Arambewela et al., 2006; Ledden et al., 2011, 2007; Santini et al., 2017). Section 2.3.5 provides a more detailed discussion of research involving each of these concepts within the context of higher education.

Gallarza et al. (2011) conceptualized a helpful model of the relationship between these three concepts (see Figure 3., below). As we can see from this model value is considered to be both cognitive and affective and can be considered both pre or post use. That value is something that is also considered pre-use means it is important to have an understanding of the type of value that CIS are seeking prior to their overseas study experience but this research is currently lacking.

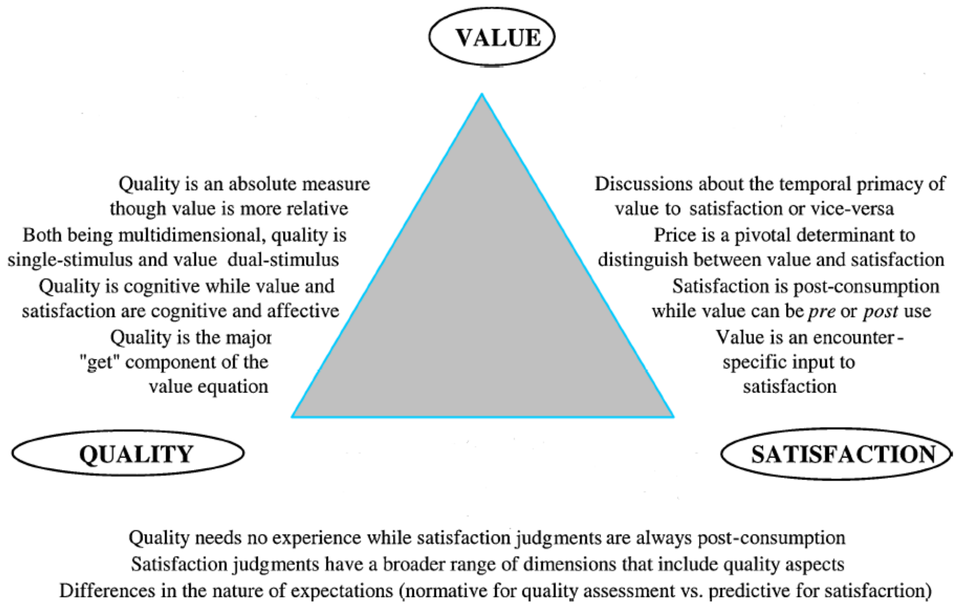

Figure 3. Conceptual delimitation between value, quality, and satisfaction

Source: (Gallarza et al., 2011, p. 185)

Whilst Gallarza's model provides a useful clarification of where the concept of value sits in relation to quality and satisfaction there is another significant area of conceptual confusion which we shall consider next.

2.2.3 Value and Values

Another area of confusion can be found in the distinction between the terms value and values which, whilst closely related, do not represent the same thing (Boksberger & Melsen, 2011; Dumont, 1980; Holbrook, 1999; Ramírez, 1999).

Vinson, Scott, and Lamont (1977, p. 45) defined values as "centrally cognitive elements that stimulate motivation for behavioural response" and suggested that these existed in "an interconnected hierarchical structure in which global values were related and connected to generalized consumption-related values, which were, in turn, similarly associated with product attributes" (p. 49) (see Figure 4). Similarly, Holbrook (1994, p. 23) suggested that domain specific values corresponded to "value" [singular] and were preferential judgements, whereas global "values" [plural] were "the criteria upon which such judgements are made". It is therefore important that marketers have a good understanding of such global values and how these cascade down to individual consumers and affect their purchasing decisions.

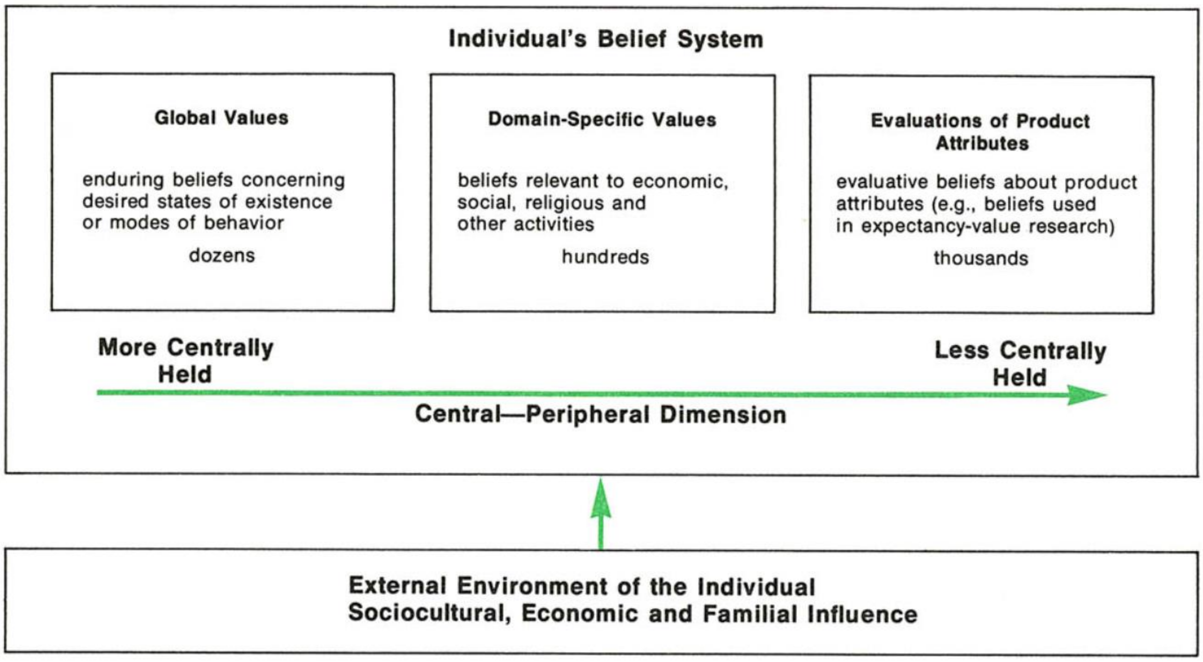

Figure 4 - Organization of the Consumer's Value-Attitude System
Source: (Vinson et al., 1977, p. 46)

According to Rokeach (1973, p. 24) every human value is a "social product that has been transmitted and preserved in successive generations through one or more of society's institutions" with an individual's values assumed to be the result of a combination of these societal influences and their individual personalities. These institutions to which Rokeach referred include religious, familial, educational, political, economic, and legal. Each institution is responsible for the transmission of a particular subset of values from generation to generation. These subsets of value together form a '*system of values*' that:

> "guides and determines actions, attitudes towards objects and toward situations, ideology, presentations of self to others, evaluations judgements, justifications, comparisons of self

> with others, and attempts to influence others" (Rokeach, 1973, p. 25).

Dumont (1980) suggested that values are in general intimately combined with other, non-normative representations and therefore any *'system of values*' is an abstraction from a wider system of *'ideas-and-values*'. He provides an example of this in terms of the Great Chain of Being, which he describes as:

> "… a linean hierarchy of holy ordering, a knowledge, and an activity, which assimilates itself as closely as possible to the divine forms… The aim of the hierarchy is therefore the attainment, as far as possible, of likeness and union with God." (Dumont, 1980, p. 303)

Whereas historically an individual's values might have been more likely to link with such religious ideas Gummesson (2019, p. 706) suggests that "consumption and materialism, which promise a good time in this life, have taken over from the divine and spiritual" in most western countries. This is consistent with Dumont's (1980, p. 308) suggestion that man has distanced himself from nature and the universe and is attaching value to the individual rather than to a greater whole.

Xie, Bagozzi, and Troye (2008) suggested that, consistent with previous research on culture (citing Arnould & Thompson, 2005; Holt, 1994, 1997) consumption behaviour is more strongly affected by domain specific values than global values which appear too abstract. It may be the case that global values are too abstract to link with specific consumption behaviour but perhaps the difficulties lie instead with there no longer being any significant global values system, or at least none which exists independent of consumption based values (discussed further in Section 2.2.6.2).

2.2.4 Value Research Streams within Marketing Literature

There have been a number of seminal models and frameworks relating to value that have been developed over the years and these can be categorised into three broad streams: value as means-end; value as benefits vs. sacrifices; and, value as experiential. I will now provide an overview of these three areas before moving on to discuss the S-D Logic perspective on value.

2.2.4.1 Value as Means-End

Means-Ends models work on the basis that consumers purchase products or services to achieve desired end states. These desired end states may take the form of such things as happiness, security, or accomplishment and are generally influenced by consumers underlying values (Gutman, 1982). This approach began when researchers started to develop benefit chains linking products to various benefits (Gutman, 1982; Vinson et al., 1977; Young & Feigin, 1975) (refer to Section 2.2.3 for more detail). Gummerus (2013) suggests that the roots of means-end theory can be traced back to Alderson (1957) who suggested that consumers sought desired end states such as self-esteem or physical contentment when making purchases.

Woodruff & Gardial (1996) adapted Gutman's (1982) earlier model and proposed a 'customer value hierarchy' (see Figure 5, below) whereby the lower levels represent the means by which higher level ends are met. Woodruff (1997) argued that despite the suggestion of a strong relationship between customer value and satisfaction few conceptual frameworks had previously sought to integrate the two.

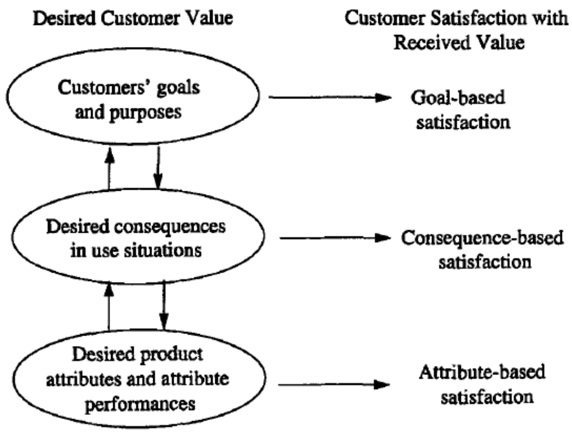

Figure 5 - Customer Value Hierarchy Model
Source: (Woodruff, 1997, p. 142)

Whilst a major focus on Woodruff's study was on measurement the practical distinctions between satisfaction and value, in terms of how they are measured and how those results might be used, were not sufficiently resolved (Parasuraman, 1997, p. 155). Nevertheless, the integration of satisfaction to the customer value hierarchy helps to provide a much richer picture of the value of products and services and of the feelings of satisfaction achieved at each level. This work was later extended to consider the influence that culture might have on consumers' value perceptions (see Overby, Woodruff, & Gardial, 2005) and this is discussed in more detail in Section 2.2.6.

2.2.4.2 Value as Benefits vs. Sacrifices

Arguably, the most universally accepted definition of perceived value derives from Zeithaml's (1988) seminal work, which argues that it represents: *"the consumer's overall assessment of the utility of a product, based on perceptions of what is received and what is given"*. Zeithaml used means-end theory to build on a model developed by Dodds and Monroe (1985), which focussed predominantly on the price-quality relationship, and incorporated functional, practical and emotional benefits to help understand the trade-off consumers make at a perceptual level (Karababa & Kjeldgaard, 2014).

Zeithaml's (1988) study identified four consumer definitions of value:

1. value is low price;
2. value is whatever I want in a product;
3. value is the quality I get for the price I pay; and
4. value is what I get for what I give.

Her work was the first to employ '*give*' and '*get*' components and these were later used to develop other perspectives (Gummerus, 2013). For example, Day (1990, p.142) suggested that "perceived customer value" could be represented as an equation based on the difference between "customers perceived costs" and "customers perceived benefits". Huber et al. (2001) identified a number of costs that could be considered when evaluating the "perceived customer value" of a product. These included "monetary costs; time costs; learning costs; emotional costs; and, cognitive and physical effort coupled with financial, social, and psychological risk.

Another key finding of Zeithaml's (1988) work was the influence that situational or contextual factors could have on the formation of value perceptions. These findings were supported by later studies, for example in the work of Bolton and Drew (1991) who developed a multi-stage model of service assessments (including value) that they applied to residential customers' assessments of a local telephone service.

However, despite the significance of these types of models that relate to consumer trade-offs there has been less interest in the negative aspects (e.g. price, risk, and other costs) than to the more positive dimensions of value (e.g. quality, excellence, aesthetics etc.) (Gallarza, Seri, & Cuadrado, 2017). This is an important observation as Woodall et al. (2014) have observed that international students' perception of value appears to be more affected by what they must sacrifice for their study experience than home students. However, Woodall et al.s' (2014) research was predominantly quantitative and they suggest that a qualitative research approach, such at that proposed in this study, would be useful to identify potential opportunities for improvement to the student experience.

2.2.4.3 Value as Experiential

Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) argued that important experiential aspects of consumption were being neglected and suggested more focus was needed on the symbolic, hedonic, and esthetic [sic] nature of consumption. Subsequent research therefore considered both utilitarian and hedonic value (Babin, Darden, & Griffin, 1994; Batra & Ahtola, 1990; Chiu, Hsieh, Li, & Lee, 2005; Overby & Lee, 2006).

In addition to utilitarian and hedonic values further categories were added with Sheth, Newman, and Gross (1991a, 1991b) proposing a theory of consumption values whereby consumers choose one brand or product over another subject to the following propositions: i. Consumer choice is a function of multiple consumption values; ii. The consumption values make differential contributions in any given choice situation; and, iii. The consumption values are independent. The multiple consumption values referred to can be found in Figure 6, below, and include: Functional value - which relates to the utility gained through the functional, utilitarian, or physical performance of a product; Social value - which is concerned with a product or service's association with one or more specific social groups; Emotional value - which relates to a product or service's ability to arouse feelings or affective states; Epistemic value - which reflects the curiosity or novelty factor associated with a product or service and/or the extent to which is can satisfy a desire for knowledge; and finally, Conditional value - which highlights that the functional or social value of some products or services is contingent upon antecedent physical or social factors.

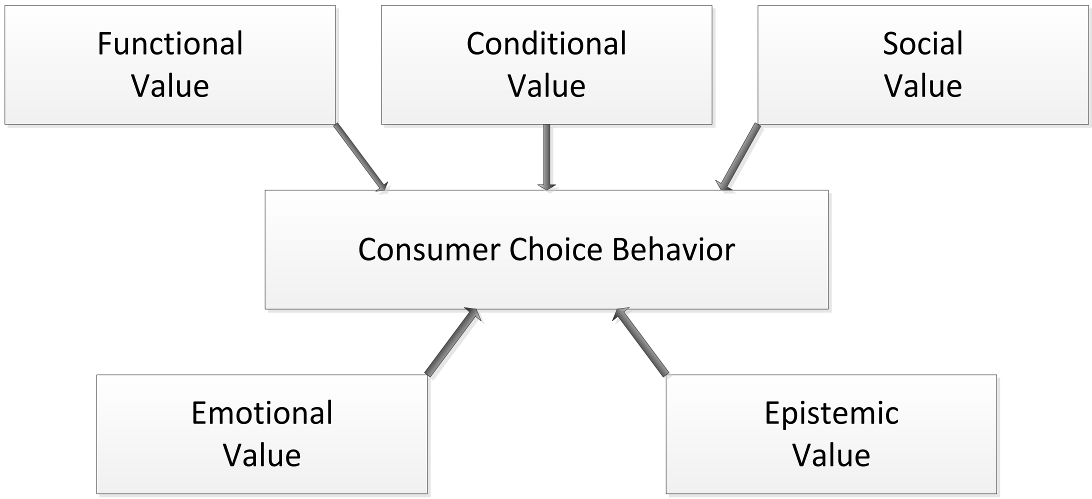

Figure 6 - The five values influencing consumer choice
Source: (Sheth et al., 1991b, p. 160)

Sheth et al.'s (1991a, 1991b) theory of consumption value was adapted by Sweeney and Soutar (2001) in the development of their PERVAL model which included a four-dimensional scale (emotional value; social value; functional value - prices/value for money; and, functional value - performance/quality) used to measure consumers' perceptions of value.

Application of their model showed that "multiple value dimensions explain consumer choice better… than does a single 'value for money' item" and can thus provide better results in studies of consumption value (Sweeney & Soutar, 2001).

The idea that there are multiple dimensions of value was further explored by Holbrook (1999) who developed a typology of perceived value. Holbrook (1999, p. 5) defines consumer value as an interactive, relativistic, preferential experience. The experience is interactive as it involves an interaction between a subject and an object in the formation of value. It is relativistic as there is a comparative evaluation required between objects to establish value, this evaluation is personal in that it varies from individual to individual, and it is situational as it depends on the context within which such evaluations are made. It is preferential in that above all else it requires a fundamental preference judgement. In Holbrook's (1999) view:

> *"Consumer value resides not in the product purchased, not in the brand chosen, not in the object possessed, but rather in the consumption experience(s) derived therefrom"*.

There are three key dimensions of consumer value according to (Holbrook, 1999):

- *Extrinsic versus intrinsic value* - an extrinsic value might relate to some kind of functional or utilitarian means-end achievement or some form of purpose or objective whereas something of intrinsic value would relate to the enjoyment of the consumption experience for its own sake.
- *Self-oriented versus other-oriented value* - something of self-oriented value would be something which an individual might enjoy for their own sake, for the effect that it has on them, for example they might buy a new shirt because wearing it made them feel good. Something other-oriented might have value for the effect that it has on someone else, for example that same shirt might instead be bought so that that person's partner feels proud to be

seen with them in public. Other-oriented value can relate to the micro level, as in the example given, or to more intermediate or macro levels.

- *Active versus reactive value* - value is active when some tangible or intangible object is used by the consumer as part of a consumption experience, for example riding a bicycle. Reactive value occurs when the consumer is involved in some form of consumption experience where they are responding to some object, e.g. appreciating a piece of music or some work of art.

These three key dimensions, combined, result in the typology of value detailed in Figure 7, below.

		Extrinsic	Intrinsic
Self-Oriented	Active	EFFICIENCY (O/I, Convenience)	Play (Fun)
	Reactive	EXCELLENCE (Quality)	AESTHETICS (Beauty)
Other-Oriented	Active	STATUS (Success, Impression Management)	ETHICS (Justice, Virtue, Morality)
	Reactive	ESTEEM (Reputation, Materialism, Possessions)	SPIRITUALITY (Faith, Ecstacy, Sacredness)

Figure 7 - A Typology of Consumer Values
(Source: Holbrook, 1999, p. 12)

Research within the 'experiential value' stream has been criticised for paying little attention to sacrifices however this is because within this body of literature value is typically seen as representing an holistic assessment (Gallarza & Saura, 2006; Gummerus, 2013). Within Higher Education there have been a number of studies on the ‘quality’ of student experience, however Tan et al. (2016) have suggested that such experience does need to be looked at more holistically, considering aspects both inside and outside the classroom, and that it may be influenced by political, social, and economic circumstances. Considering student experience from a value perspective, of which there is currently only a limited number of studies (see Section 2.3.5), should therefore provide greater insight than those studies with the more specific focus on the quality aspects.

2.2.5 Value from a Service-Dominant Logic Perspective

In this section I introduce Service Dominant (S-D) logic and provide an overview of some of the key S-D logic principles. I also discuss some of the criticisms of S-D logic before outlining a number of important aspects of S-D logic that are relevant to this study.

2.2.5.1 Introduction to Service-Dominant Logic

Since its arrival in 2004, service-dominant logic (S-D Logic) has rapidly emerged to have a direct impact on business market research (Cova, Ford, & Salle, 2009) and represents an emerging paradigm for marketing which, according to Brodie, Saren, & Pels (2011):

> "... offers a shift in thinking that seeks to unify the traditional transactional and relational perspectives of marketing that have emerged since the 1980s (market orientation, services marketing, relationship marketing, quality management, value and supply chain management, and network analysis)"

Although it is primarily associated with the marketing discipline S-D Logic is intended to apply to a much broader range of disciplines by way of a fairly simple narrative *"primarily informed by just a handful of concepts and five axioms"* (Lusch & Vargo, 2019), which is depicted in Figure 8, below:

Figure 8. The narrative and process of S-D logic
Source: (Vargo & Lusch, 2016, p. 7)

The key concepts within S-D Logic are:

Actors - Whereas previously marketing had been predominantly concerned with dyadic supplier-customer relationships, S-D Logic, similarly to relationship marketing before it, considers the creation of value to include multiple stakeholders. The use of the generic terms 'Actors' to replace labels such as 'consumers', 'producers', 'suppliers', and other parties involved in some form of exchange "allows the development of a logic of human exchange systems that includes the economy and society and transcends academic disciplines" (Lusch & Vargo, 2014, p. 102). Such actors are considered to have agency yet are influenced by institutions (see below).

Value - In S-D Logic value is created when a particular actors wellbeing is improved (Lusch & Vargo, 2014, 2019; Vargo & Lusch, 2008). Value is specific to each individual actor, is uniquely and phenomenologically determined by the individual, and is always co-created (Vargo & Lusch, 2008, 2016) through the interaction of actors and the integration of resources (Vargo & Lusch, 2016). Whilst acceptance of S-D Logic's ideas on value co-creation are growing there remain different perspectives as to how value is created, these are discussed in more detail in Section 2.2.5.4.

Service - S-D Logic challenges the predominant economic paradigm of Goods-Dominant Logic which considers value to be something that is embedded within goods by firms and passed on to customers as value-in-exchange. In S-D Logic "service is conceptualized in terms of the application of resources by one party for the benefit of another or oneself" (Lusch & Vargo, 2019, p. 8) with goods considered to be a form of distribution mechanism for service provision (Vargo & Lusch, 2004, 2016).

Resources - Resources are anything tangible or intangible that an actor can use to create value and can be categorized as either: operand resources - which are tangible and are acted on by other resources; and operant resources which are often intangible, e.g. knowledge and skills, and act upon other resources to create value. Operant resources are considered to be the fundamental source of competitive advantage (Vargo & Lusch, 2008, 2016).

Institutions - Institutions are defined within S-D Logic as "rules, norms, meanings, symbols, practices, and similar aides to collaboration", which, together with institutional arrangements - "interdependent assemblages of institutions" - provide the structural detail surrounding actors and resources. Institutions can enable value co-creation by facilitating resource co-ordination, integration, and service exchange. However, they can also limit co-creation through "ineffective dogmas, ideologies, and dominant logics" (Lusch & Vargo, 2019)

The five axioms upon which S-D Logic is built are:

- Axiom 1 Service is the fundamental basis of exchange
- Axiom 2 Value is co-created by multiple actors, always including the beneficiary
- Axiom 3 All social and economic actors are resource integrators
- Axiom 4 Value is always uniquely and phenomenologically determined by the beneficiary
- Axiom 5 Value co-creation is coordinated through actor-generated institutions and institutional arrangements.

Whilst some scholars acknowledge that there was a need for a general theory such as S-D logic (Brown, 2007; Gronroos, 2011) there are also criticisms of it and I discuss some of these below.

2.2.5.2 Criticisms of S-D Logic

During the early stages of S-D Logic's development it was suggested that it was nothing new and offered only a retrospective look at previous theories (Brown, 2007), that its single perspective approach was regressive (O'Shaughnessy & O'Shaugnessy, 2009), and that its success was largely due to its promotion as an academic brand, with at least some evidence of an explicit branding strategy and management (Cova et al., 2009). There may have been a little truth to some of these claims. It is certainly evident that S-D Logic incorporates previous theories and in their original article, 'Evolving to a New Dominant Logic of Marketing' (Vargo & Lusch, 2004) they refer to a wide range of theories upon which S-D Logic is built, e.g. when discussing goods as distributions mechanisms - "… therefore, consistent with (Gutman, 1982), goods are best viewed as distribution mechanisms for services, or the provision of satisfaction for higher-order needs" (Vargo & Lusch, 2004, p. 9). Similar ideas where expressed earlier by Abbott (1955, as cited in Holbrook, 1999, p. 9) who stated that:

> "The thesis… may be stated quite simply. What people really desire are not products but satisfying experience. Experiences are attained through activities. In order that activities may be carried out, physical objects or the services of human beings are usually needed… People want products because they want the experience-bringing services which they hope the products will render."

Indeed, Lusch and Vargo (2019) point out that their original article was *"intended to capture and extend a convergence of related divergent thought noted in a growing number of academic articles, business trade books, and managerial articles in practitioner-oriented journals"*. They have previously argued (Lusch & Vargo, 2011) that S-D Logic is neither regressive, nor singular in perspective and that it is intended to do two primary things: 1) to provide a transcending organizing framework for understanding economic phenomena; and 2) to be inclusive. So what some might see as an explicit branding and management strategy (Cova et al., 2009) others see as an innovative creation by academic entrepreneurs who have provided an 'open code' which is engaging researchers worldwide (Evert Gummesson, 2019).

Another criticism of S-D Logic was the suggestion that its take on co-creation had been granted premature immunity to controversy or even reasonable scrutiny and that the concept functioned more as a metaphor than as a genuine scientific principle (Leroy, Cova, & Salle, 2013). However, it has long been acknowledged that research on both value and value co-creation in general is mostly theoretical with more empirical work needed to support S-D Logic's claims as to the foundational nature of value co-creation (Echeverri & Skalen, 2011; Gronroos, 2011; Gummerus, 2013).

Vargo and Lusch (2017, p. 50) acknowledged that the early work on S-D Logic had primarily focussed on the meta-theoretical level but further work was expected to take place at midrange and micro-foundational levels. They argued that a "… combined, top down, theory-driven, evidence-based testing of midrange theory and a bottom up, practice-driven, theory-generating activity" was an ongoing iterative process.

2.2.5.3 Experiential vs. Phenomenological Value

S-D Logic suggests that value is always uniquely and phenomenologically determined by the individual (Vargo & Lusch, 2008, 2016). However, there is some confusion surrounding the use of the word 'phenomenological' as it is sometimes used within the value literature alongside terms relating to 'experience' without a sufficiently explicit discussion of the difference. For example, Holbrook and Hirschman (1982, p. 132) take an 'experiential view' to consumption practices which they describe as 'phenomenological' in spirit.

Vargo and Lusch (2008, p. 9) discuss how they preferred to use the word 'phenomenological' rather than 'experiential' as they felt the latter *"often invokes connotations of something like a "Disneyworld event'"*. However, they suggested that the two words might be used interchangeably provided the word 'experience' was intended in a phenomenological sense.

According to Van Manen (1997) phenomenology involves the study of lived experience or the life world. It is through the lived experience that a person is inextricably linked to the world which they share with others and things (Sandberg & Dall'Alba, 2009, p. 1353-1354). Gummerus (2013, p. 29-30) argues that it is this deeper meaning of the 'lived' experience that characterises phenomenological studies of value in contrast to other studies that have been classed as 'value as experiential' but have mostly sought to merely identify and/or measure benefit or value categories. It is this deeper meaning of lived experience for which this study seeks to provide insight and in order to do so I adopted a hermeneutic phenomenological approach to my analysis and this is discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.

2.2.5.4 Value Co-Creation

The central focus of S-D Logic is about value co-creation (Lusch & Vargo, 2019). However, the concept of co-creation has been the subject of ongoing debate with Oertzen et al. (2018, p. 645) highlighting the lack of conceptual clarity between the research streams of S-D Logic and its rival theories, particularly those considering value creation from a *service logic* perspective (e.g. Grönroos, 2008; Grönroos & Ravald, 2011; Grönroos & Voima, 2013).

Within both research streams there is agreement that value is realized by the customer as value-in-use, a concept which was originally derived from Aristotle's view that value was an outcome of commodity use rather than something inherent in a commodity itself (McColl-Kennedy & Cheung, 2019, p. 69). Value-in-use occurs through beneficiaries interacting and integrating resources embedded within service ecosystems (Vargo & Lusch, 2016). However, whereas from an S-D Logic perspective the customer is always a co-creator of value (Vargo & Lusch, 2004, 2008, 2016) from the service logic perspective of Grönroos and co-authors co-creation only takes place in the joint sphere of customer-provider interaction (Grönroos, 2017; Grönroos & Ravald, 2011; Grönroos & Voima, 2013). From this perspective, when there is no interaction value is created solely by the customer as value-in-use.

However, Vargo and Lusch (2016, p. 9) argue that the term 'interaction' used by Grönroos (2017) and his fellows authors (Grönroos & Ravald, 2011; Grönroos & Voima, 2013) should be considered as having a wider meaning and not be restricted just to direct face-to-face interaction or smart technologies, but also to that provided through institutions. Thus, in S-D Logic terms, all value is co-created albeit with different levels of actor involvement. Indeed, whilst 'involvement, engagement, and participation are pre-requisites for co-creation' (Oertzen et al., 2018) some activities are recognised as being more effortful than others (McColl-Kennedy & Cheung, 2019) and this can impact on the extent to which actors are willing to interact within the co-creation process.

The amount of effort that actors are willing to put into the value co-creation process can be linked to 'customer engagement' a concept that Brodie, Hollebeek, Juric´, & Ilic´ (2011) suggest is linked to an actors psychological state. Chandler and Lusch (2015) also highlight the importance of customer engagement in the value co-creation process, however they argue that it relates not only to the actors psychological state but also the connections around the actor because each experience occurrs in a particular time and space, which is why the context within which value is created, discussed in Section 2.2.5.5, is of such importance. Actor engagment can be encouraged and facilitated through the effective use of engagement platforms (Storbacka, Brodie, Böhmann, Maglio, & Nenonen, 2016) which can facilitate the engagement of various actors in order that they can integrate resources.

A potential constraint on engagement, and thus on potential co-creation, might be that of cultural difference. A study by Rod et al. (2014) that looked at the relationship between China and the west in the context of value co-creation, with specific regard to b2b relationships in this instance, suggested that in dealings with the west the Chinese take a more transactional view. Rod et al. (2014) subsequently suggest that value co-creation and thus S-D Logic might not be a one size fits all solution and that excluding attention to the traditional value-in-exchange paradigm is ill advised.

Grönroos (2017) suggests that value-in-exchange should be considered a sales concept, rather than a value concept. However, from an S-D Logic perspective this is still considered to form part of the value co-creation process, as Vargo et al. (2008, p. 150) explain:

> "… value determined by exchange remains an important component in the co-creation of value. It is possible for value-in-use to exist without value-in-exchange (Vargo & Lusch, 2006), but when the need to access resources from others arises, so does the need for value-in-exchange. In other words, value-in-exchange is required for value creation once the resources needed cannot be attained naturally… The process of co-creating value is driven by value-in-use, but mediated and monitored by value-in-exchange."

In summary, there are two competing views, and thus confusion, around whether or not value co-creation always takes place and a key factor in the difference between these two views is to what extent we might consider interaction to be taking place. The level of engagement might well be a factor here but the extent to which this is affected by cultural differences needs to be explored in more depth.

2.2.5.5 Value Co-destruction

Value co-creation is a central concept within S-D logic and whilst there are arguments for further empirical research in this area there has already been a lot of theoretical writing on the concept. However, more recently the concept of the co-destruction of value has emerged (e.g. Echeverri & Skalen, 2011; Plé & Cáceres, 2010; Smith, 2013).

Plé & Cáceres (2010, p. 431) define the co-destruction of value as an interactional process between service systems that results in a decline of at least one of the systems' well-being (which, given the nature of a service-system, can be individual or organizational). They state that the co-creation of value depends on congruent expectations as to the manner in which resources are integrated but suggest that sometimes these expectations are not met for one or both parties and that this can lead to the co-destruction of value. If, as discussed in the previous section, the concept of value is a social construction influenced by culture then the likelihood of achieving a congruence of expectations would be reduced.

However, I question the extent to which this might be considered co-destruction because, in the absence of value having been co-created in the first place, there would be no value to be destroyed. The absence of co-creation does not, in my opinion, equal co-destruction and the focus of this study will therefore be on co-creation rather than co-destruction.

2.2.5.6 Value and context

Whilst earlier research on value identified the importance of context (e.g. Bolton & Drew, 1991; Holbrook, 1999; Zeithaml, 1988) this importance was elevated within S-D Logic to reflect the extent to which context frames exchange, service, and the potentiality of resources. Introducing the concept of 'value-in-context' Vargo (2009) sought to highlight the complexity of resource integration and the need to consider the relationship between service exchange relationships at both the micro and macro levels.

Edvardsson, Tronvoll, and Gruber (2011) elaborated further on the contextual nature of value and introduced the idea of 'value-in-social-context'. They argued that as service exchange and value co-creation were significantly influenced by social forces the social setting in which value creation occurred must be considered. Drawing on social construction theories (e.g. Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Giddens, 1984) Edvardsson et al. (2011) suggest that future research needed to consider questions of social reality around which services are exchanged.

A multi-level perspective of context was proposed by Chandler and Vargo (2011), in order to make *"salient and explicit how context, markets, and value co-creation are theoretically related"*, and this consisted of three levels: 1) micro level; 2) meso level; and 3) macro level. This multi-level approach has been further explicated and now forms one of the central ideas of S-D Logic in respect of how resources are integrated through institutions and nested service ecosystems (Frow & Payne, 2019; Lusch & Vargo, 2014; Vargo & Lusch, 2016, 2017), see Figure 9 below.

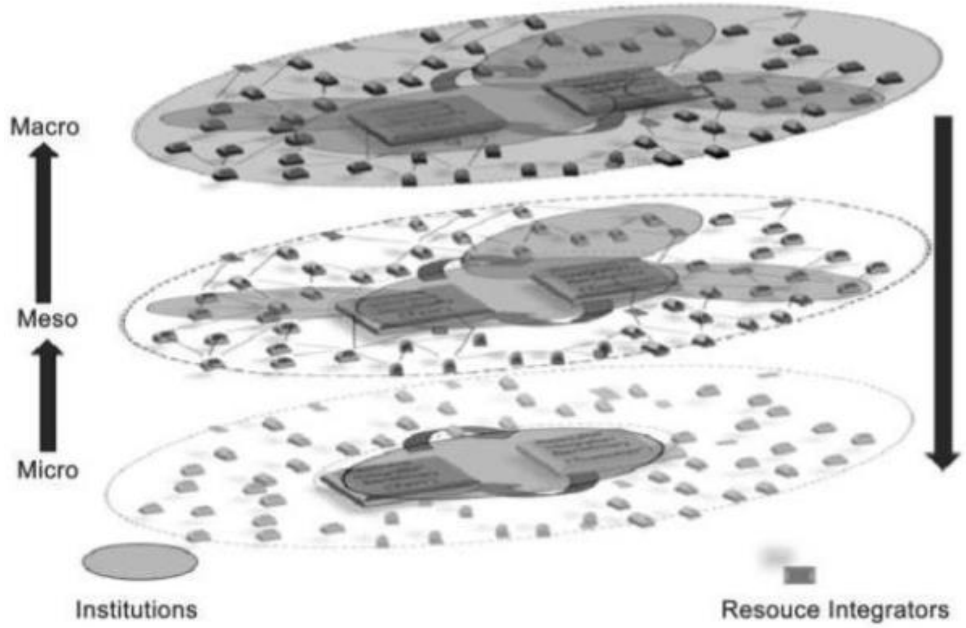

Figure 9 - Service Ecosystems
Source: Lusch and Vargo (2014, p. 171)

In addition to the multi-level and ecosystem considerations of context Helkkula, Dube, and Arnould (2019) suggest that culture might be considered as context for value creation. They reference Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) research (see Arnould & Thompson, 2005) which focuses on the influence of culture on marketplace activities and consider servicescapes as meso contexts within which value co-creation takes place. The link between S-D Logic and CCT is also explored by Akaka, Schau, and Vargo (2013) and Akaka, Vargo, and Lusch (2013) who build on the earlier work of Chandler and Vargo (2011) and Edvardsson et al. (2011) to stress the cultural context and how that frames the co-creation and evaluation of an experience through what the conceptualization of 'value-in-a-cultural context'. The relationship between value and culture will be discussed in greater detail in Section 2.2.6.

In summary, the contextual nature of value is significant to the extent that many scholars consider it to be something which is socially constructed (Edvardsson et al., 2011; Helkkula et al., 2019; Karababa & Kjeldgaard, 2014; Peñaloza & Venkatesh, 2006). It is therefore important that consideration be given to socio-cultural contexts within which value is created.

2.2.6 Value and Culture

We have now established the importance of context when considering value and value creation (Akaka & Chandler, 2019; Chandler & Vargo, 2011; Edvardsson et al., 2011; Lusch & Vargo, 2014; Vargo & Lusch, 2016, 2017). We have also seen arguments for a broadening of the scope to include the cultural context within which value is co-created (Akaka, Schau, et al., 2013; Akaka, Vargo, et al., 2013; Helkkula et al., 2019), an area within which there has been only limited research (Voyer et al., 2017). Therefore, I will now consider the relationship between value and culture in more detail.

As we discussed in Section 2.2.6, according to Rokeach (1973, p. 24) A person's values are assumed to come from "culture, society and its institutions, and personality". These values, in turn, influence the value that consumers seek from products or services (Holbrook, 1994; Rokeach, 1973; Vinson et al., 1977). Therefore, culture would seem a significant consideration for our studies. However, Overby, Woodruff, and Gardial (2005) argue that previous conceptualizations of value perception have mostly been derived from the study of western consumers and therefore propose a conceptual model for considering value perceptions of other cultures by studying them through a *culture lens*.

Applying such a *lens* is not as easy as it may sound though as culture is a very complex area and there are many different models linked to this topic. In this section I will consider two research streams relating to culture: those relating to national cultures; and that of consumer culture theory.

2.2.6.1 National Cultures

National culture models are based on the delineation of cultural groups by national borders (de Mooij, 2019). Whilst there are a number of frameworks for describing and measuring national cultures and cross cultural differences, including those of Schwartz (Schwartz, 1992, 1999, 2006, 2012), the GLOBE Project (House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, & Gupta, 2004), and that of Trompenaars (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012), it is Hofstede's (1980) cultural dimensions model which has had the most significant impact in cross-cultural research (Beugelsdijk, Kostova, & Roth, 2017; de Mooij, 2019; Fang, 2011).

Hofstede (1980) described culture as *"the collective programming of the mind"* and was the first to develop a national culture framework which enabled the measurement and comparison of countries along a range of cultural dimensions. Hofstede's (1980) original work drew on surveys of 116,000 multi-national employees of IBM that were collected over two periods, around 1968 and around 1972. From this data he developed four dimensions by which countries could be classified. These dimensions included: Power Distance; Uncertainty Avoidance; Individualism; and, Masculinity.

There have been a few elaborations to Hofstede's dimensions since it's original introduction, perhaps the most significant of which originated from a study of Chinese culture and the work of The Chinese Culture Connection (1987), who were concerned that Hofstede's (1980) work might be culture bound and therefore conducted their own research on Chinese culture. They found four factors of culture, three of which correlated to factors in Hofstede’s model, with a fourth, ‘Confucian work dynamism’, that was unrelated to Hofstede’s previous work. Hofstede later added a fifth dimension ‘long-term orientation’ (Hofstede & Bond, 1988) related to these Confucian principles (and later still a sixth dimension Indulgence-Restraint (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010)).

There are criticisms of national culture models (Dervin, 2011; Hofstede, 2002; Mcsweeney, 2002; McSweeney, 2002) and their ability to accurately portray the culture of a whole nation of individuals. Dervin (2011) criticises the use of ‘culturalism or solid interculturality’ in the teaching of intercultural management and calls for a softer approach that takes into account the complexity of individuals who interact with each other. Steenkamp (2001) suggests that there are layers within national cultures that include meta and micro levels and that there is also the further complication of acculturation as more and more migration takes place. It has been suggested that there are great differences in culture between regions and cities with more affluent urbanized areas being more individualistic than collectivist (although of course the above mentioned critics would disagree with the use of those culturalist terms). For a country as large as China, with such vast differences in levels of urbanisation between their southern and eastern coastal cities and their inland western provinces this has a significant impact on the ability to describe one ‘national’ culture.

Fang (2003) offers more specific criticism of Hofstede's fifth dimension, originally termed 'Confucian dynamism' but later changed to 'Long-term orientation (LTO), highlighting both methodological and philosophical flaws. Methodological concerns stem from the empirical grounding of the fifth dimension in data collected from college students who are unlikely to be the most representative of average cultural values. Philosophically, Fang (2003) argues that the values on which the fifth dimension is based are too strongly linked to Confucianism when Chinese beliefs and values derive from a combination of Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism (Redding, 1990). Minkov and Hofstede (2012) acknowledge that this particular dimension lacks theoretical coherence and more recent work (cf. Minkov, 2017; Minkov et al., 2018) has reconceptualised this particular dimension as 'Flexibility versus Monumentalism' and now seems far removed from its origins as a way of highlighting 'Confucian Work Dynamism'.

Hofstede's dimensions of national culture represent a very valuable tool for marketers, as the leading global advertising consultant Simon Anholt (2000, cited in de Mooij, 2019) points out:

> "For advertising agencies and their clients, culture mapping [i.e. working with the Hofstede Dimensions] really comes into its own: It's absolutely made for mass marketing, an area where individual personality is of very secondary importance,

> and what you really want is reliable, true, but gross generalizations. You need to know what most people in a country are like, and how most of them will behave in response to certain stimuli."

Whilst national culture models clearly have their advantages when considering culture from a mass marketing perspective we must also be wary of the limitations of these essentialist type cultural models (Holliday, Kullman, & Hyde, 2004; Schedlitzki, Ahonen, Wankhade, Edwards, & Gaggiotti, 2017) because although Hofstede (1980) suggests that "the value system (the mental software) shared by major groups in the population" is central to culture, this "sharedness" does not always exist and within-country variance in values is often significant (Fischer & Schwartz, 2011; Schwartz, 2014).

In Section 2.2.5.5 I discussed the arguments for value being a social construction, an outcome of sociocultural contexts rooted in a cultural perspective (Edvardsson et al., 2011; Karababa & Kjeldgaard, 2014; Peñaloza & Venkatesh, 2006). It is necessary now to also consider a non-essentialist view of culture as a shifting, ephemeral reality (Holliday et al., 2004, p. 14-15). This is consistent with the view that social construction abandons essentialism (Burr, 2015, p. 121) and that culture is socially constructed at both macro and micro levels of society (Cunliffe, 2008, p 126).

If value is a social construction based on culture, which is in itself something which is socially constructed, then we can expect there to be a multiplicity of conceptualizations of value dependent not only on national culture, but on the various different groupings within that national culture whether those be geographical, age related or of some other origin. This idea is supported by Wang & Lin (2009) who highlight different attitudes towards value between different generations of Chinese and also between mainland Chinese and their counterparts in Hong Kong and Taiwan. It seems reasonable to assume that if there are significant changes in an individual’s social circumstances, for example through immersion within a different national culture, that their concept of value could in some way be influenced.

Cultural differences between generations can be significant too. In China these differences are particularly profound because of the significant social upheavals that took place within China over the 20th century. There are distinct differences between Chinese born within the 70’s, 80’s and 90’s and, moreso than in the west, identity is strongly linked to these age groupings (Bergstrom, 2012).

A significant factor in the difference between children born pre and post 70's relates to the introduction of China's one-child policy which was deemed necessary by Chinese officials to produce a generation of high-quality individuals (Fong, 2007; Greenhalgh, 2003; Liu, 2016) with Fong (2007) suggesting that the 'quality' referred to might well resemble what Pierre Bourdieu referred to as "cultural capital" but was essentially associated with characteristics that were likely to lead to social and economic success. However, Liu (2016, p. 106) argues that the one-child policy and other post-Mao socio-economic changes have led to the rise of the "Priceless Child" in China, where "Chinese urban children have become strikingly emotionally "precious", but economically useless, to parents".

Differences between generations are common in most cultures. Asgary and Walle (2002) point out that older generations tend to embrace the norms of their heritage whilst the young are influenced more by the global, outside world. This leads to a kind of cultural hybridisation whereby many individuals are at the same time a part of, and influenced by, their traditional culture but are also global citizens and are drawn into the dominant Western sphere of economic and cultural influence (Asgary & Walle, 2002).

2.2.6.2 Consumer Culture Theory

Consumption is an integral part of contemporary society with much of daily life revolving around some form of consuming (Baudrillard, 1998).

This consumer culture is the main focus of the interdisciplinary Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) research tradition which seeks to highlight the effect that sociocultural processes and structure have on: 1) consumer identity projects; 2) marketplace cultures; 3) the sociohistoric patterning of consumption; and 4) mass-mediated marketplace ideologies and consumers' interpretive strategies (Arnould & Thompson, 2005). There is a close link between CCT and S-D Logic (e.g. Akaka, Vargo, & Lusch, 2013; Akaka, Vargo, & Schau, 2015; Vargo & Lusch, 2016) with Arnould (2007) suggesting that the empirical basis for conceptualizing the co-creative role of consumers initially arose through CCT research.

CCT researchers consider globalization forces to have a significant impact on consumption behaviour and suggest that these represent a set of processes whereby global and local cultures interpenetrate and co-construct each other (Bardhi, Luedicke, & Sharifonnasabi, 2018). Significant within CCT research has been the work of Appadurai (1990) who considered the tensions between cultural heterogenization and homogenization (which, at the time, he considered to represent an argument about Americanization and/or 'commoditization') to be a central problem of global interaction. Appadurai (1990) proposed a framework for exploring the global economy through a process of five global flows which he termed: a) ethnoscapes - the shifting landscapes of persons, e.g. tourists, immigrants, refugees; b) mediascapes - the production and dissemination of information and the images of the world created by this media; c) technoscapes - the ever fluid global configuration of both mechanical and informational technology; d) finanscapes - the global flow of capital through currency markets, national stock exchanges and commodity speculation; and e) ideoscapes - images of an ideological nature that might relate to political, cultural, or historical contexts.

These global flows to which Appadurai (1990) referred have been gradually gathering pace and have led to what the sociologist Zygmunt Bauman (2000) referred to as 'liquid modernity', a state characterised by the fluid nature of ideas and structures in which change is the only constant. These ongoing changes to social structures, institutions and traditions have significant effects on individuals' identity projects and consumption practices (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2017; Bardhi, Eckhardt, & Arnould, 2012; Bardhi et al., 2018).

These constantly changing sociocultural circumstances are significant because identity is considered to be formed through the process of socialisation yet it has been suggested that for each thread of our identity there is only a limited number of discourses on offer out of which we might fashion ourselves (Burr, 2015, p. 124). As Markus and Nurius (1986, p. 954) suggest:

> "An individual is free to create any variety of selves, yet the pool of possible selves derives from the categories made salient by the individual’s particular socio-cultural context and from the models, images and symbols provided by the media and by individual’s immediate social experiences".

Therefore, it is possible that with the changing sociocultural environment, particularly for those individuals who are globally mobile, there comes an increase in 'possible selves' from which they can form their identity. Whether this is advantageous to the individual or not is uncertain however and Askegaard, Arnould, and Kjeldgaard (2005) identified how individuals can sometimes struggle to find a sense of identity when faced with the competing ideologies, behaviours, and values of different home and host cultures. Askegaard et al. (2005) also identified a third culture that affected individuals' identity formation, a transnational consumer culture, and this is becoming increasingly important as a cultural grouping (Fang, 2006).

With regard to China, the introduction of the open-door economic policy has had a significant impact and led to many Chinese developing a more materialistic outlook (Leung, 2008), this is particularly so for younger Chinese who are encouraged and empowered by increasing wealth, education, and access to global neoliberal cultural flows to adopt alternative sets of values to their more conservative parents (Fong, 2007,

p. 97). However, Faure and Fang (2008) suggest that this does not mean China's old value system is being replaced by a new one but rather that the two systems co-exist in a kind of paradox. What impact might this paradox have on consumption? As De Mooij and Hofstede (2002, p. 67) point out:

> "The wealthier countries become, the more manifest is the influence of culture on consumption. When income levels are such that consumers have satisfied their basic needs and wants, they will spend their discretionary income on what best fits their value systems."

Triandis (2004) also points out that populations tend to become more individualistic as they become more affluent. In China, the country's wealth and the influence of the global consumer culture have risen alongside each other. Global mobility has also been on the rise and Bardhi, Luedicke, and Sharifonnasabi (2018) suggest that this can take many forms, including that of *education sojourning*, something of particular significance to the higher education sector to which I will review in the next section.

2.3 Internationalization of HE

> "Internationalization is changing the world of higher education, and globalization is changing the world of internationalization."
>
> (Knight, 2004, p 5)

We live in an increasingly globalized society and whilst the terms *internationalization* and *globalization* are often confused they are not the same (Altbach, 2004a). Globalization can be defined as the economic, political, and societal forces that push higher education institutions (HEIs) toward greater international involvement (Altbach & Knight, 2007). Internationalization is a term that is used to discuss the international aspects of higher education (Knight, 2004).

There are many benefits to be gained from internationalisation at both the national and institutional levels. At the national level there are opportunities for countries to develop their human resources, their 'brain power', by recruiting talented students from other countries to increase their scientific, technological, and economic competitiveness (Knight, 2004, p. 22). International students also make a significant contribution to the national economy, in the UK for example, international students and their visitors represented a total of £25.8 billion in on and off campus spending in the UK during 2014-15 (Universities UK, 2017b). From an institutional perspective international students not only represent a key source of profit (Altbach & Knight, 2007) they are also beneficial to the development of domestic students as the inter-cultural experience helps to better prepare them for the international labour market and a variety of different cultural settings (Marshall, Fry, & Ketteridge, 2002). Ratios of international staff and student numbers also help universities enhance their world university rankings through the 'international outlook' criteria (Jin & Cortazzi, 2017).

2.3.1 International Student Mobility

The mobility of students through globalization has grown considerably over the past 40 years with the number of international students rising since the 1970s and growing fourfold between 1975 and 2008 (Beine & Noe, 2015). Whilst this global trend was mirrored in the UK where international students play a significant role in the Higher Education (HE) market (Huang, Raimo, & Humfrey, 2016; Warwick, 2014) 2013/14 saw the first reduction of enrolments in almost three decades. This recent decline was partly because of a fall in EU enrolments due to tuition fee increases but non-EU enrolments also declined and continued to stagnate in the following years.

The decline in UK enrolments was in stark contrast to the high growth in international demand for study in Australia, Canada, Germany, New Zealand and the US (UUKi, 2018). Non-EU enrolments started to recover in 2016/17 and this was in no small part due to an increase in students from China. In 2017/18 there were 106,530 Chinese students studying in the UK, representing 40% of all non-EU students in the UK (UK Council for International Student Affairs, 2019).

The UK HE sector currently finds itself under significant financial pressure due to a number of factors: the demographic dip in 18 year olds which will affect the sector until the numbers rise again in 2021 (Corver, 2019); concerns around a potential fall in EU enrolments resulting from Brexit; and a potential reduction in tuition fees as recommended by the Auger Report (Conlon & Halterbeck, 2019). The sectors reliance on international students will therefore likely increase as will the intensity of competition for such students both within the UK and globally. Within the global market one key issue that has affected the UK is a lack of post-study work opportunities for international graduates. Such opportunities have been less clearly presented and more limited than in other countries and this appears to correlate strongly with enrolment growth rate which saw the UK achieve just 0.7% growth between 2012-15 compared with: Australia, 18.0%; USA, 22.5%; Canada, 26.9%; New Zealand, 39.3%; Ireland, 42.5%; and even the non-native English speaking Germany at 16.3% (UUKi, 2018). The recent return to the 2012 policy of granting two year post-study work visas (Adams, 2019) will likely have a positive influence on UK enrolments.

2.3.2 UK Higher Education’s Response to Competition

Warwick (2014) suggests that UK HEIs have previously responded to international competition in two ways: first, with an emphasis on boosting university reputations, through developing international research and the university's position in league tables that measure research output; and secondly by redoubling their efforts to attract fee paying international students.

In order for HEIs to attract these fee paying international students in this increasingly competitive world of international education they need to apply strategic management and marketing theory (Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka, 2006; Irene C. L. Ng & Forbes, 2009; Tan, Muskat, & Zehrer, 2016). Key areas of marketing theory that have been identified as particularly relevant to higher education are Service Dominant (S-D) logic (Vargo & Lusch, 2004, 2008, 2016) and value co-creation (see Prahalad

& Ramaswamy, 2004; Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2002) whereby the learning encounter might be enriched by the capabilities and assets brought by the students (Ledden, Kalafatis, & Mathioudakis, 2011; Naidoo et al., 2011; Ng & Forbes, 2009; Nixon et al., 2018).

2.3.3 The Marketization of Higher Education

However, this focus on attracting fee paying students has contributed to the worldwide ascendance of market mechanisms within HE and the increasingly referred to conceptualisation of students-as-consumers (Jabbar, Analoui, Kong, & Mirza, 2018; Naidoo et al., 2011; Natale & Doran, 2012; Nixon et al., 2018). This in turn leads to attendant ethical concerns around HEs commodification in an international context (Natale & Doran, 2012, p. 195).

Ritzer (1996, 1998) introduced the concept of 'McUniversity' and suggested that students were increasingly approaching universities as consumers. He argued that non-elite universities would become just another 'component of consumer society'. Knight (2013, p. 89) suggests that globalisation has led to universities being 'increasingly characterised by competition, commercialisation, self-interest, and status building'. Miller (2010) considers the effects that the commoditization of education has had on the industry and identified three models of commodification: 1) the credentialism model - 'the certification of learning that has value in the wider economy'; 2) the Skills model - with a focus on transferable skills and represents 'a standardised product that meets pre-specified quality and quantity thresholds'; and, 3) the consumption model in which universities sell consumption itself as part of what Lyotard (1984, cited in Miller, 2010, p. 203) refers to as the 'mercantilization of knowledge'.

Collini (2017, p. 33) paints something of a negative picture when he states that if current trends continue then "the dominant character of higher education institutions across the world would be as a business specialising in preparing people to work in business." Both Knight (2013) and Collini (2017) suggest that universities should consider re-orienting their values back to those of a more academic nature. However, although marketisation clearly does not sit comfortably within all areas of HE (Ek, Ideland, Jönsson, & Malmberg, 2013) given the financial situation that some UK HEIs currently find themselves in a re-orientation might not be a viable option.

It is important therefore to consider how universities might attract more international students and in order to do that it is important to understand what it is that drives them towards UK HEIs. As the sector is particularly vulnerable to changes in the Chinese student market (HEFCE, 2017), from which such a large proportion of international students derive, it is particularly important that there is a good understanding of the factors that influence Chinese International Students decisions to study in the UK.

2.3.4 Factors influencing Chinese Overseas Study

A useful model for studying international student mobility is the "*Push-pull*" model (Altbach, 2004b; Azmat et al., 2013; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002). Students are "pushed" from their home countries by a variety of forces and 'pulled' to study overseas, or to particular countries, for other reasons.

2.3.4.1 Push factors

Mazzarol and Soutar's (2002) original study identified four '*push*' factors: the perception that an overseas course of study is better than a local one; difficulties gaining entry to a particular program; a chosen program not being available in their own country; and, a desire to gain a better understanding of the "West", perhaps with the intention of migrating.

Previous research has suggested similar push factors for Chinese with a number of studies highlighting the perception that overseas programmes are superior to their domestic counterparts (Altbach, 2004b; Bamber, 2014). In China, many students are unable to gain entry to a good university due to the very competitive entry requirements (Altbach, 2004a; Azmat et al., 2013; Brandenburg & Zhu, 2007; Xu, 2017). Wu

(2014) highlighted cultural enrichment as one of the main motivating factors for overseas study.

Social and political forces can also push students to study abroad and Deng Xiaoping's Open Door Policy, implemented in 1978, is a prime example of this. Not only did this policy make it easier for students to go overseas it also put China on a path of increasing prosperity which meant an increasing number of families could afford overseas education for their children (Azmat et al., 2013; Fong, 2011; M. Li & Bray, 2007; Xu, 2017). Furthermore, China's One-Child Policy, introduced in 1979, meant families could concentrate all their resources on providing for their only child and more easily afford to provide them with an overseas education.

From the mid 80's China was also promoting "education for quality" (suzhi jiaoyu) (Fong, 2007; Liu, 2016), a campaign designed "to enable China to succeed in the global neoliberal system by adopting the educational practices of the developed world". (Fong, 2007, p. 101) and many Chinese parents, who had lacked the opportunity to study abroad in their youth, encouraged their children to study overseas to enhance their upward mobility (Fong, 2011, p. 69). The number of students increased significantly over the years and in 2016 there were 860,000 Chinese students studying in OECD countries (OECD, 2018).

Unemployment of Chinese university graduates is an increasing issue (Azmat et al., 2013; Brandenburg & Zhu, 2007; Leung, 2008; Melvin, 2006) and with more than 8 million students graduating from Chinese universities in 2017 (Stapleton, 2017b) the competition for jobs is intense and therefore many graduates choose to continue to postgraduate study overseas to increase their chances of employability. Many students feel that overseas study improves job prospects, especially with international companies (Altbach, 2004a; Bamber, 2014; UUKi, 2018; Wu, 2014; Xu, 2017)

Although knowledge and education have always been highly regarded in China Griffiths (2012, p. 45-46) suggests that today education is perhaps becoming less valued for its own sake than it is for the good jobs, higher salaries and the social status that it can provide. As a result he suggests that the best imaginable education today would be to attain a PhD in an explicitly commercial discipline.

Whilst most Chinese believe a foreign education to be best attitudes do fluctuate in respect of China's position in the world (Griffiths, 2012, p. 46) so it remains to be seen how growing levels of nationalism might influence their perception of overseas study.

2.3.4.2 Pull Factors

Mazzarol and Soutar (2002) identified a number of "*pull*" factors including: the knowledge and awareness of a particular country; the quality and reputation of its educational system; alumni links; and cost of study, including living and other indirect study factors.

Again, previous research has suggested similar "pull" factors for Chinese students. There is an attraction to the US and UK for cultural enrichment (Azmat et al., 2013; Fong, 2011; Wu, 2014; Xu, 2017) and, as Wang, Harding, and Mai (2012, p. 637) point out, for many Chinese overseas study is seen as *"the first step in students' life towards becoming independent, creative, open minded, culturally competent and confident."*

The strong academic system in countries like the US and UK are also attractive. There is a level of prestige attached to a degree attained from countries such as these that is greater than one attained from those offered by many Chinese universities (Altbach, 2004a; Azmat et al., 2013; Bamber, 2014; Barnes, 2007; Li & Bray, 2007; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; Wu, 2014). Cost was also a factor and the advantages of a UK postgraduate degree only taking one year was a significant factor in choosing the UK as a destination (Bamber, 2014).

Other significant pull factors include the extensive use of marketing and recruitment agents by UK HEIs to recruit increasing numbers of international students (Huang et al., 2016).

2.3.5 Value in Higher Education

There is a limited range of literature that discusses value in the context of higher education and student experience, especially with regard to CIS. However, in Section 2.2.2 I discussed how some of the problems in researching value stemmed from the conceptual difficulties associated with the term 'value' and its close links with other terms such as 'quality' and 'satisfaction'. When considering these other terms there is a much broader range of literature that might inform this research.

Quality - Tan et al. (2016) conducted a systematic review of quality of student experience in higher education and concluded that student experience was a predominantly student-centric idea but further research was needed on the concept of 'student experience' as there was no clear definition among the literature reviewed. Tan et al. (2016) also suggested that student experience should be looked at holistically as involving experience both inside and outside the classroom, and that it may be influenced by political, social, and economic circumstances. Student engagement, a multi-dimensional construct which includes behavioural, cognitive, and affective aspects (Mandernach, 2015), has been highlighted as an important factor in the delivery of student-centred experiences (Prakash, 2018; Tan et al., 2016). A number of studies focussed specifically on the quality of CIS experience and have identified that relationships with the university and its staff are more important than course content or degree quality (Simpson & Tan, 2008) and that more individual attention to students in respect of mentoring and pastoral schemes would be beneficial (Barnes, 2007). This seems to suggest that student engagement is indeed a key area.

Satisfaction - A number of theoretical models have been developed which focus on the different variables association with satisfaction in higher education (Alves & Raposo, 2007; Douglas et al., 2008; Santini et al., 2017) including some that focus specifically on international students (Arambewela & Hall, 2009; Arambewela et al., 2006; Bianchi, 2013). A wide range of factors are found in these studies with a number of common themes emerging, including: the quality of teaching and learning; the availability of support resources; the university environment; and university image. 'Value' appeared as an antecedent in a number of studies although in some this was only loosely represented as either 'value for money' (Arambewela et al., 2006) or as a measure of the perception of being able to obtain a job and therefore being a good investment (Alves & Raposo, 2007). In a meta-analytic study of student satisfaction in higher education Santini et al. (2017) found perceived value to be a significant antecedent to student satisfaction and they identified 11 variables that included not only monetary value but also such factors as hedonic value, social value, and status (see Figure 10 below).

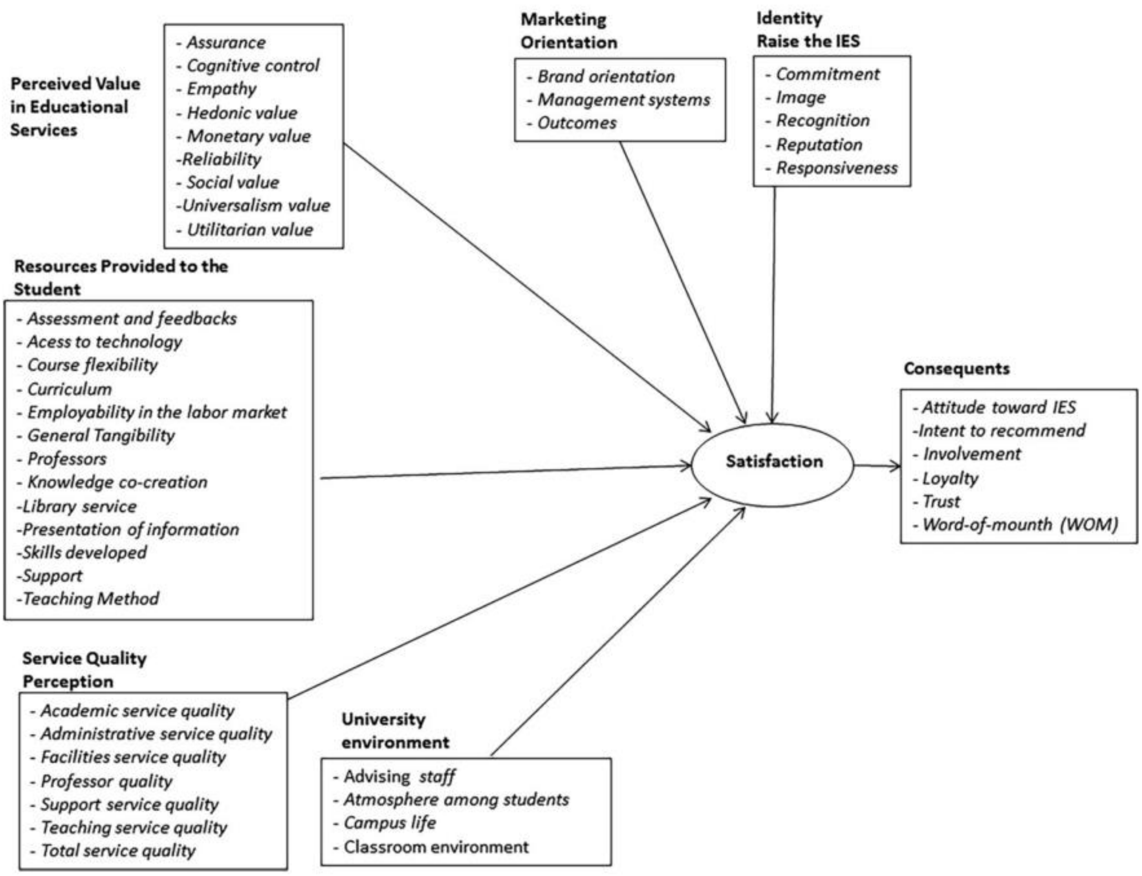

Figure 10 - Meta-analysis of Student Satisfaction in Higher Education
Source: (Santini et al., 2017, p. 11)

The importance of considering both educational and non-educational factors was highlighted in the studies relating to international students (Arambewela & Hall, 2009; Bianchi, 2013) and the importance of customer-to-customer interaction, to support cross-cultural development, and 'peripheral' services that supported daily living were noted as being key drivers of satisfaction (Bianchi, 2013).

There are a few studies that specifically relate to value and higher education. The works of Ledden, Kalafatis, and Samouel (2007) and Ledden et al. (2011) both consider value and its relationship with other similar concepts within the higher education environment. Drawing on Zeithaml's (1988) 'give and get' components and Sheth et al.'s (1991a) value framework they conducted studies which identified a significant link between personal values and perceived value which they subsequently found to be a key determinant on satisfaction (Ledden et al., 2007). Their later study suggested that value dimensions together accounted for over 60% of variation in satisfaction. These studies provide useful insight into the extent to which HE provides satisfaction against previously identified *perceived value* constructs, however they do not specifically focus on international students and the quantitative nature of the methodology does not allow for the generation of rich data that might facilitate the identification of new value types.

Ng and Forbes (2009) consider higher education through service logic and in particular how students might value their educational experience. They argue that the educational experience can be transformative but also that is emergent and dependent on value being co-created between the university and students. The extent to which the co-creation process is successful also depends very much on the effort and abilities of students. Dollinger, Lodge, and Coates (2018) also consider the co-creation of value within higher education and propose a conceptual model which suggests that interaction and relationships between universities and students is critical to successful value co-creation. Whilst these studies provide useful conceptual insight they do not provide empirical analysis to support their conceptualizations.

Woodall et al. (2014) looked at students as consumers and the value of student experience and found that service quality and satisfaction are frequently conflated within the value domain. They highlighted a number of areas that students considered when thinking about value but found the most comprehensively inclusive of these, net value, a comparison of perceived benefits and sacrifices, to offer the best potential for measurement. Woodall et al. (2014) found that home and international students considered value in different ways with indications that international students get less value from the study environment and suggestions that their perception of value is affected by too much sacrifice rather than a lack of benefits. This in an interesting finding however this study discusses international students in general rather than being specific to CIS and the predominantly quantitative nature of the methodology is, as the authors acknowledge, less useful than a qualitative approach at identifying opportunities for improvements.

A qualitative study of benefits and costs in higher education was conducted by Gallarza et al. (2017) who considered several value dimensions to provide a broader scope to the consideration of value in HE and focussed on international students. They identified that whilst language learning and living in a different culture were the main reasons for overseas study, the social benefits of travelling and meeting new people, together with the emotional rewards associated with personal fulfilment and achieving a sense of freedom, were significant areas of value sought by overseas students. Although Gallarza et al.'s (2017) study provides a good deal of qualitative data on international students perceptions of value in HE it is based on students studying in Valencia, Spain, and only includes two Chinese participants.

A study on the value of HE for Chinese students was conducted by Lai, To, Lung, and Lai (2011) but this was on the perceived value of higher education of non-local Chinese students studying within universities in the Greater China regions of Macao, Guangzhou, Shanghai, and Taipei, in either English or Portuguese (widely spoken in the former Portuguese colony of Macau). This study was largely based on the earlier work of Leblanc and Nguyen (1999) in which 402 students at a small US business school were surveyed in order to identify what value dimensions they considered most important in respect of their education . Lai et al. (2011) identified two major value components of student satisfaction: the usefulness of a degree in terms of increased earnings potential; and the experiential aspect, although their paper does not specify exactly what part of their experience this component relates to.

The studies discussed above provide useful insight into the value that CIS may seek from their overseas study experience. However, given the importance of the socio-cultural contexts surrounding the nature of value and its creation, as discussed in Section 2.2, further research that takes into account the specific home/study country context is needed and it is my intention to address this as part of this study.

2.4 Liminality

The concept of liminality was originally introduced in van Gennep's (1960, translated from the 1909 original) book The Rites of Passage and was derived from the Latin term 'limen' which means 'threshold'. Liminality refers to the transition period between different social states and is a concept which Thomassen (2009) argues:

> "… may be as central a concept to the social sciences as both "structure" and "practice", as it serves to conceptualize moments where the relationship between structure and agency is not easily resolved or even understood within the, by now classical, "structuration theories", as suggested by Pierre Bourdieu or Anthony Giddens."

van Gennep's (1960) original work identified a distinct ritual pattern to demarcate transitions which was universal to all societies (Thomassen, 2009, p. 6) and which consisted of three distinct phases. First is the separation phase during which the individual is removed from their usual social environment and everyday life. Next comes the transition or 'liminal' phase during which the individual is subject to possibly ambiguous and uncertain circumstances. Finally, there is incorporation, a post-liminal state whereby the individual is now returned to society in a different state.

van Gennep's work was later taken up and developed by the British anthropologist Victor Turner who "stumbled" upon van Gennep's *The Rites of Passage* almost by chance when he himself was in a liminal state (Thomassen, 2009, p. 14). Turner was in a transition period having left an academic position in the UK but ending up in a situation in which he was having to wait for a visa to take up a new position in the US. During this period he experientially recognised the importance van Gennep's work (Thomassen, 2009, p. 14). In exploring the concept of liminality Turner introduced the idea of individuals being in a 'betwixt and between' state from which one can emerge with a new social status or identity (Andrews & Roberts, 2015, p. 132).

2.4.1 Liminal vs. Liminoid

One of Turner's most significant contributions to the area of liminality was his suggestion that liminal experiences in modern consumerist societies to a large extent have been replaced by “liminoid” moments, i.e. 'not quite liminal', as he explains:

> "The liminoid is more like a commodity - indeed, often is a commodity, which one selects and pays for - than the liminal, which elicits loyalty and is bound up with one's membership or desired membership in some highly corporate group. One works at the liminal, one plays with the liminoid." (Turner, 1982, p. 55)

The role of consumption in effecting liminal transitions to a new role has previously been explored by Noble and Walker (1997), however, as Thomassen (2009, p. 15) points out, the liminoid can offer a break from the norm, a 'playful as-if experience', without the transition to a changed status that is a key component of liminality.

2.4.2 Liminality and Identity

According to Ybema et al. (2009) the search for identity is a symptom of individualism in Bauman's (2000) liquid modernity. 'Identity' is an implicitly social concept which is constructed out of the discourse culturally available to use (Burr, 2015, p. 123) and is formed through a dialogue between the inner-self and the outer social-identity (Beech, 2011, p. 289). Liminal identity work, according to Beech (2011), can be conceptualized into three types of practice, each relating to different dialogical circumstances (see Figure 11 below).

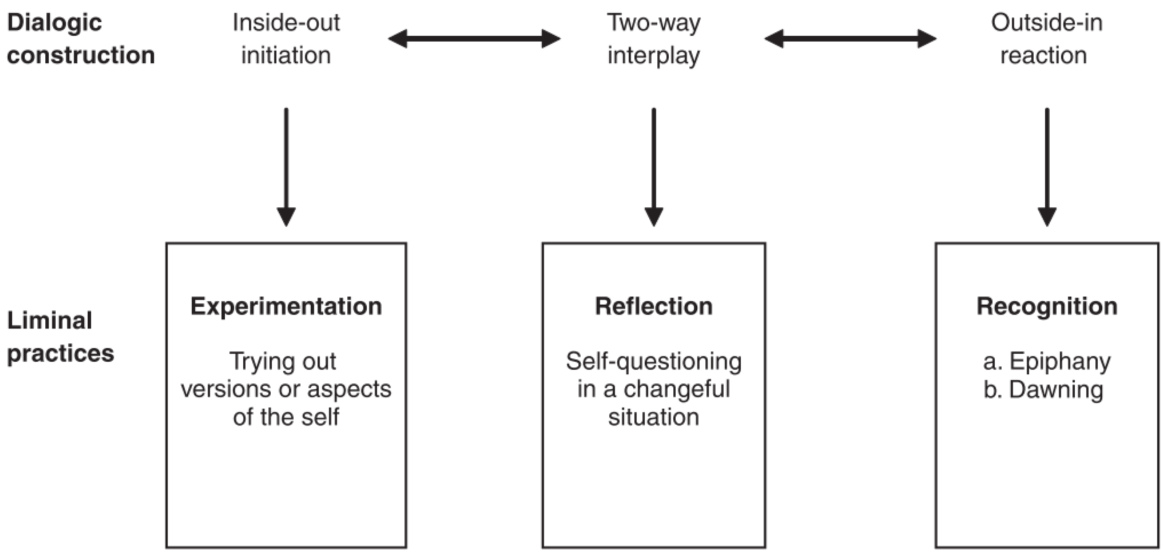

Figure 11 - Liminal Identity Work
Source: (Beech, 2011, p. 6)

The first of these practices is experimentation whereby an individual tries out different versions of themselves while seeking a new or modified identity. This involves an 'inside out' dialogic approach in which the individual tries out different identities or group attachments. The second practice is reflection in which the individual is influenced by both their internal self-questioning and the external influence of the social environment in which they inhabit. The third practice is that of recognition, a 'gradual process of dawning' (Beech, 2011, p. 289) in which the individual reaches a turning point in realizing they are not the person they used to be.

Ybema et al. (2009) also highlighted the extent to which identities are co-constructed through the interaction of individuals and the social structures within which they exist. It has also been suggested by Ybema, Beech, and Ellis (2011) that during this co-construction process the 'betweenness' associated with the liminal phase can be characterised in two different ways: i) as a transitional betweenness where an individual passes from one identity position to another; or ii) a perpetual betweenness, an ongoing state where an individual is constantly between two social categories. Ybema et al. (2011) suggested that 'perpetual liminars' are subjected to longer periods of ambiguity and find themselves in a situation where they must constantly re-position their identities to match the social circumstances that are most relevant at any particular time.

2.4.3 Liminality as Process, Position, and Place

Söderlund and Borg (2017) conducted a systematic review of liminality literature within management and organization studies and identified three commonly occurring themes. The first theme identified was that of liminality as process which highlighted the use of the liminality concept in the study of transition between 'different states, situations, and professional identities'. The temporary and ambiguous nature of liminality, as originally identified by van Gennep, was highlighted in many of the studies on transition and one of the key questions arising related to how individuals handle the pressure and tension of such transitions. The second theme identified was that of liminality as position and research in this area highlighted issues around how individuals holding in-between positions relate to their dual or newly emerging identities, as considered in the research by Beech (2011) and Ybema et al. (2009) above. The third theme identified was that of liminality as place and/or space and focusses on the spatial elements of liminality and the extent to which such elements might cause individuals to reflect on the structures, values, and institutions around them. Turner (1982, p. 25) suggested that movement in space, for example between one geographical place and another, often accompanied a movement in social status.

Söderlund and Borg (2017) suggest that the three themes can each be identified as reflecting a particular focus: temporal liminality; positional liminality; and spatial liminality. They also make a number of recommendations as to how liminality research might be advanced and these include: a focus on the temporality of liminality and how the duration of change processes and how longer and shorter periods of liminality might differ; and, a greater focus on the liminal experience which would benefit from more in-depth qualitative enquiries.

2.4.4 Liminality and Experience

Szakolczai (2015) suggests that any experience is above all an event, something which happens to us, and something which involves not just our senses, but our entire existence as well. As such, he argues that the consequences of our experiences are both subjective and manifold as they form part of many such events that effect not only ourselves but everyone around us who perhaps all experience similar events but with potentially differing perspectives. Szakolczai (2015) suggests that we can deal with the complexities resulting from this by using the concept of a rite of passage to understand experiences as more than just subjectively meaningful.

Turner (1982, p. 16-18) considered the etymology of the word 'experience' and identified terms such as ‘peril’, ‘danger’, ‘risk’, ‘fear’, ‘experimental’ and a number of other similar terms from past etymological forms of the word. He likened it back to Dilthey’s description of ‘erleben’:

> "… “living through” a sequence of events - “it may be a ritual, a pilgrimage, a social drama, a friend’s death, a protracted labor, and other Erlebnisse. Such an experience is incomplete, though, unless one of it’s “moments” is “performance,” an act of creative retrospections in which “meaning” is ascribed to the events and part of experience - even if the meaning is that “there is no meaning.”

He suggested that experience was therefore a kind of “living through” and “thinking back". He also suggested that it is a "willing or wishing forward" and it is during these types of experience that individuals might start to question their taken-for-granted structures and identities and envision new alternatives (Söderlund & Borg, 2017, p. 15).

2.4.5 Liminality in Higher Education

The concept of liminality has been drawn upon within a number of studies in higher education. It has been used to study the idea of students as both learners and teachers (Cook-Sather & Alter, 2011; Matthews, Dwyer, Hine, & Turner, 2018) and the transition to becoming an academic (Breier, Herman, & Towers, 2019; J. Smith, 2010). The concept of liminal spaces has been prominent in some studies, e.g. Facebook as liminal space of transition into HE (Baker & Stirling, 2016), as a 'betwixt' space for turning point experiences of students in first year transition (Palmer, O'Kane, & Owens, 2009), and of emotions and the liminal space in entrepreneurship education (Rose, Leisyte, Haertel, & Terkowsky, 2018).

Blumenkrantz and Goldstein (2014) consider rites of passage to be important functions of HE institutions but argue that few fully capitalize on the natural power they possess as places of initiation. They suggest that van Gennep's (1960) three phase structure can be intentionally applied to the college experience in service to student's identity and social development with the graduation ceremony representing the final stage of incorporation into the graduates new status within the community (Blumenkrantz & Goldstein, 2014, p. 87).

The idea of doctoral liminality is introduced by Keefer (2015) who's research suggested that doctoral students are subject to a liminal experience during which they face a number of challenges to their identity as they face issues of isolation and loneliness, a lack of confidence and imposter syndrome, and concerns about research misalignment. Keefer's (2015, p. 25) study also found that for many of the doctoral students their struggles were often hidden from discussion and some had only discussed and processed their liminality due to their participation in the study.

Simpson, Sturges, and Weight (2009) interviewed 20 MBA graduates who had recently returned to China. Their study is particularly interesting as it identified two separate 'in between' statuses, that between their management career and that relating to the 'interculturality' of spaces to which they were subject as they had crossed both geographic and cultural boundaries. Their respondents found themselves in a marginal space, often on the edge of groups dynamics, and thus in some cases unable to benefit from the intercultural learning and international capabilities that they were hoping to develop (Simpson et al., 2009, p. 63). Many respondents also talked about instances of 'reverse culture shock' in their post-liminal return to China where they found themselves 'out of step' with local Chinese practices (Simpson et al. (2009, p. 41).

A study of student migration from Taiwan to China was conducted by Lan and Wu (2016) in which they identified students as occupying a *liminal terrain of identity* due to the ambiguous position they found themselves in between Chinese and Taiwanese identity. This ambiguity led to a high degree of reflexivity in which students considered their position with differing discourses. Lan and Wu (2016, p. 758) called for further research into the education and employment migrants who face a "predicament between globalization and nationalization in shaping their ways of being and ways of belonging".

2.5 Chapter Summary

The aim of this chapter was to review three broad streams of literature that are pertinent to this study. I began the review by considering extant literature on value and this highlighted a number of commonly occurring themes: that value is contextual, that it is socially constructed, and that it is unique to the individual. I also considered the literature around value creation and drew attention to the lack of conceptual clarity on how value is created, specifically between the research streams of Service Logic (Gronroos, 2011; Grönroos, 2017; Grönroos & Ravald, 2011; Grönroos & Voima, 2013) and S-D Logic (Vargo & Lusch, 2004, 2008, 2016), and how previous research had indicated that value co-creation might not be appropriate where cultural differences exist (see Rod et al., 2014). In light of this consideration I reviewed literature on culture, including both national culture (e.g. Hofstede, 1980) and transnational consumer culture (Appadurai, 1990).

I then looked at literature relating to my research context, higher education and, more specifically, Chinese International Students (CIS). The value of overseas study to CIS was largely unexplored, however literature relating to international student mobility and studies on international student satisfaction and quality were reviewed to give some indication as to what value CIS might seek from their experience. Literature on 'push-pull' factors of student mobility (see Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002) was particularly useful as I considered *pull* factors as possible indicators of value sought.

Finally, I reviewed literature relating to van Gennep's (1960) concept of *liminality* and his theory on 'The Rites of Passage'. This theory was identified as significant following data analysis (see Chapter 3) and provides an overarching framework in which the experience of Chinese International Students can be viewed.

A theoretical model outlining the key literature reviewed can be found in Figure 12, below.

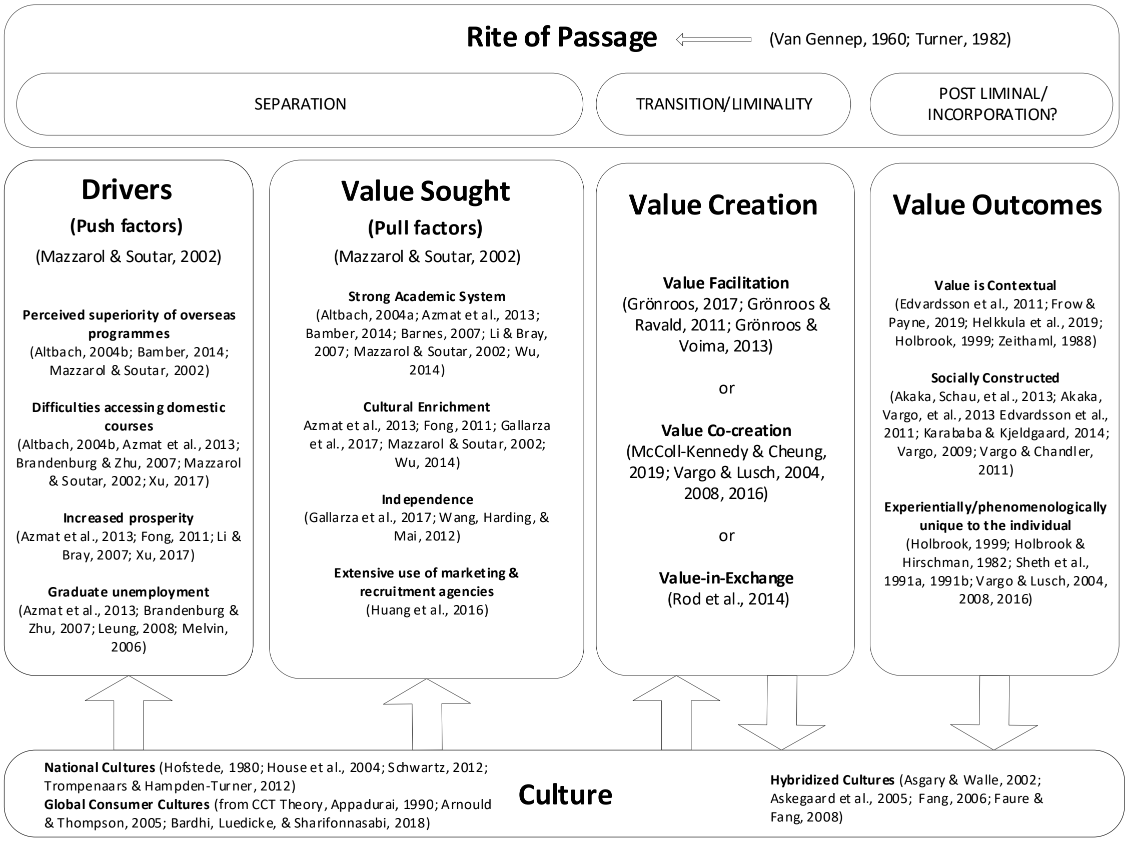

Figure 12 - Theoretical Framework
Source: Author

Chapter 3 Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter explored the nature of value, different ideas about how value is created, and the extent to which this is influenced by socio-cultural context. It also considered the concept of liminality as a potential lens through which Chinese International Students' (CIS) experience might be considered. The purpose of this chapter is to consider the decisions made during my research design and provide the reader with a comprehensive understanding of how the study has been conducted.

The chapter begins by providing an overview of research philosophy before moving on to discuss my particular choice of theoretical perspective, methodology and the methods that I chose to collect and analyse data. I then provide a detailed discussion on my data collection and data analysis which includes setting out how I chose my research context and established my research sample. I also include a detailed explanation as to how I conducted participant interviews and subsequently analysed the resulting interview data. Finally, I end this section with a discussion of research quality and ethical considerations.

3.2 Research Philosophy

It is necessary when conducting research that we reflect upon the nature of the philosophical assumptions we make (Johnson & Duberley, 2000, p. 9) and central to these assumptions are issues of ontology and epistemology. Ontology relates to the nature of being and each research philosophy is underpinned by different ontological assumptions about what exists and the nature of reality (Blaikie, 2007, p. 13). Epistemology is concerned with knowledge and how we make judgements about what is adequate and legitimate about our social reality, how we know what we know (Blaikie, 2007, p. 18).

As Hunt (2014, p. 374) points out, all marketing research has philosophical foundations as it presumes an ontology, a methodology, and an epistemology and this can lead to differences of opinion as to which philosophies are most appropriate for guiding research. The philosophical context of marketing research has long been debated (Hunt, 2014) and it is widely accepted that there is a schism in many of the social sciences with respect to what constitutes truth and genuine knowledge about phenomena (Rod, 2009). Hunt (1990) suggests that truth was once an overriding, central goal within marketing theory and research and that this drew heavily on the two *traditional* theories of truth, the correspondence and coherence theories. However, this became less clear with the advent of marketing's *crisis literature*. He suggests that the traditional view of research within marketing was considered *outmoded* and to be replaced by the *relativisist/constructivist* perspective. Hunt (1990) suggests that many writers in the crisis literature adopted the *consensus theory of truth* which holds that there are no objective criteria but that if the consensus of a group of people is that an assertion is true, then it is true.

Research carried out by many social scientists is generally conducted within particular research paradigms, sets of beliefs, values, assumptions and techniques (Johnson & Duberley, 2000, p. 68). Much of the discussion on such paradigms originated from the work of Burrell and Morgan (1979) who identified four paradigms based upon a number of different metatheoretical assumptions on the nature of social science and the nature of society (Johnson & Duberley, 2000): functionalism; interpretivism, radical structuralism; and radical humanism (See Figure 13, below).

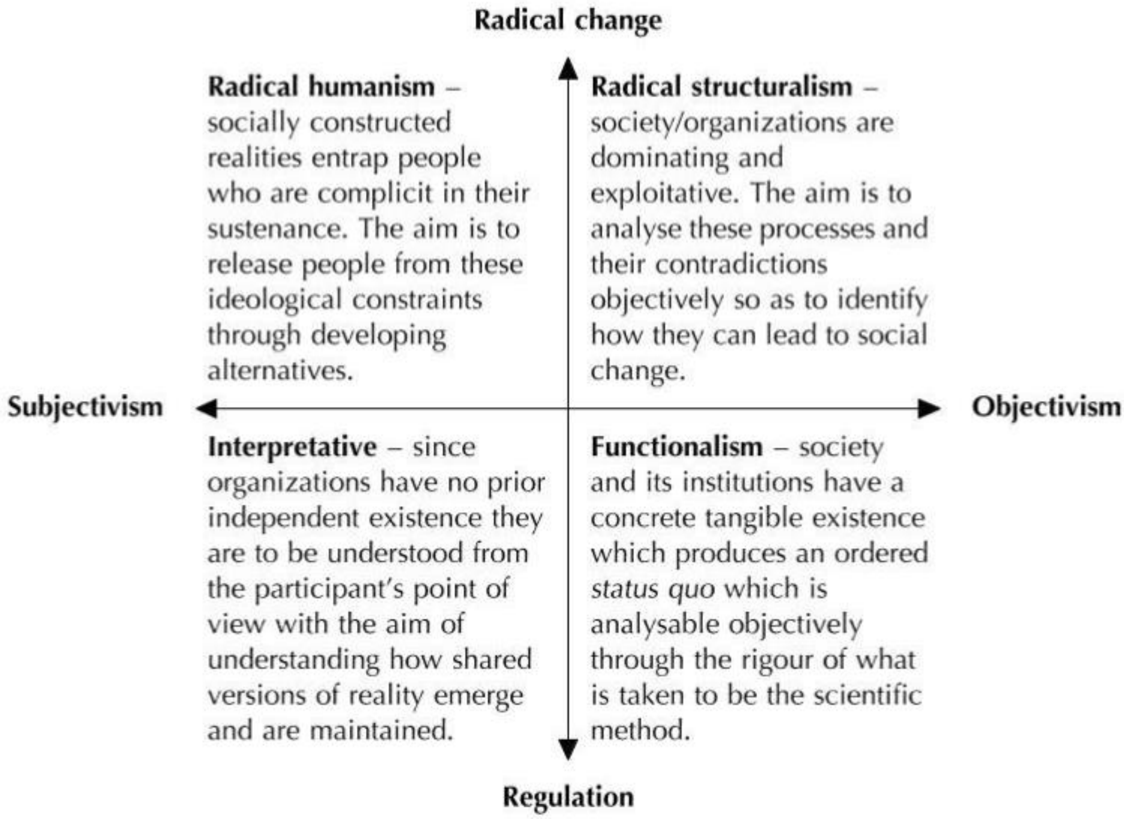

Figure 13 - Burrell & Morgan's Four Paradigms
Source: (Johnson & Duberley, 2000, p. 80)

Within marketing there is a clear objectivist/positivist bias among research (Hunt, 1990; Hunt, 2014; Rod, 2009) and of the four paradigms identified by Burrell and Morgan (1979) there has historically been a clear emphasis on research carried out within the functionalist paradigm (Gioia & Pitre, 1990, p. 586; Nicholson, Brennan, & Midgley, 2014, p. 3). However, Nicholson et al. (2014, p. 3) suggest that one reason for this emphasis on functionalism might be the result of pragmatic approaches to getting published in high-prestige journals which have a favourable attitude towards quantitative studies. Considerations of publishing opportunities aside, another key factor that needs to be considered when deciding upon a research philosophy is the nature of the phenomena to be investigated (Morgan & Smircich, 1980, p. 491).

The focus of my research is to identify the value that CIS seek from their overseas study experience and to establish how that value is created. In the preceding chapter I established the extent to which value outcomes were unique to the individual but were very much influenced by socio-cultural environment, both in respect of where value is created and where the actors involved in the creation process originate. As such it is necessary that any methods chosen should enable me to provide empirical insight into such a process.

In this chapter I will provide a detailed explanation of the research approach I adopted which was guided by (Crotty, 1998, p. 2) who describes four elements to the research process which can be developed by answering the following questions: What methods do we propose to use?; What methodology governs our choice and use of methods?; What theoretical perspective lies behind the methodology in question?; and, What epistemology informs this theoretical perspective? (see Figure 14, below).

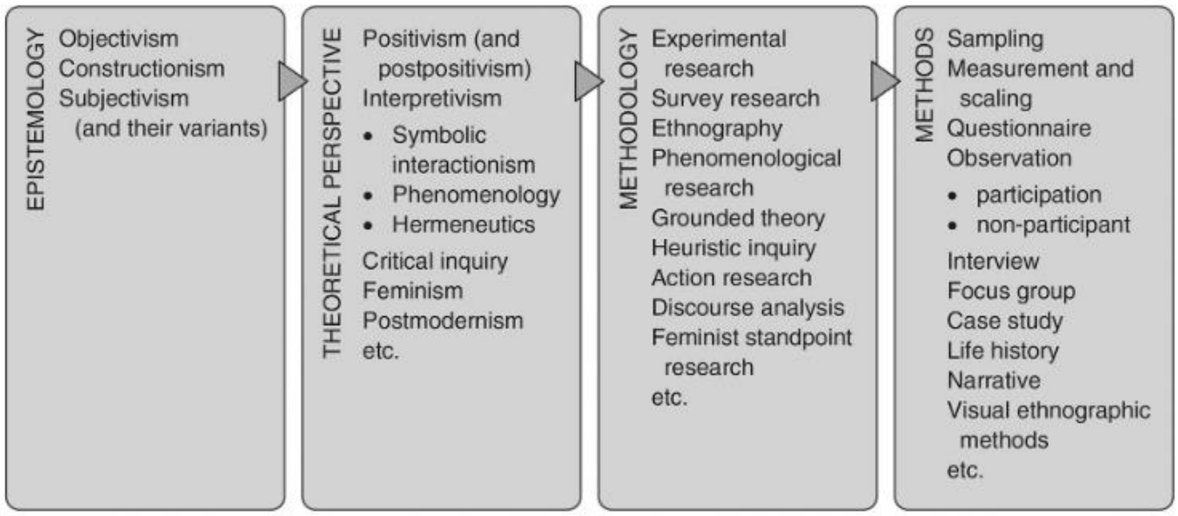

Figure 14 - Crotty's elements of the research design process
Source: (Pernecky, 2016, p. 12)

There are a number of different models that suggest a process approach to developing research, for example the Research Onion proposed by Saunders, Thornhill, and Lewis (2016). However, Crotty's (1998) approach appeals to me because he suggests starting out first with the methodologies and methods we propose to use and then looking to justify these choices through the selection of an appropriate theoretical perspective and epistemology.

During my time in China I spent many hours working with young Chinese professionals who were looking to improve their spoken English and during these sessions we would discuss a wide range of topics, both work related and non-work related. This enabled me to gain a significant understanding of both the students' individual thoughts and ideas and also of Chinese culture in general. This in turn helped me to develop a degree of intercultural sensitivity (Bennett, 1986) which enabled me to develop a good rapport with my students so that they would feel at ease and be comfortable sharing their thoughts with me. It was therefore my intention from the outset to use a similar approach and use semi-structured interviews as my main method for data collection.

My overall research design was initially completed following a thorough examination of the literature on both research methods and value. However, I found that my research approach evolved over time and a more appropriate theoretical perspective presented itself to me during the course of my research. In the following sections I will discuss my overall research approach and how this came about.

3.3 Epistemology and Ontology

Crotty (1998) describes epistemology as how we deal with the nature of knowledge, it is about how we know what we know, and in his view there are three broad categories of epistemology: objectivism; constructionism; and subjectivism. An objectivist epistemology holds that meaning, and therefore meaningful reality, exists as such apart from the operation of any consciousness, it holds that we can discover the objective truth. Constructionism rejects this view and suggests that truth, or meaning, is constructed through our engagement with the realities of the world, an interplay of subject and object. Whereas from a subjectivist epistemology meaning is created out of nothing, it is imposed on the object by the subject.

In terms of ontology, in Crotty's (1998, p. 10-11) view ontological issues and epistemological issues tend to emerge together. This is also the view of Morgan and Smircich (1980) who, in considering the different approaches to social science research on a subjective-objective continuum, highlighted a number of basic assumptions about epistemology, ontology and human nature. Their work was later developed by Cunliffe (2011) who described *three knowledge problematics* – objectivism, subjectivism, and inter-subjectivism – the latter introduced to meet the need to consider social experience as inter-subjective rather than subjective, something that neither Burrell and Morgan (1979) or Morgan and Smircich (1980) had, in Cunliffe's (2011) view, previously conceptualized adequately. These three problematics are examined in the context of ontological, epistemological and methodological considerations to provide a basis for crafting research in careful, consistent, thoughtful and informed ways.

3.3.1 Epistemological Position

The main aim of my research is to provide empirical insight into value creation within an intercultural context. In the literature review I showed that there is a growing body of research suggesting that value is a social construction rooted in a cultural perspective (Akaka, Schau, et al., 2013; Chandler & Vargo, 2011; Edvardsson et al., 2011; Karababa & Kjeldgaard, 2014; Overby et al., 2005; Peñaloza & Venkatesh, 2006). Using Cunliffe's (2011) framework as a guide a social constructionist perspective, which sits in-between the subjective and inter-subjective problematics, seemed an appropriate research stance as it is appropriate for the researcher who is interested in participants' multiple interpretations and reflections (Cunliffe, 2011, p. 663).

Social constructionism takes place at both the micro and macro levels: the former taking place within everyday discourse between people in interaction; and the latter deriving from, or at least related to, material or social structures, social relations and institutionalised practices (Burr, 2003; Cunliffe, 2008). This latter description, of macro social constructionism resembles Geertz's (1973) ideas on culture, which he refers to as being essentially semiotic, a system of symbolic structures around which behaviours flow in the form of customs, traditions, and habits. It seems reasonable to assume that, if value is socially constructed, and there are significant changes in one’s social circumstances, for example through immersion within a different culture, that one’s concept of value would be in some way influenced. Conversely, we might also expect there to be a subsequent influence on culture if, as Helkkula, Dube, and Arnould (2019, p. 123) suggest “culture is both a context for, and a product of, value co-creation”.

According to Burr (2015, p. 206-209) a problem that both micro and macro forms of social constructionism encounter is that the relationship between the individual and society is not always sufficiently addressed. She argues that this is because the individual and society are seen as two components of a dichotomy but in reality, from an experiential point of view, the two are never really divorced from each other. However, Burr (2015, p. 209-211) suggests that there are a number of ways in which this might be addressed. One such way draws on the classic work of Berger and Luckmann (1966) and is to consider the relationship not as dichotomous but rather as a dialectic in which the world is continually constructed by human beings but not necessarily in any way they choose as they are born into a world already constructed by their predecessors. Another way, which draws on the work of Bateson (1972) and Sampson (1989), is to consider the individual/society as an ecosystem in which "the individual, the social practices in which they engage, the social structure within which they live and the discourses which frame their thought and experience become aspects of a single phenomenon" (Burr, 2015, p. 212). This latter approach seems appropriate given the increasing emphasis placed on ecosystems within the value literature that I discussed in Chapter 2.

In summary, there is close link between the value literature and social constructionism and I therefore adopted this epistemology for my research.

3.3.1.1 Constructivism vs. Constructionism

There is often confusion around the terms constructivism and constructionism and it would therefore seem appropriate to provide some clarification. According to Crotty (1998), constructivism is related to the individual and how they engage with objects and the world around them in meaning making activities. Constructionism on the other hand is related more to the collective 'generation and transmission of meaning', hence the term 'social constructionism'. Crotty (1998, p79) argues that this results in our cultural heritage which 'pre-empts the task of meaning making so that, for the most part, we simply do not do what constructivism describes us as doing'.

3.3.2 Ontological Position

Blaikie (2007, pp. 13-18) states that the nature of social reality is often reduced to the two opposed categories of *idealist* and *realist*, or more recently *relativist* and *realist*, with the former representing the view that the external world exists only as part of individuals' thoughts and the latter that both natural and social phenomena exist independently of the human observer.

A social constructionist epistemology can fit alongside either a relativist or realist ontology with Burr (2015, p. 118) suggesting that the former is more typically associated with micro social constructionism and the latter with macro social constructionism. Crotty (1998) believes that ontological and epistemological issues tend to emerge together and suggests that Blaikie's (2007) use of the terms ontology corresponds with what he refers to as a 'theoretical perspective', and it is this that we will consider in our next section.

3.4 Theoretical Perspective

Our theoretical perspective might also be described as the philosophical stance that lies behind our methodology and is grounded by our epistemology (Crotty, 1998, p.7-8). During the course of my research it became advantageous to change my theoretical perspective due, in part, to issues that arose in the early part of my data collection and also due, predominantly, to an insight that arose during my data analysis. In this section I will talk briefly about my initial choice of perspective, and the issues that arose, before discussing my final choice.

According to Burr (2003, p. 2) the proper focus of enquiry for social constructionism are the social practices engaged in by people, and their interactions with each other. Therefore, having elected to take a social constructionist approach to my research I felt it important to choose a theoretical perspective that focussed on such social practices and initially decided to use Practice Theory. Practice theory is becoming more widely used within the social sciences and has previously been used as a model for studying consumption (Duguid, 2005; Holt, 1995; Warde, 2005), is used in the area of strategy under the title Strategy-as-practice (SAP) as an alternative to conventional strategy research (Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009), and has more recently been put forward as an alternative to conventional marketing research with the introduction of a Marketing-as-practice (MAP) field of research in a special edition of the Scandinavian Journal of Management (Skålén & Hackley, 2011).

I was first introduced to the concept of practice theory in a study by Schau, Muñiz, & Arnould (2009), who described practices as 'linked and implicit ways of understanding, saying and doing things'. They used practice theory as a model for studying the creation of value within brand communities. I was interested in how practice theory might be used to study value co-creation and found a good overview of the main characteristics of 'practice theory' by Reckwitz (2002) who describes it as a type of social theory that is drawn from common elements of works by such scholars as Bourdieu, Giddens, Taylor, late Foucault and others.

Although there is presently no single unified theory of practice (Nicolini, 2012), Echeverri and Skalen (2011), building on the work of Schau et al. (2009), used a practice theory based approach to study co-creation and co-destruction in a case study of a public transport company. Their approach posits that practices consist of three elements: procedures; understandings; and emotional engagements and it was my intention to use a similar approach in my own study. However, my initial interviews highlighted two issues which led me to question the appropriateness of this approach: first, the quality of data produced within the first set of interviews was not as high as I had hoped, a potential issue when interviews are carried out in the participants non-native language (Welch & Piekkari, 2006, p. 429). This meant I might not be able to get the level of detail I might need to define a practice along similar lines to the previous study; and, second, my initial interviews did not indicate a significant level of co-creation taking place with other actors (this issue will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5). I therefore realised that an alternative perspective through which to consider my research topic would be necessary.

In order to explore the intercultural aspects of value and its co-creation I would need to gain access to the understandings of individuals seeking to create value within intercultural contexts. An interpretivist approach, which according to Crotty (1998, p. 67) "looks for the culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social life-world", would therefore be the most appropriate. He describes three approaches to interpretivist research: symbolic interactionism; phenomenology; and hermeneutics. According to Crotty (1998) the first two of these - Symbolic interactionism and phenomenology – differ significantly in their connection to culture. Culture is at the heart of symbolic interactionism and not to be called into question, least of all by someone from another culture (Crotty, 1998, p. 76), instead the researcher should attempt to put themselves into the place of those within that culture and search out their perspective. Grounded Theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) is a research method developed out of symbolic interactionism and seeks to build theory that emerges from the data alone and not from other sources.

Phenomenology, as a theoretical perspective is, by contrast, about the 'things themselves', phenomena that present themselves directly to us and our understandings of those phenomena as we immediately experience them. Therefore phenomenology "treats culture with a good measure of caution and suspicion… [as it] shuts us off from an abundant font of untapped significance" (Crotty, 1998, p. 71). This, at least, is the view of Husserlian phenomenology which attempts "to establish a path to pure consciousness, and hence to pure truth, by bracketing the natural attitude" (Blaikie, 2007, p.124). However, the phenomenology of Heidegger, Husserl's student, differs significantly as he believes it is impossible for humans to separate themselves from their social world or the historical context in which they exist (Blaikie, 2007, p.124). I will return to Heidegger in my next section.

Odman (1985, cited in Gummesson, 2000a, p. 174) suggests that in comparison to phenomenology hermeneutics "is more context directed… [and] often tries to go beyond the observable in order to "read between the lines". It can therefore be characterized as more transphenomenal."

Hermeneutics has its roots in the Renaissance period as the study of the Bible and ancient texts and from the beginning its main theme has been that the study of the meaning of a part can only be understood if it is related to the whole (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009, p. 92). This is where the concept of the Hermeneutic Circle comes from and potentially presents us with a problem as we can only understand the part from the whole and the whole from the part. Radnitzky (1970, p. 23, cited in Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009, p. 92) suggests we deal with this by transforming the circle into a spiral, beginning, for example, with a small part and trying to connect that to the whole, upon which to shed new light, and then returning to the part studied. This approach seems in harmony with the calls in S-D Logic research for approaches that 'zoom in' and 'zoom out' to facilitate different levels of observation to value co-creation exchange phenomena (Leroy et al., 2013). It also facilitates the focus at both the level of culture and the level of the individual, something which Bauman (1978, p.29) suggests comes as a result of Schleiermacher's contribution to hermeneutics. This contribution involved an extension of its scope to include the understanding and interpretation of universal human experience so that becomes a question of a member of one culture struggling to grasp the experience of another.

Bauman (1978, p. 27) suggests there is no understanding without affinity of spirits and therefore it is important that there is some form of connection between subjects. Interpretation has become increasingly linked to empathy (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009, p. 93) and therefore from a hermeneutic perspective, unlike research undertaken from a more positivistic point of view, insight gained by the researcher from personal experience can be advantageous (Gummesson, 2005, p. 177). Alvesson and Skoldberg (2009, p. 93) suggest that only intuition can fully assimilate the mental universe of another human being and that with a hermeneutic approach knowledge is not acquired in the usual, reasoning and rational way but that:

> "… there is instead something of a privileged royal road to true knowledge in the world. This is achieved, not by laborious pondering, but rather at a stroke, whereby patterns in the complex wholes are illuminated by a kind of mental flashlight, giving an immediate and complete overview."

The insight to which I referred at the beginning of this section occurred as though it had been illuminated by this type of 'mental flashlight'. During the analysis phase of my research a theme seemed to be emerging from my data which suggested that some of my participants appeared to be 'killing time'. For some of the participants there seemed to be no firm desire to move forward from their current state, no sense of direction, and it was almost as if they were lost and unsure who they were. I had encountered this before during my time in China with some of the young Chinese professionals I had worked with in international companies, a sense that they were unsure of their identities. During a discussion with my doctoral supervisor about this potential theme I was introduced to the concept of *liminality* and when I started to read up on this it was then that my 'mental flashlight' started to illuminate a pattern and I developed an overriding theme with which to frame my thesis. This was because, like Victor Turner before me (refer to Section 2.4 for further details) I could see, experientially, how this concept was appropriate.

I had myself been 'betwixt and between', geographically, culturally, and professionally, for some period of time. I had been separated from a previous social state and found myself, directionless, in culturally different locations, in what I am now able to define as a liminal state. I was therefore able to relate the experience of my participants to my own, to empathize with them better. It has been suggested that when empathy is complemented by the interpreter's broader or at least different stock of knowledge then the interpreter might then understand the agents better than they understand themselves (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009, p. 93; Bauman, 1978, p. 31; Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2012, p. 27).

Crotty (1998, p. 110), suggests that in many contemporary instances this is not the case and that hermeneutics can sometimes seem little more than a synonym for interpretation. He suggests that the mystique surrounding hermeneutics in its more historical usage, which we encounter with the likes of Dilthey, Heidegger, and Gadamer, is hardly mirrored in social research that employs techniques like observation and interviewing and analyses data in a way that allows themes to emerge in quite straightforward ways. However, my experience was very much that of a 'flashlight' moment after which I could see themes emerging around 'status' and 'identity' that had not appeared to me so clearly before.

Blaikie (2007, p. 159) explains that Giddens' Structuration Theory draws heavily on hermeneutics and this theory is one of a number upon which Practice Theory, my initial preference as a theoretical perspective, is built. It is perhaps fitting then that it is a hermeneutic perspective on which my research finally rests, albeit hermeneutics having seemingly chosen me rather than my having chosen it.

3.5 Methodology

The methodology describes our strategy or plan of action, the research design that shapes our choice and use of particular methods and links them to the desired outcomes (Crotty, 1998, p. 7). Brinkmann and Kvale (2015, p. 239) suggest bearing in mind that hermeneutics does not involve any step-by-step method and Andersson (1981, cited in Gummesson, 2000a, p. 181) describes how hermeneutic studies, rejecting the demands of positivism, rarely contain a technical chapter on methodology. He argues that the formulation of a set of rules for this interpretative approach would be to transform hermeneutics into positivism. However, Gummesson (2000a, p. 181) feels this approach goes too far and suggests that an account of optional strategies and guidelines can assist hermeneutic research without being overly prescriptive. As such I will discuss some of the considerations made during my research design.

One of the key areas of my research is the concept of culture and according to Maheswaran and Shavitt (2000) one of the key methodological issues when researching cultural differences in a consumer setting is the selection or blending of emic and etic research approaches. The terms *emic* and *etic* were originally taken from the linguistic terms *phonemic* and *phonetic*, used from a research perspective an emic approach represents understandings that arise from actors themselves and an etic approach represents observations by a community of scientific observers (Harris, 1976).

Ethnography, an approach that has roots in cultural anthropology, at first seemed a suitable approach for my research as Goulding (2005) suggests that ethnography allows for both insider and outsider views to combine and provide deeper insights than would be possible by the *native* alone, with an emic perspective being at the heart of ethnography and the etic perspectives being brought into the picture by the researcher. This view is supported by Stier (2010, Human egocentrism and ethnocentrism section, para. 3), writing from the perspective of intercultural communication:

> "...we often claim that those who do not belong to a culture are more prone to detect peculiarities and idiosyncrasies that members do not notice, simply because the latter are so enmeshed in their culture. At the same time, non-members typically fail to completely appreciate and understand social expectations and cultural codes that members both are aware of and familiar with".

However, one of the defining features of ethnographic research is that the researcher goes into the field (Schwartzman, 1993, p. 3) and typically undertakes long periods of intensive study and immersion in a well-defined locality (Gill, Johnson, & Clark, 2010, p. 154). For my particular research, at the outset, I did not know which set of relationships would form the most significant part of my study. Certainly, I would be working with international students but in what context? I was hoping to find organisations or groups that they work with to create value but in the early stages of my research it was unclear which organisations that might be. At later stages, when this had become clear, I might not have been able to gain access to such organisations, therefore it might have been difficult to gain access to study within the group and therefore I was concerned that the amount of participant observation I would have access to might be limited and this might raise concerns that what I was doing was not true ethnography.

My original intention was always that the majority of my research would be centred on semi-structured interviews. These would allow me to get an idea of the thoughts behind multiple actors within a situation because as Stake (1995, p. 65) points out much of what we cannot observe for ourselves has been or is being observed by others. Therefore, even if I was unable to take part in significant participant observation, I believe my proposed interview approach would allow me to get a good idea of others viewpoints and behaviours. Such 'indirect observations' allow the researcher to gain access to data without personally witnessing it (Gill et al., 2010, p. 169) and collecting such data through interviews would allow me to get an idea of the thoughts behind multiple actors within a situation.

I felt that the important thing to consider was that whichever approach I chose allowed me to *zoom in* on the intercultural aspects of value co-creation, and provide *thick description*, *experiential understanding*, and *multiple realities* which would add to the conversation on value co-creation and SDL. This would extend and complement existing S-D Logic literature, much of which has been dominated by an *abstract* zooming out perspective (Leroy et al., 2013). However, it is also important that my approach enabled me to zoom out and consider the wider socio-cultural aspects because as Rogers and Steinfatt (1999) highlight:

> "Many of us perceive the world through the eyes of a single culture, surrounded by other people with similar views… The ability to see the world from different points of view is fundamental to the process of becoming intercultural."

Much of the research on value and value co-creation is theoretical and there is therefore a need for more empirical research to back this up (Echeverri & Skalen, 2011; Gronroos, 2011; Gummerus, 2013). The theoretical perspective of hermeneutics that I eventually adopted facilitated the consideration of both the whole (culture) and the part (individual practices), or both zooming out and zooming in in S-D Logic parlance, and would thus potentially help me to address this imbalance. Yet it was important that my methodology also facilitated analysis of the relationship between whole and part and a methodology that enabled me to do this was hermeneutic phenomenology.

In Section 3.4 I briefly discussed the difference between the phenomenology of Husserl and that of Heidegger. Whereas Husserl sought to *bracket out* the natural world around us ("Phenomenology," 2013) in Heidegger's view the individual was always and indelibly a worldly *person-in-context* (Smith et al., 2012, p. 16-17). Therefore, rather than bracketing out the world, Heidegger argued it was necessary to study our contextual relations to the things around us in order to help understand our activities and the meaning things have for us ("Phenomenology," 2013).

Gadamer, a student of Heidegger, suggested that understanding involves a 'fusion of horizons' in which the interpreter's own horizon of meaning is engaged in a hermeneutical conversation with that of the participants horizon in what Blaikie (2007, p. 153) describes "as a meditation or translation of the past meaning in to the present situation". Gadamer (1979, p. 62) also suggests that we should consider every experience as a part of the whole, the totality of life, and references Georg Simmel's idea that every experience has something about it of an adventure, but "what is an adventure?", he rhetorically asks and subsequently answers:

> "An adventure is by no means just an episode. Episodes are a succession of details which have no inner coherence and for that very reason have no permanent significance. An adventure, however, interrupts the customary course of events, but is positively and significantly related to the context which it interrupts. Thus an adventure lets life become felt as a whole, in its breadth and in its strength. Here lies the fascination of an adventure. It removes the conditions and obligations of everyday life. It ventures out into the uncertain… But at the same time it knows that, as an adventure, it has an exceptional character and thus remains related to the return of the everyday, in which the adventure cannot be taken. Thus, the adventure is 'passed through like a test' from which one emerges enriched and more mature."

In hermeneutic phenomenology the researcher is encouraged to consider their own experience and to consider how this relates to the experience of the issues being researched (Laverty, 2003). In the process of interpreting the experience of my participants, reflections of my own experience, my own horizons, emerged and fused with theirs. It is from this 'fusion of horizons' (Gadamer, 1979) that my interpretation of CIS' experience as being liminal arose. From that point on I therefore adopted a hermeneutic phenomenological approach to my data analysis.

3.6 Methods

Crotty (1998, p. 6) describes research methods as "the activities we engage in so as to gather and analyse our data". In this section I will set out the methods that I employed for both data collection and data analysis.

3.6.1 Selection of Data Collection Method

In order to address my research questions it was necessary to gather rich qualitative data that allowed me to go beyond the superficial and access the underlying thoughts and practices of how value is formed within an intercultural environment. In terms of gathering data, Creswell (2014, p. 190) suggests that within qualitative research there are just four basic types of data collection methods: observation; interviews; document analysis; and qualitative audio and visual material analysis. An approach that would have allowed me to adopt a number of these methods would be case study which Yin (2003) and Gummesson (2000) suggest can be utilized as interpretivist, qualitative research designs which can provide depth, but have less intrusive attributes than ethnography and might, therefore, perhaps have been more acceptable to organizations I might have wished to involve in the later stages of my research.

There are criticisms of a case study approach, not least of which is that case studies are not conducive to generalizations and thus their benefit is limited. This is a key criticism within the quantitative v. qualitative debates that resound within research, however Flyvbjerg (2006) argues that this is one of a number of misunderstandings about case study. Whilst it is true that single case studies are not a strong base for generalizing to a population of cases as other research designs Stake (1995, p. 85) suggests that:

> "...people can learn much that is general from single cases. They do that partly because they are familiar with other cases and they add this one in, thus making a slightly new group from which to generalize, a new opportunity to modify old generalizations."

According to Stake (1995, p. xiii) there are many, many ways to do case studies and his approach, which draws from naturalistic, holistic, ethnographic, phenomenological, and biographic research methods (Stake, 1995, p. xi) seemed appropriate for my research area. However, one of the key factors of case studies is being able to determine the boundaries of what constitute the case in question (Flyvbjerg, 2011). Therefore, as the boundaries within which co-creation might take place were unknown at the outset this particular method was rejected.

Another approach to data collection that seemed appropriate to my study was the use of interviews. Bryman (2016) suggests that interviews can be either structured or semi-structured with the latter type being useful if the researcher is beginning their investigation with a fairly clear focus. Rather than committing to a more structured style of interviewing I believed that a semi-structured interview would allow me to explore participants' perception of their experience in more depth and perhaps provide more insight. However, initially I also wanted to identify particular practices that participants' carried out in order to co-create value. Therefore, I originally started out with the intention of using convergent depth interviews (Carson, 2001 p85-90). The idea behind this method of interviewing is that the initial interviews are almost completely unstructured. During those initial interviews the focus would be on the participants' reasons for coming to the UK and how they spent their time here, what they enjoyed doing, what they disliked. At the end of each convergent interview the intention was that a summary of the key areas discussed would be drawn up. In subsequent interviews more specific questions would be added based on these key areas. As more interviews were conducted differences and similarities of attitudes and opinions would begin to emerge.

My time spent in China has led to my developing a degree of intercultural sensitivity (Bennett, 1986) which I hoped would help make my participants feel at ease and share their knowledge with me. During interviews it was my intention that the focus would not be exclusively on the individual, it was my hope that I would be able to find 'informants', members of the CIS community who were willing to act as a guide and translator of cultural mores and, at times, of jargon or language (Fontana & Frey, 2008). I had hoped that this approach would lead to a broader understanding as asking about others or society in general leads to different inferences compared to when asking opinions purely about the individual (Mooij, 2015). As Stake (1995) points out, much of what we cannot observe for ourselves has been or is being observed by others. Therefore, convergent depth interviews, focussed not only on the individual but also on what is happening around them would provide much 'thick' description (Geertz, 1973, p. 24) around my area of interest.

However, I found that some of my early interviews, when I had started to reflect on them, had seemed a little disappointing and lacking in depth. I therefore abandoned the convergent depth interview approach in the early stages of my data collection in favour of a more general depth interview approach. This new approach is more consistent with hermeneutic phenomenology as van Manen (1997, p. 29) discusses:

> "Heidegger talked about phenomenological reflection as following certain paths, "woodpaths," towards a "clearing" where something could be shown, revealed, or clarified in its essential nature. However, the paths (methods) cannot be determined by fixed signposts."

A more detailed explanation of my approach to data collection can be found in Section 3.7.4.

3.6.2 Selection of Data Analysis Method

One of the difficulties with qualitative research is that it can generate such a large amount of data and yet there are relatively few well-established ways in which this data might be analysed (Bryman, 2012, p. 565-566). To aid my analysis it was my original intention to use a framework originally developed by Schau et al. (2009) and later used by Echeverri and Skalen (2011) and use their conception of the anatomy of practices - as procedures, understandings, and emotional engagements - as coding categories. Whilst this would be a similar approach to that taken by Echeverri and Skalen (2011), whereby a number of practices are identified and the relevant procedures, understanding and emotional engagements are described, it was my intention that my research would go further than this and try to identify how those practices were socially constructed within an intercultural environment, how they evolved and how understandings of value and of culture in general appeared to be affected over time.

Unfortunately, as discussed in the previous section, the quality of data from some of my earlier interviews lacked depth and appeared insufficient to enable a continuation of my practice theory based approach to data analysis. I subsequently adopted an hermeneutic phenomenological approach to my analysis, which I discussed in Section 3.5 and which I will elaborate on in more detail in Section 3.7.5.

A summary of my research design can be found in Figure 15, below:

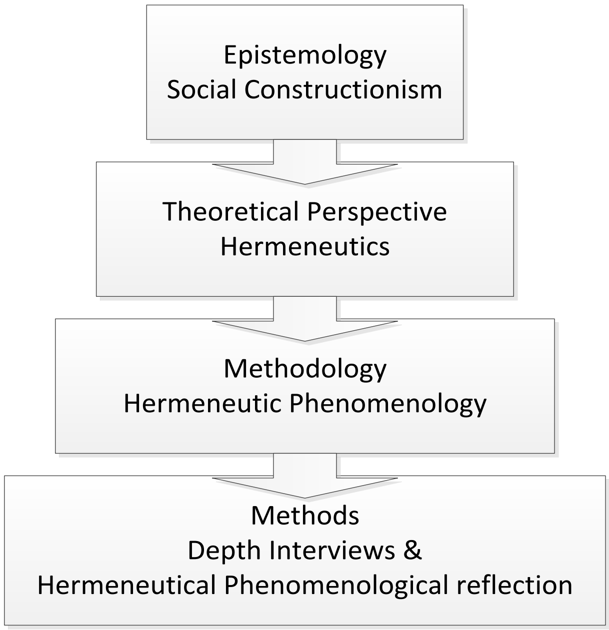

Figure 15 - An overview of my research approach
Source: Author, based on (Crotty, 1998, p.4)

3.7 Data Collection and Analysis

In this section I provide more detail about the research context, sampling, data collection, and data analysis.

3.7.1 The Research Context

Creswell (2014, p. 189) suggests purposefully selecting participants or sites that will best help the researcher understand the problem and the research question. From the outset I was interested in looking at how value is co-created in the intercultural context of Sino-British exchange and therefore it was necessary that I had access to individuals who are embedded within such a context.

I retain a number of contacts in China from my time working and living there. Many of these individuals work within intercultural environments and initially I thought to either include some of these in my study or through them recruit other participants. However, I felt this approach might be unsatisfactory for a number of reasons: (1) I might not be able to attract a sufficient numbers of participants; (2) the practicalities of gathering data might prove difficult - face-to-face interviews would be preferable for building rapport but necessitate a number of trips to China – online interviews might prove difficult for Chinese having to speak in their non-native language; and (3) Chinese working in an intercultural environment will have some exposure to British culture but not to the point of immersion. Chinese International Students (CIS) provided a perfect alternative option with sufficient numbers within the Sheffield area (the location of my original PhD registration) to allow for a good sized sample with which I could undertake face-to-face interviews. Furthermore, CIS are immersed within a British culture from their arrival in the UK.

In actual fact, CIS make a great subject for study as they themselves make a significant contribution to the Sheffield regional economy. A previous study suggested that international students, of which Chinese represent over 40%, contribute £120m per annum to the local region (Oxford Economics, 2013). From a wider regional perspective, it has even been suggested that international students should become the underpinning of the whole northern powerhouse strategy (Groom, 2016).

3.7.2 Pseudo-longitudinal study

My interest in the social construction of value and how this is influenced by intercultural aspects would have a made a longitudinal study preferable as it would enable me to look at the extent to which concepts of value change over time immersed in another culture. It would seem reasonable to assume that the more time spent within another culture, the more that other culture might influence your own interpretation of society for example. Unfortunately, given the time constraints placed upon my research by the PhD programme, a study of significant length was not possible therefore I chose to carry out a *pseudo-longitudinal study*. Davies and Lea (1995) conducted a study on the attitudes to student debt and used cohort (year of study) as a proxy for time. It was my intention to carry out a similar approach, using length of time within the UK as a proxy for the length of exposure to British culture. Using this type of approach would allow me to examine how length of exposure to another culture influences ideas of value and its co-creation. For example, students in year one will have a more limited exposure to UK culture than those that are in year three and this might have an effect on their ability or opportunities to co-create value. I decided to adopt a pseudo-longitudinal approach rather than using purely retrospective accounts as such accounts might well be more vulnerable to problems of recall and faulty memory (e.g. Glick, Huber, Miller, Doty, & Sutcliffe, 1990; Golden, 1992). However, it turned out that the retrospective accounts of those participants that had been in the UK for some time were incredibly valuable to the study due to the reflective nature that those recollections involved.

3.7.3 Research Sample

For the purpose of my research I therefore set out to collect a purposive stratified sample (Bryman, 2016, p. 409) . Purposive samples are often used in exploratory research with particular types of participant identified in order to gain a deeper understanding of that type (Neuman, 2014, p. 274). My aim was to select Chinese International Students at different stages of their study within the UK. International Students are defined by UNESCO (n.d.) as "students who have crossed a national or territorial border for the purposes of education and are now enrolled outside of their country or origin." My sample would therefore only include those students who had travelled to the UK specifically for educational purposes and whose country of origin was China. However, the sample would not include any student who had originated from either of the two special administered regions of China – Hong Kong and Macau – as their education system is somewhat different to that which exists throughout the rest of China (OECD, 2016). By applying this selection criteria participants would be more likely to have similar pre-overseas study educational experience.

I adopted a number of approaches for gaining access including introductions through fellow teaching staff, advertising for participants on a university intranet, and referrals through networks of contacts. Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014, p. 31) suggest that sampling methods often evolve once fieldwork begins and this was certainly my experience. My initial search for participants through colleagues resulted in fewer than expected volunteers and my advertisements for participants only yielded one participant. However, the contacts to whom I was introduced through my wife proved to be not only very informative but also very helpful in referring me on to other relevant contacts in what is known as a type of snowball sampling (Patton, 2015, p. 270). Bryman (2012, p. 427) suggests that it is quite common for snowball sampling to be preceded by another form of purposive sampling.

With regards to sample size there are no fixed rules as to how many interviews should be conducted. As Englander (2012) points out, phenomenological research is by nature qualitative and not quantitative and therefore the quantity of interviews is less important than the quality of data that we are able to collect. However, an indication of the numbers can be taken from previous research and Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (1995) suggest 12 would probably suffice if working within a relatively homogenous group. In their study of West African sex workers 92% of codes had emerged by this point, but major themes had been identified after 6. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) suggests that an appropriate sample might consist of 15 but can range anywhere between 5 and 25.

In the end 18 interviews were carried out and these included 20 participants in total, with two interviews carried out with two participants jointly at their preference. Each participant was provided with a Participant Information Sheet (see Appendix 1) and asked to complete a Participants Consent Form (see Appendix 2) before any data collection took place (see Section 3.7.7 for further details on ethics). Each form was written in both English and Mandarin in order to ensure that the details of the study and what was being asked of participants were fully understood. A list of participants can be found in

Table 1, below, which also details the length of time the participants have been in the UK together with the levels of study that have taken place during their time here.

Pseudonyms have been used for each of the participants and for ease of application were selected from a list of the top Mandarin Chinese surnames ("List of Common Chinese Surnames," n.d.) and applied in order against each of the participants (the only exception being for Participant #17 who was given the Cantonese style 'Ho' rather than the Mandarin 'He' to avoid confusion with the pronoun 'he'). These pseudonyms will be used to refer to Participants for the remainder of this thesis. In addition to referring to Participants by pseudonym I will also provide details, in brackets, of Participant number, whether they are currently studying at bachelors (B), master's (M), or PhD (P) level, and also the approximate length of time they have been in the UK. **Therefore, Participant #1, for example, will be referred to as Wang (p1m1) and Participant #2 as Li (p2m1).**

Table 1 - List of Participants

Participant	Participant Name (m/f)	Subject Area	Study in UK			Approx. Time in UK
			Bachelors	Masters	PhD	
1	Wang (f)	Hospitality & Tourism		✓		1
2	Li (f)	Hospitality & Tourism		✓		1
3	Zhang (f)	Hospitality & Tourism	✓	✓		2
4	Liu (f)	Business & Management	✓			1
5	Chen (f)	Business & Management	✓			1
6	Yang (f)	Business & Management	✓			1
7	Huang (m)	International Business	✓			2
8	Zhao (f)	Education		✓	✓	4
9	Wu (f)	Media Studies	✓	✓	✓	4
10	Zhou (f)	Education		✓		1
11	Xu (f)	Education		✓	✓	5
12	Sun (m)	Engineering			✓	3
13	Ma (m)	Engineering			✓	2
14	Zhu (f)	Accounting		✓		2
15	Hu (f)	International Business		✓		1
16	Guo (m)	Engineering			✓	1.5
17	Ho (m)	Engineering			✓	2
18	Gao (f)	Education		✓	✓	5
19	Lin (f)	Education		✓		1
20	Luo (f)	Engineering		✓	✓	5

The decision to include participants who had spent different amounts of time in the UK proved useful because, as Gadamer (1979, p. 60) points out, experience has an immediacy which initially eludes meaning and it is only through reflection that the meaning of experience can be grasped. Therefore, those participants who had lived longer with their experience in the UK were better able to reflect and provide greater insight into that experience. What this meant was that the emic perspective that I gained from participants included the initial thoughts of those participants that had only been in the UK for a limited amount of time and also the more profound, reflective thoughts of those that had 'lived' with their experience longer. Furthermore, these latter students acted much more like informants (Stake, 1995, p. 65) who provided insight into the type of

CIS behaviour which many of the newly arrived CIS proved to be examples of. The emic perspective of CIS together with my own etic perspective resulted in a comprehensive level of detail with which to consider CIS experience. These multiple perspectives are represented in Figure 16, below.

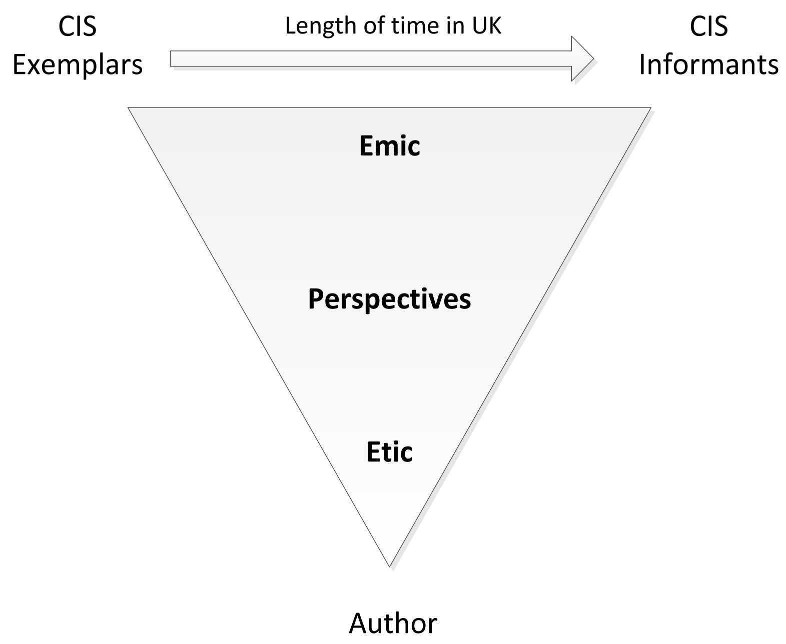

Figure 16 - Relationship between Author, Participants, and Emic/Etic Perspectives
Source: Author

3.7.4 Conducting the Interviews

Interviews were conducted between February and August 2017 with each taking place in a private room on a university campus with the exception of one interview that took place in a university canteen. Interviews varied in length between 25 and 80 minutes and each interview commenced with confirmation that participants understood the nature of the study and with them providing a signed copy of the Consent Form (Appendix 2).

With the permission of participants all interviews were recorded to ensure that data could be reviewed further following the interview. Saunders et al. (2016) recommend also taking notes as the interview progresses, however Bryman (2016) suggests that this can sometimes prove a distraction to the interviewee so I opted not to take notes in order that I could fully engage with the interviewee and not inhibit the flow of conversation. Bryman (2016) also points out that interviewees sometimes 'open up' at the end of interviews and suggests keeping the recording device going. This proved to be good advice as a number of participants did indeed open up more towards the end of our time together perhaps because they perceived the 'formal' part of our interview open.

3.7.4.1 Intercultural Interviewing

As previously mentioned, my prior experience in China meant that I was confident in my ability to build a rapport with participants and believed this would enable me to gain rich data. I noted that the use of simple and short language is recommended when interviewing in an intercultural context (Torres De Oliveira & Figueira, 2018, p127) so whilst asking participants about value I also made clear that this might be interpreted as what they hoped to gain from their time in the UK.

Although initially confident that I would be able to gather data of sufficient quality interviewing in English I did become concerned during some of my early interviews that participants' responses were not sufficiently detailed enough for analysis. There were a couple of times during the interview process where a participant seemed to struggle to articulate their thoughts, at these times I did suggest the participant might prefer to express them in Chinese and I would have them translated later but in each case this option was refused. Welch and Piekkari (2006, p. 430) found similar instances in their study of qualitative interviewing in intercultural contexts suggesting that interviewees might sometimes be insulted or embarrassed about having to switch back to their native language. However, they also found evidence that there were advantages in having interviews carried out by an *outsider* as they were perhaps more likely to open up and say more than they would to someone of their own culture. A number of my participants seemed to welcome the opportunity of being interviewed as they found it difficult to find people to converse with in English, an issue which I will come to in more detail in Chapter 5.

3.7.4.2 Preparation of Interview Questions

In this section I discuss the preparation conducted prior to carrying out interviews. As previously discussed, as my research progressed my research approach evolved and there is evidence of this in my interview preparations which can be broken down into three phases: Phase one - that relating to the initial interview; Phase two - preparation for the following 6 interviews; and Phase three - that which related to the remaining set of interviews conducted. These are now explained in more detail under the headings below.

Phase one - Initial Interview preparation

In preparation for my first interview, although I wanted this to be as unstructured and free-flowing as possible I realised I would need to have a few topic related questions prepared just in case the conversation didn't flow so I was ready to ask the participant questions based on my ideas at the time as to why CIS might come to the UK, which aside from the education, related to the cultural experience and having opportunities to shop and to travel.

I also wanted to make the interview an enjoyable experience for the interviewee as I hoped to gain new participants via referral and I thought that it might be good to share some of my experience living in another culture to prompt conversation. However, I did not feel it would be helpful to talk about my reasons for choosing to go overseas, in terms of wanting a new experience, to see something of other cultures, as I did not want to bias them towards answering in a similar way. I therefore initially restricted my observations to my knowledge of China in the hope that this would help to create rapport, in the first interview this took the form of a brief discussion of the participant's hometown:

Interviewer: Whereabouts in China are you from?

Wang (p1m1):	In the middle of China, Shanxi province.
Interviewer:	I always get confused, because there is Shanxi and Shaanxi…
Wang (p1m1):	Yes, it is different, the capital of Shaanxi is Xian.
Interviewer:	Ok, that's where you come from?
Wang (p1m1):	No, the other one, I come from the Taiyuan, the capital of Shanxi which city has lots of resources like coal.
Interviewer:	Yes, I remember, I think one of my students previously was from Taiyuan, yes lots of coal I think, as you say. I guess most people know Xian more because of the Terracotta Warriors. So, what do you like doing when you are in the UK?

I also shared with participants the fact that I had lived in Beijing for six years and that my wife was Chinese, this helped to build rapport and provided some common ground for discussion. Hunter (2015) suggests that building rapport is a good way to gather as much 'revelatory data' as possible and whilst there are some views on the role of interviewer that suggest they should not reveal personal information that might bias the respondent's responses (Gordon, 1975), the researcher needs to consider the different goals of the interview and whether more fully revelatory data is preferable to unbiased data. My approach reflected my preference for discussion, in a similar manner to that which I had experienced while teaching in China, rather than a more formal interview style. Many interviews now are commonly understood as collaborative, communicative events that evolve their own norms and rules (Briggs, 1986, Kvale, 1996, Fontana & Frey, 2008, Ellis & Burger, 2011) and even within my own set of interviews there were variations in how each interview played out.

Phase two

Following on from the first interview, and consistent with my initial convergent depth interview approach (Carson, 2001), I developed a series of questions for my second interview, these included:

- Why did you come to study in the UK?
- What were you most looking forward to about being in the UK?
- What are the best things about your stay in the UK?
- What are the worse things about your stay in the UK?
- Have you travelled as part of any arranged trips? (Interviewee #1 described a University arranged trip to Bridlington as her best moment)
- Where do you like to eat out/go for entertainment? (Interviewee #1 mostly ate at Chinese restaurants and liked to go to karaoke)
- Have you been to the Conversation Club? (Interviewee #1 said she was a regular attendee)
- Any experience with the International Student Team? (Interviewee #1 said she had been on a trip to Cambridge with them and referred to the Ice Skating but said doesn't have much to do with them as she doesn't have any problems)
- How do you find communication with British? (Interviewee #1 stated that you have to speak very clearly (directly) with British)
- Can you give any examples?
- How easy do you find doing things in the UK? For example, setting up bank accounts etc? (Interviewee #1 talked about the different bureaucracies in the UK/China)

The above questions were used as a guide up my sixth interview. Although I tried to ensure these topics were covered my preference was to let the conversation flow as much as possible and see where it might lead as interviewees sometimes go off at length about topics which seem unrelated which Riessman (2011) suggests is because in some cases they might not want their opinions broken down and codified. Mishler (1986) discusses how this highlights the gap between research interviewing and naturally occurring conversation and social interaction. It was my hope that I would be able to conduct discussions that resembled the latter more than the former, however whilst I was able to achieve this in some instances during the initial interviews I was disappointed with the data I obtained from others.

I had hoped that my initial interviews would yield rich data which identified a number of potential actors that might be considered significant co-creators. This would have enabled me to focus on the interactions between CIS and those other actors and investigate how value was being co-created. Unfortunately, although I was able to identify a number of potential themes relating to the value that they were seeking (these are discussed in Chapter 4) those initial interviews did not appear to highlight any significant third parties that appeared across all participant interviews and might therefore warrant further investigation. I became worried about my interview questions as I had expected that after my pilot interviews I would have had more detailed questions that I had *converged on*. However, in truth this was not the case, I had not identified a significant number of questions that I felt would be more appropriate after my initial interviews.

Phase three

As I had been unable to identify what I felt were a specific set of questions from the initial interviews I decided that it would be best to leave my questions as vague as possible. This approach seemed to be supported by the thoughts of Silverman (2013, p. 204) who suggests that interviews could be conducted with a minimal number of prepared questions and also by Kvale and Brinkmann (2009, p. 18) who suggest that interviews facilitate the construction of knowledge through the more social aspects of conversation between interviewer and interviewee and can thus benefit from a less rigid structure.

From my seventh interview onwards I adopted a far less structured approach, starting with a basic introduction about my topic which went roughly as follows:

> "So, I'm looking at value and I'm interested in what value Chinese International Students seek from their time studying in the UK. I hope to get an idea of what you hoped to gain from your time here and whether that differs from what you feel you have actually gained from your time here. Perhaps first, if we start at the beginning, before you came to the UK what made you want to come here and what were you hoping to gain from your time here?"

Despite adopting a less structured approach I did realise that on reflection there were a few themes that had arisen in the early interviews which I felt it might be beneficial to pursue. These related to generational differences in Chinese society and the idea of Confucian principles. Therefore, if these themes did not seem to be emerging naturally in the later interviews I made a point of asking participants about them.

On reflection I realise that my interview technique had naturally become very similar to that which is recommended in phenomenological enquiry whereby questions asked should be of a more open nature with the discussion led not so much by the researcher but by the participant (Laverty, 2003) and with the interviewer's questions and comments being formulated in concert with participant descriptions (Thompson, Locander, & Pollio, 1990). This approach led to some very rich descriptive data and I will now go on to describe how this data was analysed.

3.7.5 Data Analysis

I started my data analysis by personally transcribing all of my interviews which in total consisted of 14 hours and amounted to approximately 105,000 transcribed words. Although this proved to be a very time consuming process it was very beneficial as this is recognised as being an excellent way for the researcher to familiarize themselves with the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I subsequently imported the transcribed data into the qualitative data analysis software Nvivo 11 and followed Braun and Clarke's (2006, p. 89) key advice to code as many potential themes as possible. To identify potential themes I followed Ryan and Bernard's (2003) suggested techniques in searching for: repetitions; indigenous typologies or categories; metaphors and analogies; transitions; similarities and differences; linguistic connectors; missing data; and, theory-related material.

Although my analysis generated 790 initial codes (Braun & Clarke, 2006) I found the task of aggregating these into broader themes difficult. Although, as Saldana (2016) points out, the use of such technology is useful for storing, organizing and managing this type of data it does not do the coding for us and personally I felt too removed from the text when handling it electronically. I subsequently reverted back to printed copies of the transcripts, re-reading these a number of times and making hand written annotations against potential themes.

My initial coding did seem to indicate a number of potential themes relating to the type of value being sought by CIS and some of these linked to push-pull factors (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002) already identified in the a priori literature. Prior to the data collection phase of my research I had started to write a research diary. This diary took the form of a Google Doc, stored on Google Drive, in which I would write down my thoughts and observations as and when they occurred. Within this diary I started to make observations about the potential themes that seemed to be appearing in my data. Laverty (2003) suggests that this type of reflective journal can be very useful and a way in which the researcher can move between the parts and the whole of a text to engage in a hermeneutic circle. As van Manen (1997, p. 125) points out "for the human sciences, and specifically for hermeneutic phenomenological work, writing is closely fused into the research activity and reflection itself".

Zahavi (2019) argues that with phenomenologically informed qualitative research it not enough to just be open-minded and interested in the experience of our subjects. He argues that we also need a 'comprehensive theoretical framework concerning the subject's relation to himself or herself, to the world, and to others' (Zahavi, 2019, p. 906).

Through reviewing the literature, engaging intimately with the interview data, and through hermeneutic phenomenological reflection which drew on my own experience I arrived at the Theoretical Framework I presented at the end of Chapter 2 and the Conceptual Framework I present in Figure 17, below.

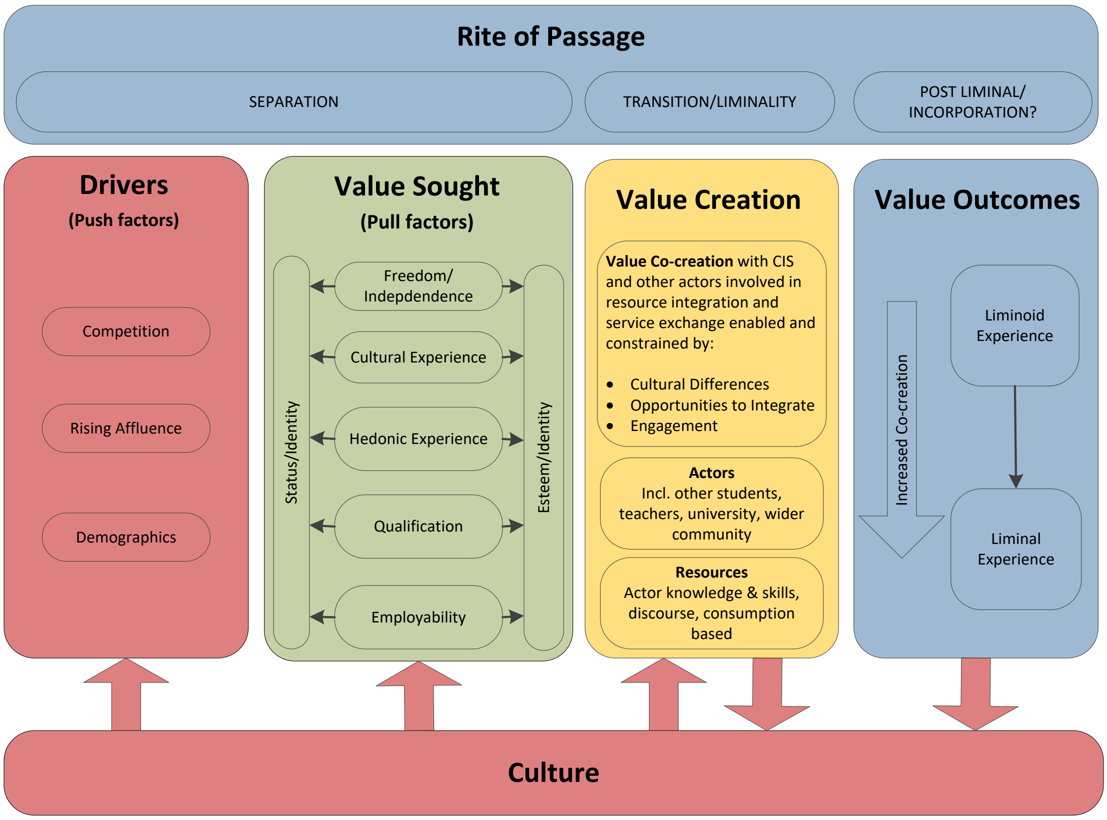

Figure 17 - Conceptual Framework
Source: Author

This Conceptual Framework is discussed in the following chapters. In Chapter 4 I discuss the part of the Conceptual Framework highlighted in green which addresses my first research question – RQ1 What value do CIS seek from their overseas study experience? In Chapter 5 I discuss the part of the Conceptual Framework highlighted in yellow which addresses my second research question – RQ2 How is the value that CIS seek created? In Chapter 6 I discuss the part of the Conceptual Framework highlighted in red which addresses my third research question – RQ3 What influence does culture have on value and the value creation process? In Chapter 7 I discuss the part of the Conceptual Framework highlighted in blue which provides an overarching framework through which CIS' overseas study experience can be viewed using van Gennep's (1960) theory on *The Rites of Passage*.

3.7.6 Ensuring Qualitative Quality

According to Burr (2015), it is inappropriate to judge social constructionist research by the same tests of reliability and validity that are regularly applied to more positivistic research paradigms. Indeed, the standards by which qualitative research in general should be judged have long been an issue of discussion (see Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This discussion is due to the different nature of qualitative research which can often be conducted with smaller sample sizes and tend to be specific to a particular context.

In order to provide a *common language* for qualitative research Tracy (2010) has drawn together best practices in the field and highlighted eight universal hallmarks for high quality qualitative research. In order to show that my work has been undertaken in a manner which can be considered appropriate I set out my research against these eight hallmarks in Table 2, below.

Table 2 - Criteria for Quality - adapted from Tracy (2010)

Criteria for Quality	**How these criteria are met**
Worthy Topic	A *Worthy Topic* can arise just as easily from a personal event as it can from disciplinary priorities (Tracy, 2010) and this was certainly the case with my choice of topic. However, there are other important reasons why my chosen topic is worthy which include the extent to which the UK Higher Education Industry is becoming more reliant on CIS for income and the recent calls for further empirical research around value and value creation. See Section 1.3 for more detail.

Rich Rigor	Tracy (2010) suggests that rigor can be achieved through a rich complexity of abundance and with descriptions and explanations that are *rich*. In my study I set out to obtain as much *thick description* (Geertz, 1973, p. 24) as possible and this was a consideration when selecting an appropriate data collection method (see Section 3.6.1) and ensuring I had an adequate sample size with which to work (see Section 3.7.3). I personally transcribed all interviews to gain a good understanding and familiarity with the data and my extensive review of the literature, together with my own intercultural experience better prepared me to see *nuance and complexity* (Tracy, 2010). My findings are supported by longer interview quotes evidencing the richness of data.
Sincerity	Self-reflexivity and transparency are key ways in which researchers can exhibit their sincerity (Tracy, 2010). I was reflecting on my own experience throughout the study and it is this that led me to my choice of hermeneutic phenomenology as an approach to data analysis. I was also transparent in this choice of method and how it came about through encountering difficulties in the application of my original choice of approach. I reflect further on my study at the end of Chapter 8.
Credibility	Interpretive analysis should be plausible and persuasive (Tracy, 2010) and in my study I have made efforts to collect *thick description* (Geertz, 1973) from my participants which I present in my findings chapters as longer quotes from which readers can draw their own analysis. However, I also provide analysis of my own which is supported by my in depth literature review and from the tacit knowledge that I have gained through my intercultural experience. Tracy (2010) recommends some form of *triangulation* as an appropriate means of building credibility and my study provides this in the form of the etic and emic perspectives of myself and the different types of CIS. See Section 3.7.3 for more detail.

Resonance	Tracy (2010) identifies *aesthetic merit*, in which texts are presented in a beautiful or evocative way, as a means by which resonance can be achieved. In completing this study I have encountered a number of works in which the authors writing style has resonated with me, these include, for instance, works by Baudrillard, Bauman, Heidegger, and Gadamer, a few of whom I quote in this study. I can only aspire to be able to write as beautifully and evocatively as they, however I have tried my best to present the experience of CIS in a way that I hope has at least some aesthetic merit from which the reader can make a connection. Perhaps too, in these liquid modern times (Bauman, 2000), the liminal position that I argue CIS find themselves in might resonate with readers who have "experienced the same thing in another arena" (Tracy, 2010, p. 845).
Significant Contribution	This study makes a number of significant contributions which I discuss in detail in Section 8.3.
Ethical	Ethical considerations have been observed throughout all stages of my study and I provide more detail on this in Section 3.7.7.
Meaningful Coherence	I have attempted to maintain a meaningful coherence throughout my study. This is supported in the structure of my thesis with findings Chapters 4, 5, and 6 each relating to one of the study's research questions. My final findings chapter, Chapter 7, introduces the concept of liminality and The Rites of Passage (van Gennep, 1960) and through the application of this theory I provide a framework which promotes meaningful coherence for the whole CIS overseas study experience. This is captured in the Conceptual Framework introduced in Figure 17. My use of hermeneutics is also coherent with the topic of this study as the hermeneutic relationship between the *part* and the *whole* (Evert Gummesson, 2000a) relates closely to the arguments for the consideration of value from a service ecosystems perspective (see Frow & Payne, 2019) and

	considerations of value co-creation at macro, meso, and micro levels.

3.7.7 Ethical Considerations

The importance of taking an ethical approach was considered during all stages of my research and was conducted at the outset under the Research Ethics Policy of Sheffield Hallam University. Research Ethics Checklists (SHUREC 1 and SHUREC 2) were completed and submitted as part of my PhD upgrade process.

The purpose of the research was made clear to all participants who were provided with a Participant Information Sheet (see Appendix 1) and asked to complete a Participants Consent Form (see Appendix 2) before any data collection took place. The Consent Form explained that participants could withdraw from the interview or the research project at any time. The Form also explained that all data would be anonymised. Each form was written in both English and Mandarin in order to ensure that the details of the study and what was being asked of participants were fully understood. I personally transcribed all interviews and made no reference to the participants' real identity on the transcripts. All data was stored in a secure location.

During the study I was also considerate of *relational ethics* (Tracy, 2010) in maintaining mutual respect, dignity and connectedness between myself and the research participants. To prepare for interviews I reviewed literature on interviewing techniques, including that which related to intercultural interviewing (see Section 3.7.4.1) and used my previous intercultural experience working with students in China to ensure participants were at ease during our interviews.

3.7.8 Chapter Summary

In this chapter I have set out my research philosophy and explained the rationale behind my research design. I have considered how that design meets a number of appropriate quality markers for qualitative research and I have explained how my study was carried out in an ethical manner. I have provided a detailed discussion on my data collection and data analysis and presented a Conceptual Framework that I arrived at following my analysis. The following four chapters set out my findings against this Framework.

Chapter 4 On Value Sought

4.1 Chapter Introduction

This is the first of four chapters which set out my findings, each based around the conceptual framework introduced in the previous chapter. The first three of these chapters address each one of the three research questions set out in the introduction to my thesis: RQ1 – What value do Chinese International Students (CIS) seek from their overseas study experience?; RQ2 – How, and with whom, do they seek to create this value?; and RQ3 – What influence does culture have on the value creation process? The fourth of these chapters discusses my findings in relation van Gennep's (1960) concept of the Rites of Passage which provides an overarching framework to make sense of those findings.

In the literature review we saw that value was contextual (Bolton & Drew, 1991; Edvardsson et al., 2011; Holbrook, 1999; Zeithaml, 1988), socially constructed (Akaka, Schau, et al., 2013; Chandler & Vargo, 2011; Karababa & Kjeldgaard, 2014; Peñaloza & Venkatesh, 2006; Vargo, 2009), and experientially or phenomenologically unique to the individual beneficiary (Holbrook, 1999; Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982; Lusch & Vargo, 2006; Sheth et al., 1991b, 1991a; Vargo & Lusch, 2004, 2008, 2016).

The aim of this chapter is to provide a summary of the value that CIS seek as interpreted from the empirical interview data. From the empirical data I was able to identify a number of common value types that appeared to resonate with participants. These dimensions are listed as separate subheadings under which I have documented some of the empirical findings that support the existence of each particular type through participant experience or their observation of fellow CIS.

This chapter addresses the first research question: RQ1 – What value do Chinese International Students seek from their overseas study experience? In Section 3.7.5 a Conceptual Framework was introduced which provides an overview of my findings and which each of my findings chapters contributes to. This chapter relates to the area of the Conceptual Framework coloured GREEN, see Figure 18 below.

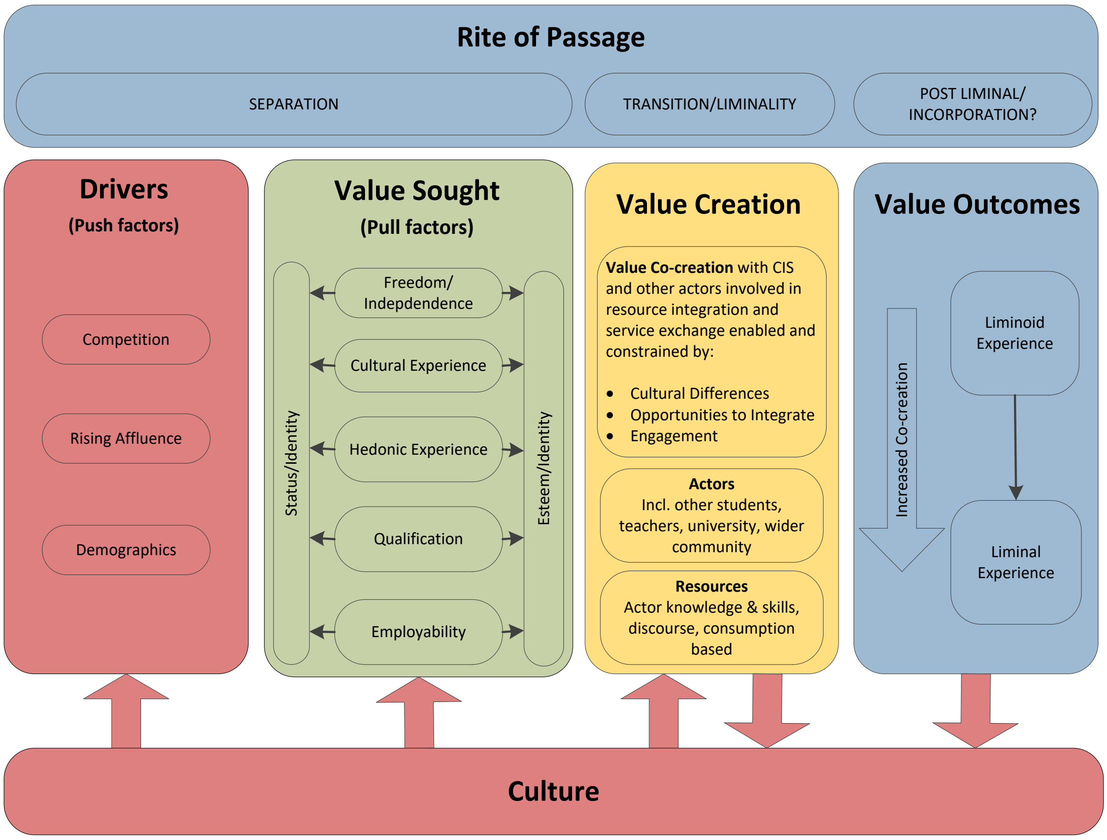

Figure 18 - Conceptual Framework – Chapter 4 Relates to Green Area
Source: Author

4.2 Value Sought (Pull Factors)

In this section I present the findings relating to the different types of value that CIS seek from their overseas study experience. These types of value sought are also considered in relation to Mazzarol and Soutar's (2002) pull factors (see Section 2.3.4.2 of the Literature Review for further details). Whilst there were a number of heterogeneous motivations for each participant's decision to study in the UK there were a number of common themes that emerged and these are discussed in the following sections.

4.3 Freedom/Independence

For many of the participants a significant advantage of studying overseas meant that they were able to gain a substantial amount of freedom and independence. This is similar to the findings made by Townsend and Poh (2008) whose study of international students in Australia identified a few students who claimed they sought freedom as their home culture was too rigid and strict. This was perhaps best illustrated by Liu (p4b1) whose first reaction on being asked why she had chosen to study overseas was to state that it was about freedom from her parents:

> "To be honest, it's not about the academic so much, yeah, I think study abroad… the experience is not essential for me… it [is] more dependent on [being] very [far] away from my parents."

She quickly corrects herself though and explains that it is also for academic purposes, perhaps feeling that this is a more appropriate answer to share. However, her immediate response about being very far away from her parents highlights how important this factor is in her mind. Liu (p4b1) is studying in the UK as part of a 2 + 2 programme whereby she spends the first two years of her undergraduate degree studying in China and then completes here final two years in the UK. At the time of her interview Liu (p4b1) was in her first year in the UK and explained how for her first two years she had studied in Shanghai while her parents lived in Ningbo. Ningbo and Shanghai are separated by the Hangzhou Bay and a high speed train journey of between 1.5 and 3 hours. Although this might have resulted in some element of freedom she explains how her sister and brother-in-law lived in Shanghai and she stayed with them in the week whilst living with her parents at the weekend.

Gao (p18p5) is in the final year of her PhD and has been away from home for a much longer period than Liu (p4b1) yet she shares similar sentiments about the benefits of being away from parents:

> "… it's good to live far away from your parents as well. Thanks to the technology that we can see each other every

> day but it is good to live, physically, far away from them. [Interviewer: Really. Why is it good to live far away from them?] I don’t know, Chinese parents! (Laughs). Yeah, they are… my parents are good but they are still parents, they want to control part of your life, especially when you are, like, female and when you are like mid-twenties. And they try to… push you to get in a relationship, that’s what Chinese parents will do."

Perhaps for Gao (p18p5) being far away from her parents is more important because the pressure for her to marry will be increasing. Whilst Chinese parents have high aspirations for their children and actively encourage them to pursue a good education they nevertheless have a preference for their daughters to marry sooner rather than later (see Kan, 2017; To, 2013). The idea that women find themselves with less control of their lives was echoed by Wu (p9p4), who is also studying for her PhD and felt that her parents did not think her capable of managing her own life:

> "I have more freedom here because if I stay in Beijing I think my parents will control me… because they love me so much that… yeah. They always think I am a little girl, I am a child, but living here I can manage all my life."

This comment resonates with the work of Liu (2016) who discusses the rise of the "priceless child" in China where, as a result of China's one-child policy, parents have shown growing concern for their children and increasing attempts to control them. However, young Chinese do not want to be controlled, they want to be free and independent and have the opportunity to develop. Wu (p9p4) states that she wants to be in control of her own life and these feelings are consistent with those of other participants. Take Huang (p7b2) for example, he is coming to the end of his undergraduate degree and has spent the last two years in the UK:

> "And in here, Europe, the environment will push you forward, will push you [to] do your assignment good, do you academic [work] good. And, what’s more it will just… make you more independent. And you are yourself [alone] abroad now, you have to do everything yourself, you have to sort it out, by yourself. And even if you have friends, you have to be

> independent, you have to be strong. So, that's what I'm looking for during these years."

Consistent with the findings of Wu (2014) the idea that surviving in an unfamiliar environment will make individuals more confident resonated with many of the participants. There was a general feeling that an overseas experience and meeting the multiple challenges that entailed represented a significant source of value. It also represents an environment in which CIS can start to see things from a different perspective and to challenge the societal norms within which they have been raised. Xu (p11p5) studied her undergraduate degree in China before moving to the US for her Master's degree. She is currently studying her PhD in the UK and reflects on some of the differences between Chinese and UK societal norms and the freedom from judgement that seems to exist in the UK:

> "And the other thing I think is maybe in the UK, if you are very unique people, people will not judge you like you are different from them. Maybe they just don't care whether you are the same or not, but if you go back in China people will say why you are not just follow the rules in the society, you need to go to get married, maybe at some stage and give birth to a children at some stage, you have to do something, something at a very specific time…"

This turned out to be a recurrent theme with many respondents, in particular for the females, Xu (p11p5) explained why she felt it was different in the UK:

> "… because I've met… I think it is a granny to me, because she is a very old lady, in a café several years ago and maybe she is just curious about me and my friend and she said 'are you from China or somewhere' and she just said that she got married a long time ago and got divorced and now she just don't want to get married again but she has a boyfriend and they are very [happy], they stay together and she felt very happy and she said that I don't need to get married again, I really enjoy it. But if you do that in China, you can't, because, not only your family but maybe the society will give you the pressure and also the company they ask you why you don't get married, why you don't have a child?

There is a sense from many of the participants that their individual freedom is limited and that they need to make the most of time away from societal pressures that face the younger generations in China. Being in a position to see things from a different perspective perhaps exacerbates the degree to which CIS feel that these pressures are unfair. However, in some respects this heightened awareness helped CIS to view their own country in a more favourable manner and this phenomena will be discussed further in Chapter 6.

4.4 Cultural Experience

One of main benefits of being able to spend time in another country is the opportunity that presents to experience a different culture and previous research has highlighted that gaining cultural experience is a significant pull factor for overseas study (Altbach, 2004b; Azmat et al., 2013; Fong, 2011; Wu, 2014; Xu, 2017). From the empirical data it became evident that this was a significant factor for many of the participants. As Yang (p6b1) explains, when asked why she chose to come to the UK, experiencing another culture was the main attraction for her the first time she came to visit to the UK and a significant factor in her choosing to study here:

> "Well first of all I choose [to] come to UK as the first time I come to the UK is five years ago I just have a [high school] trip and that time I think I love this country, I like to go to university in UK so this is my first. And second, as I want to know other countries culture and meet some foreigners and to know what they are thinking about China or other countries or the whole things I [am] interested in. And third I think because the education in China and UK is totally different I want to get some experience in the UK education and to know what is the difference in the UK education. Is it more suitable to me in UK education, that thing? That is my three things."

Yang (p6b1) is currently studying at Bachelors level and her decision to study in the UK was taken some time ago as she was enrolled on a 2 + 2 degree course which includes two years study in China and two in the UK. The decision for her to enrol on this course was perhaps influenced by her previous trip to the UK, as she suggests, or perhaps that trip was because it had already been decided by her parents that she would study in the UK. Chinese parents are heavily involved in decision making surrounding their children's education (Griffiths, 2012; Liu, 2016) and their influence was highlighted by a number of participants, including Zhu (p14m2) who said his parents "told me to go outside and see what the world is like", his partner Ma (p13p2) had a similar experience with her father telling her it was an opportunity to "see what the world was like".

Hu (p15m1) had more life experience than many of the other participants as she had come to the UK to study a Master's degree after spending a number of years working within international companies. She explained that she spent a lot of time in classes helping other Chinese students who were finding the study difficult due to poor language skills and limited prior working experience. When asked why she thought they chose to come to the UK if they found it so difficult she said it was "because their parents need them to get a Master's degree" and that the students had "no choice of which course or which country to select". When asked why that was she explained:

> "[They] just want the kids to have some experience in the overseas… because in China [they] have some limitation for you [to] get knowledge or [for] your communication… parents want the kids [to] have some [of] the language and communication skills."

Guo (p16p1.5), a PhD student studying engineering, was similarly encouraged by his parents to study overseas and he explains how they in turn are influenced by the experiences of other families with children studying abroad:

> "[My parents] encourage me to come to the UK to get a higher view of the world, because in China actually so many people now get the chance to study for higher education level. So my parents have so many friends, you know, whose child also study abroad so when they communicate they think that study abroad is a very good experience you know, not only for the technician part but also for the other part like you can learn lots more about different cultures and you can practice your English."

For a number of participants their initial decision to come to the UK is merely to gain something of a cultural experience but ends up having a significant impact on their future prospects. Zhao (p8p4) explains how her initial decision did not involve too much consideration:

> "I didn't expect too much when I do my masters because I am still young and the tuition fee is not too much for my family. So I didn't have too much stressful to go abroad, it's just a chance because my university they have a program and I can apply for it and I saw the information sheet from our university that's it. I discussed with my mum and she said "if you want you can go" and if I can pass my IELTS then I can come here. So, I didn't think too much when I came here for my masters, just for travelling, like this. I didn't think too much about the future or value I don't know what that means I just think that is a chance to see abroad, because it is only one year."

Although her initial decision to study in the UK was almost flippant it led to her having difficulties integrating back into a satisfactory life in China and ultimately to her returning to the UK with her husband and child to pursue a PhD. Similarly, for Wu (p9p4), she had an opportunity through her university so she thought "why not". However, this changed after her Masters study as by then she had found her passion:

> "Do you know, the reason [I chose to study in the UK] changed a lot of times. My undergraduate school is Xian Jiaotong and Liverpool University, so it is two schools. The mode is 2+2, two years in Suzhou and 2 years in Liverpool. And you can choose, you can stay in China and you can also choose to go to UK. And at that time I just think OK, to see a different life, just to try it so go with my friends and then that is the beginning. But for the postgraduate that was because I found my interest, I [was] interested in film study and I want to continue to learn it but then I need to compare different educational system [and] for America I don't know… and in China actually I study at Liverpool University [and it] doesn't follow the Chinese educational system so I don't know how to apply [to] a Chinese university so continued study in UK is my best choice."

The benefits of experiencing a different culture, whether considered from the student or their parents perspective, are clearly seen as something of value in the initial decision to study overseas. However, there is some suggestion that this initial decision to study in the UK, perhaps taken without a great deal of consideration in some cases, leads the individual down a path which narrows the range of other options available to them later in life. This is something that I will explore further in Chapter 7.

Whilst a number of participants stated that the cultural experience, particularly the opportunity to meet local people and improve their English language, was a key factor in deciding to study in the UK many had difficulties adjusting to UK culture and this is something that is discussed further in Section 5.4.1.

4.5 Hedonic Experience

For younger generations of Chinese the desire to express themselves has gradually increased and this has led to growing levels of materialism and hedonism (Gu & Hung, 2009), and a desire to seek out 'powerfully signified objects and experiences' (Duan & Dholakia, 2015).

Within the cultural experience that CIS identified there were certain elements that touched on the hedonic which Sánchez-Fernández et al. (2009) describe as including elements of both play and aesthetics, two types of value that consumers might experience that were earlier identified by Holbrook (1999).

Ng and Forbes (2009) argue that the learning experience is hedonic however this isn't something that emerged from participant interviews. Indeed, during some of the interviews it was suggested that certain CIS don't actually like being in the UK and preferred to occupy their time in ways other than study. Wang (p1m1) for example stated that most of her friends didn't like being here and that instead of studying they preferred to "drink, have lots of parties, get together, and play games". Li (p2m1) made similar comments suggesting that there were two types of student those that preferred to study, like her, and those that preferred "something interesting here like shopping and parties".

A number of non-study related activities were identified as taking place alongside or instead of study and these are discussed in the following sections:

4.5.1 Shopping

We hear many stories about the Chinese love of luxury goods shopping and when this subject arose during my interviews with participants I asked if the opportunity to consume such products was a significant motivator for studying in the UK. When asked this question Huang (p7b2) replied "you can't say motivation, but it will influence, it will affect the Chinese people". Here he is suggesting that it is clearly a factor but not necessarily a primary motivation. Ho (p17p2) makes a similar comment, suggesting that whilst it is definitely a factor it isn't a key reason for people to come to the UK for study. However, he goes on to discuss how it is more convenient to buy some goods in the UK:

> "For my wife as an example, she need to buy some make ups, in the UK you can just pop into the shop and if you don't know which one suit you better you can just ask the seller to have a trial on your face, something like that. In china there is no such service. Another thing is there are more brands here and the price is usually cheaper than in China."

Zhou (p10m1) has a similar preference for buying cosmetics in the UK, as she explains "because in China, for me as a girl, I prefer many beauty products, some cosmetics. Many brands in UK are not sold in China so I prefer shopping online and many, many websites [in the UK] have many beautiful discounts". She goes on to explain that although there are many cosmetic products available in China there is a significant problem with fake products being sold.

The lower price for branded goods mentioned by Ho (p17p2) and the prevalence of fake products in China that Zhou (p10m1) refers to mean that there are good consumption opportunities for those travelling overseas. As Guo (p16p1.5) explains when asked whether CIS like to shop while they are in the UK:

> "Yeah, the first thing is about the quality of the product, because in China [there are] so many fake products because in China we got very convenient online system right now. I think you might know it, Taobao, we can buy everything there and we can receive the parcel next day, it's quite convenient."

Taobao are owned by the e-commerce giant Alibaba who compete with Amazon for global e-commerce supremacy (Newman, 2018) and take advantage of the low cost courier distribution and logistics networks that exist within China (Lucas, 2019). However, convenience is not the only consideration to be taken into account:

> "But you know the product quality cannot be guaranteed, especially for the, you know, maybe milk for the small baby and also for the, some of the bags, handbags, yeah, because [there are] so many fake products so if we got chance to go to another country we also need to buy several handbags. Not for us but for family."

This responsibility to the family unit would be consistent with Hofstede et al.'s (2010, p. 107-8) suggestion that collectivist cultures share resources and I asked Guo (p16p1.5) if this was something that he would normally get involved with himself and he replied:

> "Yeah, actually I went to America, in May this year, to attend a conference and my parents ask me to go to [an] outlet to buy 2 handbags and they also send me the picture, the specific brand, a specific colour and I need to find a shop and I need to say to the shop assistant where is this bag. Yeah, that's a very common phenomena."

When asked whether the bags were for his parents Guo (p16p1.5) answered that one of them was but the other was maybe for one of his relatives, an aunt perhaps. This phenomena, as Guo (p16p1.5) describes it, is becoming increasingly common, not only with individuals making purchases for their family but also through professional agents known as 'daigou' (Li, Shao, & Zhu, 2018; Parker, 2018). Huang (p7b2) describes how many individuals will take advantage of the discounted luxury goods available at retail outlets like Bicester Village, a popular destination for Chinese visitors (Liddell, 2018). He describes how they act "like a bridge, they are in the UK and there is a huge demand in China and maybe the Chinese people want to buy luxury brand but the price is not that good". Hu (p15m1) also discusses this in our interview, describing how she and others like her provide this kind of service, she describes two types of people:

> "[S]ome people just buy something [for] themselves because they think they like a luxury life, "I need this bag", "I need these high heels", and that is to display [that they are] rich."

This is a clear reference to what Holbrook (1999) describes as *status* value, however Hu (p15m1) suggests that this is not the same kind of value that all Chinese seek when making such purchases:

> "I don't like these people, I think everybody don't like these people. For the other one, they always buy something, but sell something. They use this, in UK this experience is like a plant, overseas shopping, just want to earn money. Actually, I do this, I just buy some [of] the cheaper or best goods and sell them to some customer and earn some money. I think that help my living here, because here all the money or just the fee [is] all [paid] by myself, it's not by my parents. So I need to [earn] a living here, I need to earn some money."

The value that Hu (p15m1) seeks from these kinds of purchases would be more economic then and, viewed from a means-end perspective (Gutman, 1982; Woodruff, 1997; Zeithaml, 1988), related to her covering her study related expenses. She goes on to describe why the opportunity to do this kind of business exists:

> "… also I know some of the friends, my colleagues, also students, they also do this business, just sell some of the product in China. Because in China some of the tax is so high so some of the goods price is higher than here, and also the quality have the big problem. That's why the Chinese people always like foreign goods."

When it comes to luxury shopping then there are two types of consumer, those that shop for themselves and those that shop to earn an income. This division perhaps reflects the different type of individual, those that are from wealthy families and those that are not. Huang (p7b2) describes the former as 'second rich' or 'fuerdai', individuals whose parents will give them a substantial allowance and think nothing of spending £1,000 on a handbag. The latter, like Hu (p15m1) purports to be, using any income gained to support their time in the UK.

4.5.2 Football

According to Connell (2018) football might well be the most effective cultural activity for enthusing diverse societies and Chinese society certainly has a good number of enthusiastic fans who have been noted to travel overseas to watch their favourite European teams play (Peng, Chen, & Kwon, 2016). For CIS, overseas study provides an opportunity to get closer to world class level football activity and, for some, this opportunity is a factor in their deciding to study in the UK.

For some CIS football plays a significant part in their time in the UK. Chen (p5b1) for example is a season ticket holder for Manchester City and although this is not her favourite team, this honour belongs to Barcelona FC, she and her friend regularly travel by train to watch them play. Ho (p17p2) is also a keen football fan, as he explains:

> "I think actually the football is also one reason for me to come to the UK. I like watching football… I support Juventus, which is an Italian team, but also the Premier League is good."

Ho (p17p2) goes on to explain that Manchester United are his favourite team in the UK. During his first few months in the UK he would go to the pub to watch matches and enjoyed the atmosphere surrounding the event, especially for big matches. However, he now prefers to watch the matches from his own home where he can also "save money on beer". Atmosphere also played a significant part in Ma (p13p2) & Zhu's (p14m2) connection to football. When asked if they had many opportunities to interact with local people Ma (p13p2) said "not too many I'm afraid. Sometimes we will go to the bar and we can have some communication with the local people. This is the most direct way." However, his partner, Zhu (p14m2) added "I think the most frequent way to maybe join the local people is the football game". She explained:

> "Yes, [the] football match. When I [am] in China I don't know, I'm not interested [in] that actually, I'm a girl, I'm not interested in the football. But in [the] UK someone told me, if you want to join the local people it's really easy, the most

> simple way is when you go to the bar and see [watch] some screen in the bars, and you drink the beer, it's the best way".

This is very interesting, this use of football as a way of getting close to local people, of having a local experience. The discussion continues in a way that reinforces the view that football here is merely 'a means to an end', a way to gain a cultural experience:

> Ma (p13p2) - "Yes, we even go to see Sheffield Wednesday and yell with the local people together." [Ma (p13p2) and Zhu (p14m2) both laugh].
>
> Interviewer - "Did you enjoy that?"
>
> Ma (p13p2) - "Really enjoy that!"
>
> Interviewer - "Would you say you liked football now?"
>
> Ma (p13p2) - "No."

Ma's (p13p2) response here was an emphatic "no", there was no hesitation and it was clear they had not come away from the experience as a footballing convert, as they explain:

> Zhu (p14m2) - "We like the environment, around the [event] [Ma (p13p2) and Zhu (p14m2) both laugh], yes, most Chinese students they want to go [to the] UK to see a real match, to see, and they will be crazy and they will [be] really happy."
>
> Ma (p13p2) - "Maybe you can imagine. The football match is very tedious [laughs], few people go to see that. Only some hardcore fans, they will support the team, their team. But in [the] UK… if you live in this city you will see many… I think, I can’t say 100% of people but maybe 90% of people will support one team actually and they will, no matter the team is winning or lose, they just support them (laughs). It really very good, we enjoy very much."

Football as a way of connecting people from different cultures is also evident in my discussion with Guo (p16p1.5). He is also a football fan and explains how it was an influence on his decision to come to the UK, as he explains "I'm quite interested in football so I think when I come, if I got a chance to come to the UK I got the chance to look at some football games". Guo (p16p1.5) is a Manchester United fan and tells me he went to three of their games last season as well as to some local games. However, it is when he is asked if he has opportunity to interact with local people that he relates how playing football helps him to interact with other students:

> "You know sometimes we will go to [the university sports centre] and we will organise the football game. We need so many people, we need at least 10 players so we will invite some foreign students, for example we have a football team in our lab and in that team we will have more than 20 students. And maybe 2 or 3 are Chinese student and others are all foreign students. I got to play football game with other team maybe only twice, because I'm not so good at playing football, so I am more like an audience (laughs). So when we watch the football games I can communicate with other foreign students who sit beside me. But to be honest not so many opportunities [to communicate with non-Chinese] unless we have some particular event."

It is interesting how football is like a universal language that can be used to help people communicate. I am not a football fan and know relatively little about the game other than what appears in the sport headlines. My interview with Chen (p5b1) was a little difficult, although her English language wasn't too bad our conversation did not flow like some of the others and it seemed as though our time together might be very short. However, we managed to sustain a fairly lengthy chat purely by discussing various aspects of football. Similarly with Ma (p13p2) and Zhu (p14m2), in addition to our conversation about their own experience of football in the UK we also engaged in a conversation about football sponsorship. These instances are perhaps good examples of the strength of weak culture which, according to Schultz and Breiger (2010), can act as cultural bridges between otherwise disconnected social groups and represents a good area for further study, see Section 8.1.

4.5.3 Travel

Previous studies have identified the opportunity to travel as a primary motivation of overseas study (Bamber, 2014). Ho (p17p2) suggested that whilst shopping was not a primary motivation for studying overseas travel definitely was. Gao (p18p5) described how her initial thoughts on going overseas to study were triggered by her then boyfriend who was studying in the US and seemed to be living a good life - she remarked how he sent his first message while attending a pool party. She describes how the UK is a good base for travel because although the UK is quite small it is well placed for other destinations being so close to Europe and the opportunity that presents for exploring different cultures. Ma (p13p2) and Zhu (p14m2) had suggested that one of the good things about being in the UK was that they had the opportunity to 'play'. When asked what they meant by this they said that they really liked the lifestyle in the UK with Ma (p13p2) explaining:

> "In UK we went to a lot of places, even Europe, we went there. And [laughs] and every weekend when the weather is good we go hiking [to the] Peak District. And this week, this weekend maybe we already planned to go [to] Scarborough. Initially we planned to go camping there but we think the weather is not very good from [the] forecast so we change our plan to go to a hotel but we still [go]. I think, how to say, we just enjoy to go everywhere and see all those beautiful sites and experience the UK life here."

Ma (p13p2) and Zhu (p14m2) are part of a small group of CIS that regularly do activities together and clearly wish to make the most of their time in the UK. He explains that they have rarely had such an opportunity whilst back home in China:

> "It is really good. In China we just seldom go to other cities. One thing because maybe we can only do it in vacation, like summer vacation or winter vacation and other thing is we just think we are too familiar with our place, we won't go outside, go other places. But in [the] UK we don't know, it's just [a] brand new place and we don't know what the culture [is like], whether there is good views here."

Perhaps one of the reasons they have had less time to travel in their home country is the pressure that they will have faced in the earlier part of their education. Their desire for cultural experience and the additional freedom they now enjoy in the UK (see Section 4.3) means they must take advantage of what Ma (p13p2) describes as their limited time here:

> And one important thing is we think we are Chinese and some day we will go back to our own town and we won't come back anymore and so we need to go all the places we can get to and see all the people, see all the beautiful views."

Zhu (p14m2) describes how she and her friend twice arranged their own trips to Europe, first Northern Europe and then the Southern part, using a combination of air, rail, and sea. During their last trip they covered 6 countries in 10 days. Liu (p4b1) has also spent a good amount of time travelling during her time studying at university she explains that this is partly because she has more free time than she did before entering university:

> "You know I have to study and study before [I am] 18. I have not so much time for travel. But after I graduate from high school my parents are not so strict. Yes, I have more time to travel. Like Europe and Singapore. Like mostly in these countries."

Just like Ma (p13p2) and Zhu (p14m2) travel within the UK is also popular with Liu (p4b1) who says she likes to take trips to the Peak District at least once month with her friends. This is a popular destination with many of the participants and the natural environment appears to be a big factor in its popularity. Wang (p1m1) explains that she enjoys the Peak District because of the fresh air and the fact there aren't too many people there which is unlike most tourist destinations in China. Guo (p16p1.5) makes a similar comment suggesting that being able to hike in such a beautiful natural environment with no air pollution is very enjoyable. It seems common for many CIS to visit a number of places during their time in the UK, Guo (p16p1.5) talks about some of the destinations he has visited:

> "Actually I visit so many places in the past one year, for example north to Edinburgh, and south to Brighton and East to Scarborough and Whitby, and also Snowdon National Park in Wales. So many places, so I’m now quite familiar with the locations of different cities in the UK. And Leeds, York, Manchester, so many places."

When CIS first arrive in the UK many take advantage of trips arranged by their university or their Students Union. Wang (p1m1) for example talks about how she went on an organised trip to Bridlington which holds very happy memories for her as she describes:

"The one time I went there with my teacher and friends, a big group, so many friends, I feel so happy. And Bridlington is not a tourist city or town so it's not commercial. But the beach and the sea and that day its [a] sunny day so it depends on the weather and the people who go with you."

Although some CIS take advantage of these organised trips when they first arrive in the UK once established here they tend to arrange their own trips with friends although unfortunately this provides less opportunities for them to mix with other students as I will discuss in more detail in 4.11.

4.5.4 The Aesthetics of 'British' Culture

Aesthetics is hard to define but is something that brings pleasure and personal enrichment to the consumer (Wagner, 1999). Empirical data arising from the interviews suggested that there might be some specific aesthetic appeal associated with British culture. Part of this appeal related to the accent with Zhang (p3m2), after being asked what she had most been looking forward to about coming the UK, replying:

"[The] accent. To talk this way. Because usually [I] do look at American TV shows but when I decided to come to the UK I see a lot of UK TV shows, like Downton Abbey, and I really, really enjoy the accent when they talk. So I thought I [would] come here and get a lot of accent experience."

Zhou (p10m1) also made reference to the British accent and seemed to prioritise this over other aspects of her education when she suggested that in terms of her priorities: "First, [it] must be language, because British English is very beautiful I think. So I want to learn more British English and then about knowledge, professional knowledge."

TV shows like Downton Abbey and Sherlock, which was extremely popular with Chinese audiences (Ting, 2014), are very influential in helping Chinese form their opinions of what life might be like in the UK. Reality is often different to how we imagine it though as Liu (p4b1) found out and explained to me when I asked her what she liked about the UK before she came here:

> Liu (p4b1) - "I just heard about the gentleman in British. The… I don't know just the, the…"
>
> Interviewer - "Just the idea of the UK?"
>
> Liu (p4b1) - "I just heard about it… so I came here and I do love here."
>
> Interviewer - "Right, ok. So, what you thought of the UK before then, having been here…"
>
> Liu (p4b1) - "it's different."
>
> Interviewer - "Different? How is it different from what you expected?"
>
> Liu (p4b1) - "Previously, I thought every British gentleman wear coats and hold umbrella [laughs], it's typical gentleman. And everybody give polite to what they do… rainy day…"
>
> Interviewer - "Like today?"
>
> Liu (p4b1) - "Yes. And the food is not so good [laughs]."

Liu's (p4b1) comments reflect a somewhat naïve view of British culture, very much influenced by stereotypes of the British that are common in China, which those CIS that are newly arrived in the UK seem to hold. Liu (p4b1), like many of her fellow CIS, struggles to adjust to life in the UK at first particularly because of the difficulties communicating with locals, as I will discuss in more detail in 4.11, and perhaps partly because her preconceptions of what life is like in the UK were different from what she encountered. Similarly for Li (p2m1) who thought the UK would be more 'fashionable', as she explains:

> "Before I came here I think the people here, the local people is very, is like, likes talking to each other just like the American people. But when I came here I think they prefer to stay in their own group. But if you ask them for help they will be really helpful and be nice to tell you. But if you don't contact them personally or try to find something, try to ask something for them they will not contact you, I think. This is what I met local people here. Before I came here I think people here will be err… fashion[able] because fashion magazines [show] about this."

Holbrook (1999) suggests that aesthetics are a significant type of value sought by consumers and there certainly appears to be an aesthetic appeal surrounding the UK as it is portrayed in the media, some quintessential Britishness that significantly enhances our soft power and our appeal to overseas students. Perhaps this does even exist. Maybe just not in Sheffield.

4.6 Qualification

Research carried out by Bamber (2014) suggested that there was a perception amongst Chinese that overseas programmes were superior to their domestic counterparts. This finding echoed Altbach's (2004a) earlier work which suggested that the perception of the quality of Chinese postgraduate programmes was not as high as those in other countries. Chen (p5b1) hinted at this when discussing why she had chosen to study in the UK:

> "[I]n China I have studied for one year but the university is not very good. And [so] I go to the UK to experience a different culture and universities are different between [the] two countries. You know in China perhaps in one class you have 50 students, it's difficult to learn something and I can't concentrate on what we are learning. And here, maybe 20 students per class, it's easier to understand."

Whilst there are a growing number of internationally recognised universities in China it is becoming increasingly difficult to gain a place in such universities because of faster growing demand for places. Huang (p7b2) discusses this in some detail suggesting that it is very difficult to get into a good university in China but also that even if you are able to get a place then the learning isn't always that great:

> "In Chinese university it is hard, it is really, really hard to enter but it is easy to pass, it is really easy to pass. You just need to submit everything that is all. But in [the] UK it is easy to get in, like, you just pay the tuition fee I will let you study here, that is true. But it is hard for you to get a certificate, you have to be really careful, you have to do the academic stuff, you have to study, you have to pass, you have to do the revision, you have to do the exams, you have to do everything."

University in China provides a stark contrast to the Chinese High School system where students are working hard towards their Gao Kao, the Chinese University Entry Exam, which is used to determine which students will be accepted into the different universities. However, there is a common perception that once you have succeeded in entering university life becomes much easier as Huang (p7b2) suggests. Liu (p4b1) has a similar view of things as she explains after being asked why Chinese choose to study in the UK:

> "I think most is for education. Study abroad is for [providing] more competitive advantage in working. I was educated here [and] I think it is more benefit for me than for study in China, it's different. [When] I have [to] study here, I have to work very hard. It seems like because our university is very, very relaxed, because our senior year is very, very tough and our university is very restrict for enter but not that restrict for graduate."

However, there are benefits associated with what is perceived as a more rigorous education system. Bamber's (2014) research highlighted the importance that Chinese students attached to developing application and interpretation skills, or critical thinking skills, during their experience in UK HE and these findings were shared by participants of this research. Hu (p15m1) felt that she lacked critical thinking skills before she came to the UK because of the difference between the two education systems:

> "[Before coming to the UK] I don't really know how is the critical thinking [because] in China every question [only] have the one answer, your teacher told you the answer so you just remember [what] this is, and the teacher will tell you how to think, so just one way to think, you don't need to [use] your mind. So, [when I came to the UK] I do some essay, I do some report it's so difficult for me, I don't have any critical thinking before."

Zhu (p14m2) makes similar references: "[W]hen I was in China I knew a little bit of that, the critical thinking, but in the UK everything you should do you should use the idea." Zhou (p10m1) talks about how emphasis is placed on critical thinking within the UK by teaching staff: *"I think in the UK professors always stress a critical thinking… I didn't [do] critical thinking in China actually because I just received everything the teacher told me."*

Zhou (p10m1) thinks her critical thinking has improved although some students do find adapting to the western style of education easier than others. For example, with Hu (p15m1), although it is difficult for her at first, she thinks it is easier for her to adapt than for some of her fellow classmates as she had a number of years work experience before coming to the UK. For her younger classmates though, with less experience, it is much more difficult:

> "Actually I have some idea [about critical thinking] because I have the work [experience] so sometimes the teacher or some of the tutors say something or explain some point I know how to get it, I know why he will say that. But the 'no-experience' student, maybe he don't know that, he just get that knowledge but he don't know why those things, he just remembers. So I think for this part it's not suitable for every young student because [they are not used to this] different education process."

Perhaps it is not only about the educational system though. Huang (p7b2) suggests that it is a much wider cultural influence that affects younger Chinese and their ability or even their willingness to learn:

> "I think it's from culture background. [Many CIS] are not really independent, you know… society in China is like two [sets of] grandparents, two parents and one child. And everyone is caring about that one child so we don't have to worry about everything [anything], we just need to study, they just do whatever they want."

This relates very closely with Liu's (2016, p. 105) description of the 'priceless child' whose status is that of 'parents' love object and the family's education project.' Huang (p7b2) continues with a description of how this affects these children:

> "So once they go abroad they reach very good, very happy, they don't have to, in their mind, they don't have to get involved because [he then reports how he believes those CIS feel -] "everybody care[s] about me, "I have loads of Chinese friends, my family loves me, everyone loves me. So why should I get involved in different culture, I came here just for the certificate."

Huang (p7b2) feels that the number of such CIS is significant and that there is a significant link to the relative ease of gaining a place at a UK university compared with a good university in China:

> "… at least 40%, 50% of Chinese people that study abroad [do so] just because they can’t go to the brilliant university in China, they [came] here to… I call it ‘holiday’. Yes, just get a certificate because here you can just pay the money and then go to the university. In China you have to get the good scores if you go to the good university."

Xu (p11p5) also believes that for many students there is a strong emphasis on just getting the qualification. She also suggests that one of the key reasons why students choose the UK is because they get their qualification much quicker than in other countries and that this is particularly the case for postgraduate courses:

> "I think some people do have the view that they can get the degree much quicker [here]. I've met some of the students here and they say the reason I chose to come to the UK to study is because the master is just cost one year to study so I can just spend one year to get the master degree and then go back to work because they just need the degree, not anything else. So [it does] not matter what university it is but just I get the degree and it works for my work [career], I can get the better payment when I go back to China."

Wang (p1m1) suggests that her choice of studying in the UK rather than Australia or Canada was influenced by the UK having a one, rather than two, year Master's programme. Hu (p15m1) made a similar observation: "For my experience I want to save the time. UK's Master's degree [is] almost 1 or 1½ years, so I think if I choose another place maybe 2 years or more. So that is the best option for choosing here". The appeal of a one year Master's course, not only to save time but also to reduce the financial burden of living costs, is consistent with findings from previous studies (Bamber, 2014; Townsend & Poh, 2008; Wu, 2014). However, it is worth noting that in some cases this shorter study time can lead to higher levels of stress and reduce the available time for travel, as Zhao (p8p4) highlights:

> "In the one year course there is much stressful, we just feel we need to finish three years course in one year because in China we are not so intensive. So, we don't have… it's not what I expected, I think I will be free [so] I can [go] travelling to France, to Europe and to anywhere I like. But actually, I didn't go anywhere, I didn't have time."

I think this comment highlights that although a qualification gained from a UK university is valued, and perhaps for some CIS it represents the most value, it can be only one of a range of different value types sought. Another type of value that is closely linked to the gaining of a qualification is employability.

4.7 Employability

More than 8 million students graduated from Chinese universities in 2017 and many of those graduates ended up in part-time, low-paid jobs (Stapleton, 2017a). For Chinese graduates, finding a job in China is not as easy as it once was as Hu (p15m1) points out:

> "10 years before look[ing] for a job is not so hard, but nowadays Chinese education level have the improvement so most people is undergrad and master grad like that. So everyone look like the same."

It is therefore important to differentiate oneself from the crowd and according to Liu (p4b1) one of the ways CIS seek to do this is through their study in the UK which can help them gain a competitive advantage which can in turn translate into a higher salary. Xu (p11p5) agrees, suggesting that a degree from the UK can have an impact not only on your salary but also on the type of occupation you can enter:

> "I think it varies in different companies and in different cities but in some of the companies if you enter the company with a bachelor degree maybe you have six thousand Yuan per month but maybe if you enter with a [UK] Master's degree [it will be] eight thousand per month and you have [a] better opportunity to go to a better occupation."

Some CIS seek to gain that competitive advantage through gaining work experience as part of their time in the UK. Wang (p1m1), Li (p2m1), and Huang (p7b2) all suggest that the opportunity to gain work experience as part of their course is significant although there does also appear to be something of the hedonic about Wang's (p1m1) desire to do her hospitality and tourism placement in the Maldives. Li (p2m1) and Huang (p7b2) both highlight some issues with accessing placement opportunities suggesting that although there are support services to help them access such placements it is often difficult for those international students who have only recently arrived to secure something appropriate. Huang (p7b2) studied on a one-plus-two course where he studied the first year of his English language degree in China before completing the final two in the UK. He missed out on the opportunity of a placement because he would have needed to have started the application process at the beginning of his second year, which coincided with his arrival in the UK and the cultural adjustments that entailed, as he explains:

> "I didn't do the placement because the placement is between the second and the final [year]. When they asked me to find a placement I don't have competitive advantage, I'm just new here, and the language… it's [a] really big challenge for me to find a placement here and you're just new here and you've just been to the university for a year and even just one semester."

Huang (p7b2) goes on to explain that although he missed the opportunity of a placement as it came so soon after he had first arrived in the UK, he does not miss any now: "I missed that opportunity but now I catch every opportunity" and he goes on to explain how he has taken a part time role working for the university helping other students improve their international employability. He feels that a factor in improving his own employability, and that of fellow students, is through developing a good cultural understanding, as he explains:

> "So, in the future the world is coming together so in the future if you study abroad you will have advantage… like for example you have two people, one is from the university of China, one is the university from England. If I am [an] international trading company [and] everything about [what I do is] international, who will you employ? "Who will we employ? Oh, you must have different experience, different ideas and opinions about everything. So I will trust you, I will want you."

However, he explains that this does not necessarily mean that Chinese universities are not good it just depends on the needs of the companies who are looking for employees:

> "… it depends on what they need in the future, what they need, what the company need, what they prefer to do in the

> future. But, I can tell like if you study abroad, if you study in the UK, study in America or wherever, it will give you [a] competitive advantage, but it is only if you did a good study in university, if you just want to get a certificate it is totally different."

Here Huang (p7b2) is differentiating himself from the 40% or 50% of CIS that he feels only study abroad because they cannot get into a good university in China and come here for what he refers to as a "holiday". These are individuals who, according to Zhu (p14m2), *"can't work hard, they just want to play and they have enough money"* because they come from wealthy families. As he goes on to explain, even if they didn't get the qualification it doesn't matter because their parents either have their own company or hold senior positions and can arrange jobs for them.

Xu (p11p5) suggests that finding a job when returning to China will be much harder because there are a lot of Chinese students returning from the UK, US, Australia, and other locations outside of China. Xu (p11p5) is currently studying for her PhD, when I ask her if a PhD would make finding a job easier she suggests that it very much depends on the subject area:

> "My friend, she's looking, she just got her PhD degree and she is looking for jobs in China and she sent out a lot of CVs and personal statements but few came back say offer her an interview. It's not only because of, I mean, the population, sometimes it is about the relationship issue, in China."

Xu (p11p5) is referring here to the concept of guanxi (personal connections and networks) which plays a significant role in Chinese business and which Altbach (2013) claims is used considerably in faculty hiring in the Chinese academic profession, a claim that Xu's (p11p5) friend's experience seems to support:

> "… because she wants to work in a university and there are some job like, maybe for like a lecturer or some other opportunities, but maybe [there] will be someone say I have a relative, yeah. And she, maybe she has the same status, she also has a PhD degree but she has that kind of relationship, so you can't get it. Even though you go for interview but there is a lot of people go for interview but there is a lot of issues with the university so you don't know.

> So she said it is very hard. But I don't know, at this stage I don't know but I think maybe it will be even harder because there is a lot of Chinese student going back to find a job."

She suggested that although an overseas education can help you succeed, particularly in some areas like finance for example, the problem is first getting 'a foot in the door' as "if you want to enter this area [finance] in China then you need to have a relationship." It seems that even for hard working CIS like Huang (p7b2) it is important to have some kind of family connection if you want to succeed. He explains that he is hoping "to start a business here [in the UK] because one of my mum's friends, he is teaching me about internet trading [where people would] order here, produce in China [then] deliver to here [UK]." He is currently finding out about the requirements for UK's Tier 1 Entrepreneurship Visa.

Whilst enhancing employability does seem to be a key source of value sought by CIS it is clear that there is much more to finding work than having the experience and qualification that studying at a UK university provides. The increasing number of Chinese that return to their home country with an overseas qualification has meant this is less of a differentiator than it was before. In addition, Gao (p18p5) suggests that growing levels of nationalism within the country means that "Chinese people more and more like to hire their own people, from their own culture…" she then immediately corrects herself "no, our own culture, sorry [laughs]. It's just like being [an] outsider of the UK and China." This is an interesting notion, that returning CIS might be considered differently and that this might impact on their employability. Luo (p20p5) makes a similar observation suggesting that although her time in the UK means she can adapt and work effectively in both cultures Chinese might not like her for that. She felt they would consider her to have too many opinions (this is discussed in more detail in Section 6.4.4).

Bamber (2014) observed similar findings that suggested Chinese employers were starting to become wary of employing students with overseas qualifications because: "they were potentially over-educated; they would make greater demands of the firm; they would be more expensive to recruit and retain; and they wouldn't fit into the Chinese management style." This idea that CIS return to their home country with a significantly different way of thinking is an interesting one and is discussed in greater depth in Chapter 6.

4.8 Status and Esteem

Liu (2016) argues that the pressure put on Chinese children to succeed academically up to the end of lower-secondary school (roughly age 15) is such that they are placed under considerable stress, find it difficult to pursue their own intrinsic interests, and fail to develop in an all-around way. As such they are unsure about their identity, their own sense of self. Huang (p7b2) hints at this when he talks about missing out on his placement opportunity because at the time he needed to apply for a position he says "I didn't even know who I am (was)". This is perhaps to be expected as adolescents are well-known for their unformed identities (Erikson, 1959). Richins (1999) points out that individuals are also likely to question their identity when faced with some form of disruption to their personal or social status and the transition from China to a UK HE environment would certainly represent such.

By the time CIS move to university parental pressure is reduced and there is an opportunity for them to start to develop their own sense of self, and this is clearly hinted at by the desire for freedom and independence that was expressed by many of the CIS interviewed, see Section 4.3. Holbrook (1999) suggests that consumers' choice of the products they consume and the consumption experiences they pursue form a central role in the development of their identities, providing them with a positive sense of self and enabling them to construct a successful persona in the eyes of others. In his Typology of Consumer Value (Holbrook, 1999) he refers to these as 'Esteem' and 'Status', although he acknowledges that the distinction between the two types of value is sometimes difficult to articulate. Richins (1999) similarly observes problems differentiating between the two value types, however there is a clear link between the intrinsic aspect of feeling good about oneself

(Esteem) and the extrinsic aspect of displaying that to achieve a certain position within society (Status).

Gaining their first taste of freedom is the first stage in their search for identity and within the other areas of value sought by CIS, as discussed earlier in this chapter, we see that esteem and status are further important areas of consideration in CISs' motivations to study overseas and in the activities they pursue while they are in the UK. Let us consider how each of the areas discussed in Sections 4.3 to 4.7 might feed into the search for status and esteem.

Let us consider our earlier discussion on the cultural experience that CIS seek, in particular those that might be described as hedonic, such as shopping for example. Solomon (1999) regards status as a motivational construct whereby individuals are influenced by a kind of basic biological drive to remove the gap between their perceived present state and some ideal state. He suggests that this need for status is most evident among the 'nouveau riches' who are most troubled by status anxiety.

In my interview with Gao (p18p5) we discussed the idea that China is a Confucian society and how that might influence how Chinese consume. Gao (p18p5) suggested that Confucian values weren't necessarily shared by all Chinese. She suggests that some rich families might not have a background in which Confucian values were evident, as she explains:

> "[I]f you are from, like, a rich family but it's like the family without a long history or like all of a sudden, because you have like a lot of houses and the houses, the price of the house going up overnight then you get rich. We call it "Baofahu", 'bao' is like suddenly, 'fa' is rich, 'hu' is like household…"

This is quite a common situation in China, especially in some of the larger Tier 1 cities, as property prices in China have risen considerably in recent years and much of Chinese household wealth is linked to real estate (Bloomberg News, 2019; “China property: lost in space,” 2019).

> "… this kind of families they might don't have that kind of Confucius values because their money, it seems their money

comes from nowhere, because of the marketing, because of the market, yeah. But, for example, some families they are well educated, they get rich because of their education and their hard work. And these kind of families will have that kind of very Confucian [values], like being nice to people. A little bit like the UK families here, like being nice to people and do not bully others."

Gao (p18p5) is referring here to two types of family: those that have made money rapidly, like the 'nouveau riches' to whom Solomon (1999) refers; and more traditional families that Gao (p18p5) suggests are more likely to hold Confucian values. Wu (p9p4) makes some similar observations when she refers to Confucian values as being more traditional and suggests that younger people try to reject these, as she explains when asked whether she is influenced by Confucian values:

> Wu (p9p4) - "Influence me? Of course, that is because my family, my mum learn GuoQu. My mother learn, how to say that, the Buddhism and Confucius, it's her interest. So my family is very traditional family and my mum ask me to study it too, it was a hard life when I was a child. But it give me a complete influence in my study now. It's also based on very traditional philosophy from Kong [Kongzi - Confucius], from Dao [Daoism].
>
> Interviewer - For you? What do you think about Chinese in general?
>
> Wu (p9p4) - I don't think so. Because my friends around me, some of them, even some of them reject the traditional culture."
>
> Interviewer - When you say they reject it, you mean they understand it, they understand what it is about but they don't want to do it?"
>
> Wu (p9p4) - Yeah, I think so. They want to be the new person, they want to be fashion[able] and the…yeah, I discuss this problem with my friends, like all the things for the Confucius but only used in school, only used in exams, and actually it didn't influence their lives."

Wu (p9p4) goes on to explain that in her opinion a family's place in society nowadays very much "depends on how much money you have" and being from a family with money "gives you a good opportunity to have a good chance to receive the good education" and *"to see the world"*. Huang (p7b2) suggests children of such families, referred to as

Fuerdai, or *second rich*, perhaps make up 40-50% of CIS and like to use the substantial allowances they receive from their parents on shopping trips to places like Bicester Village (refer to Section 4.5.1 for further details). In some instances those shopping trips are perhaps also at the behest of family, as Guo (p16p1.5) explains when he talks about his experience of being tasked to buy a very specific pair of handbags by his parents (see Section 4.5.1).

We might also consider the associations with football as another way in which CIS try to form their identity through consumption. Some of the participants viewed football merely as a way of gaining some intercultural experience, for example with Ma (p13p2) & Zhu (p14m2) attending football matches as a way of taking in the atmosphere. However, others seemed to embrace football as a consumption experience, as a platform from which they might communicate things about their identity and the groups for which they wish to belong (Dixon, 2016). For example with Liu (p4b1) and her friend for whom football played a much bigger role in their time within the UK through their link to Manchester City and the frequent visits they made to watch games as season ticket holders. Similarly for Guo (p16p1.5) who expressed an affiliation with Manchester United. It is perhaps notable that none of the participants expressed an affiliation for any of the local, lower league level clubs.

Another hedonic area in which status and esteem play an underlying role is related to the desire to travel. Kristensen (2013) suggests that for many younger Chinese exercising free movement through travel is a common way of displaying wealth and distinguishing oneself. The very fact that they are able to spend time in the UK is one way that CIS are able to do this. They further enhance this through more authentic types of travel within the UK and by using the UK as a base from which they can visit many other countries within Europe and beyond as was discussed in Section 4.5.3.

A number of participants referenced 'British' culture as a factor in their choosing to study in the UK and it is interesting that Gao (p18p5) likens

Chinese families from well-educated backgrounds, those that hold Confucian values, as being "a little bit like the UK families here". Wang (p1m1) makes a similar, but more colourful reference, to the British:

> "I feel the [British] people they are high education, they [do] not shout in public. For me it is rather different, cause even the dogs (Wang (p1m1) laughs a little) they look like high education, because they never shout, in the train or bus, they can be quiet, everything, I feel good here."

This aesthetic appeal of Britishness that was discussed in Section 4.5.4 seems to hold some form of status value (Holbrook, 1999) around which CIS seem to wish to link their identity.

Apart from the hedonic value (Holbrook, 1999) CIS seek there is much about status and esteem (Holbrook, 1999) attached to the qualifications aspect of value. As discussed in Section 2.3.4.2 there is a belief that the education system in Western countries is in some ways superior to that in China (Altbach, 2004b; Azmat et al., 2013; Bamber, 2014; Barnes, 2007; M. Li & Bray, 2007; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; Wu, 2014). For Chinese there is still a significant amount of value to be found in a formal education although today the emphasis is perhaps more on the social status, good jobs, and high salaries to which this translates (Griffiths, 2012). The value of a qualification as a social status is perhaps best evidenced by Zhao (p8p4) who is nearing the end of her PhD. Zhao (p8p4) returned to China after previously studying in the UK but found it difficult to secure a decent full time job, a problem that many Chinese graduates currently encounter. This is partly because there is little demand for her subject area, linguistics and teaching Chinese as a foreign language, in her hometown and due to strong competition for related jobs in bigger cities like Beijing and Shanghai. As such she chose to return to the UK to study for her PhD but is still unsure this will help her secure a job when she again returns to China, as she explains:

> "[I]f I stay in my hometown [I may have] no job, [to] just stay at home and [be a] housewife is not what I want, I don’t want to be a housewife, I want to… maybe when I graduate, when I finish my PhD I still cannot find a job, that’s possible.

At least I'm not… [won't] regret, I get my PhD and that's the end, no matter what the future [is] like I'm a doctor (laughs)."

There is a clear link here between holding a PhD and the type of value that Holbrook (1999) links to status and esteem but there is also a significant financial cost associated with attaining this type of qualification, especially for Zhao (p8p4) who has the additional cost associated with her husband and child also staying in the UK while she studies. However, these costs are covered for her:

"… because my parents are just thinking, their opinion is 'you do whatever you like'. Actually, they never expect me to be famous or to be a professor or something like… they just think, because I am the only child in my family, so they just think "if you are happy then that is fine, if you are not happy how can we help you?"

It would appear that for Zhao (p8p4) and her family the financial cost associated with her studies is outweighed by other factors. Baudrillard (1998, P. 76-77), writing about the consumer society we now live in, suggested that incomes will lose their value as distinctive criteria and that more subtle criteria will be used as measures of social hierarchy, for example the type of work and responsibility, level of education and culture. For Zhao (p8p4) income is not her major concern, her family appears to have sufficient wealth to support her while she studies in the UK. What is more important for her is that she is not only a housewife or a low level worker. Regardless of what her studies may or may not bring they will at the very least enable her to use the title 'Dr'.

4.9 Sacrifices

So far in this chapter I have discussed some of the different benefits that CIS seek from their overseas study experience. However, Woodall, Hiller, and Resnick, (2014) suggest that consideration of the sacrifices is also important in order to get a meaningful understanding of student value in higher education. As previously discussed in Chapter 2, Huber et al. (2001) suggest a number of costs to be considered when evaluating the "perceived customer value" of a product and these include "monetary costs; time costs; learning costs; emotional costs; and, cognitive and physical effort coupled with financial, social, and psychological risk". I will therefore discuss some of these in this next section.

4.9.1 Monetary Costs

With regards to monetary cost one of the key issues to consider is that the money for tuition appears predominantly to come from CIS' families rather than CIS' own pockets. This is of course to be expected for students of this age and would be typical of many students throughout the world. However, there are additional costs associated with study in another country and the overall cost of studying in the UK is therefore considerably more expensive for CIS than studying back home in China. Whilst many participants suggested that this cost was affordable the fact that a UK Master's degree is only one year, compared with two years in places like Australia and the US, was a significant factor in their choice of destination, as Li (p2m1) suggests when discussing why Chinese choose to come to the UK:

> "[Study] here is really short compare to other countries and students don't need to learn another language. And most girl think the UK is good for shopping, more fashionable than any other country, yeah because girls like to be pretty and the living expenses or the tuition fee they can afford because one year is about £30,000 for Chinese family so they can afford this because the Chinese people become richer than before. This is what most family can afford, so they choose the UK."

This type of family support is consistent with Hofstede et al.'s (2010) suggestion that families from collectivist cultures will 'cover the expenses of sending one member to get a higher education' on the basis that it will likely lead to a better paid job.

Not all families are able to afford the expense of an overseas education and some are here only because they are able to access scholarships, however these would appear to represent a minority. Guo (p16p1.5) for example is studying here on a scholarship but feels that most of the other Chinese students he sees are from wealthy families:

> "To be honest I think most Chinese students, [the] majority Chinese students, [that] come to Sheffield for undergraduate degree are from relatively rich family in China. So, you know, err… the expense here, one year maybe 300,000 RMB [roughly £35,000 at the time of interview] so it's quite expensive for normal family in China, so most students, majority students come here because they have money. They have, to be honest I often think their study is not so good and so they have to study abroad, and the time limit in UK is much shorter than in China. For undergraduate it [is] maybe 3 years in UK, in China at least 4 years. For Master 1 year there but at least 2 or 3 years in China."

4.9.2 Time Costs

The UK's shorter time requirement seems favourable as it reduces the costs associated with study. There was also the suggestion that for some students being able to study for only one year on a Master's programme was more efficient as it allowed them to get into work much quicker, as Xu (p11p5) suggests:

> "I think some people do have the view that, because they can get the degree much quicker… I've met some of the students here and they say the reason I chose to come to the UK to study is because the master is just cost one year to study so I can just spend one year to get the master degree and then go back to work."

This desire for an early completion of study and quick return to work does appear to be significant for Hu (p15m1), although as she acknowledges here she does consider herself different from most other CIS:

> "Actually, I just talk about just err… because I am different from other students right. For my experience I want save the time, yeah. UK's masters degree almost use 1 or 1 ½ years, so I think if I choose another place maybe 2 years or more."

However, Hu (p15m1) was the only participant who expressed a specific desire to find work quickly. Perhaps, significantly, this is because she was the only participant who stated that they were paying their own costs of studying in the UK. She explained that these costs were being covered by her prior earnings and while she was in the UK she was supplementing her previous income by acting as a Shopping Agent or *daigou* (Li et al., 2018; Parker, 2018) and through work as a Tour Guide for visiting Chinese.

For the majority of other participants time did not seem to be a significant sacrifice, in fact it seemed as though some of the participants appeared to be 'killing time' and following further analysis of this phenomena this developed into a major theme of this study which will be explored further in Chapter 7.

4.9.3 Emotional Costs

Previous studies have identified that stress and anxiety are issues that can affect international students during their overseas study experience (Chen, Yao, & Yan, 2014; Tian & Lowe, 2009; Townsend & Poh, 2008; M. Wang, 2016). Similar emotional and psychological sacrifices were also highlighted by a number of participants in this research. Although the shorter duration of UK programmes was discussed as being a significant benefit on one hand, the implications of that in terms of the stress and anxiety were pointed out on the other, as Zhao (p8p4) discusses:

> "In the one year course there is much stressful […] we just feel we need to finish [a] three years course in one year because in China we are not so intensive. So, we don't have… it's not what I expected, I think I will be free I can travel to France, to Europe and to anywhere I like. But actually, I didn't go anywhere, I didn't have time."

This is a very revealing quote from Zhao (p8p4) which seems to highlight the extent to which the non-academic value of studying overseas seems to overshadow the academic for some CIS. It is also possible that the difference in intensity is exacerbated by a difference in support, or arguably a difference in supervision as Zhu (p14m2) suggests: *"In China… in senior school parents and teachers push them"*. However, in the UK she feels that some students do not want to work hard and as a result some of them turn to less legitimate ways to complete their studies:

> "[N]ot everyone will do it or want to do it. And they say "I don't need to do it, don't need to spend this time." There is

> one way to help them, just give money, someone to work for you and write some papers. It’s a simple way, you can’t work hard, you can’t think, you can’t give idea… [T]hey can’t work hard, they just want to play and they have enough money."

Unfortunately, this type of attitude has been supported by the growing number of 'Assignment Mills' propagating the increase in episodes of contract cheating (Medway, Roper, & Gillooly, 2018).

Another emotional and psychological sacrifice that has previously been identified (M. Wang, 2016) and that participants discussed was homesickness. Sometimes this related to the general environment in which they were used to living and particularly to the difference between the relative quiet of the UK compared to the hustle and bustle of some of the big Chinese cities, as Sun (p12p3) explains:

> "In Beijing you can see a lot of people and everywhere is crowded. In [the] UK [it is] much different. For me that is better but if I live here for a long time I feel a little bit bored about this because everywhere is empty and I kind of miss that crowded people."

This quote echoes earlier referenced comments by Wang (p1m1) and Li (p2m1) who suggested that some CIS don't like to be in the UK and that many preferred shopping or parties. It is these CIS who perhaps miss the many such opportunities and distractions that modern China now presents.

Whilst homesickness can sometimes relate to the general environment at other times this can refer more specifically to family, as Luo (p20p5) discusses:

> "I have really happy family, my parents really, really love me and my grandparents pay a lot of attention and I have really good aunties and uncles and my cousins, they are so nice, so I miss them."

Sun (p12p3) appears to share similar feelings. Although he is near to the end of his PhD he will stay in the UK for a few more years as a research associate as he feels it is important to have more experience. However, he will then return to China *"because my parents are in China. That's my* *home. I miss my home, every day."* The length of time spent in the country is clearly significant here. Xu (p11p5) suggests that the longer you are in the UK the more you will miss your hometown. She compares her own experience with those of her Masters degree classmates who have now all returned home to China:

> "And because a lot of my master classmates they say oh "I really miss [the] UK, I really want to go back", but no one comes back. Maybe [in] some [ways] it is because of the reality, they have their own job, but I think maybe, just my own idea, maybe if you adjust to the environment you will miss it. But I told them that if you stayed in the UK for a long time, like me, maybe you [will] not like the country as much as you think. It's not that you don't like it any more but you will face a lot of problems, you will have bad experience sometimes. So maybe you will not like the country, you will miss your hometown maybe at that time."

Perhaps these bad experiences are to do with the difficulties CIS sometimes face connecting with local people. Liu (p4b1), when asked about bad experiences of her time in the UK, hinted that she sometimes encountered problems in the street. When prompted she explained *"like [people] speak very loud and shout. But it seldom happens. I can forget it. I can forget it. It's alright."* She seemed reluctant to elaborate on such experiences. Yang (p6b1) shared an experience which clearly caused her some upset:

> "One day something strange [that happened] to me is when I sit next to a foreign student, I don't know where she come from, and sit next to her but she immediately stand up [and] change to another side seat. I don't know why! It's [because] my smell is bad? I don't know".

The effect of cultural differences on the experience of CIS was significant, particularly in respect of how value was created and this is something that will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 6.

4.10 Concluding Discussion and Chapter Findings

From the interview data I have identified a number of value types which CIS seek from their overseas study experience. These areas include freedom and independence, cultural and hedonic experience, a UK qualification, and increased employment opportunities. I argue that those areas of value subsequently feed into a need for status and esteem and it is these two value types that represent the key value sought by many CIS. These findings develop the literature on the value of higher education (Gallarza et al., 2017; Ng & Forbes, 2009; Woodall et al., 2014), and specifically the call by Woodall et al. (2014) for further segmentation of home or international students to reveal further cultural or socio-economic insights. The findings also develop the literature on international student mobility (e.g. Altbach & de Wit, 2017; Azmat et al., 2013; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002, 2012).

Having identified the value, or benefits, sought by CIS I also analysed the interview data to establish what sacrifices CIS appeared to be making. There were three main areas of sacrifice identified: monetary costs; time costs; and, the emotional/psychological cost associated with CIS's time spent in the UK. However, the extent to which each of these 'sacrifices' affected participants differed. Whilst monetary costs were noted as a potential sacrifice in nearly all cases the costs associated with CIS's experience were covered by their parents, therefore the extent to which this might be considered a sacrifice for CIS themselves is called into question.

The 'time costs' associated with their time in the UK is also called into question. Although a number of participants referred to the benefits of the UK offering shorter undergraduate and post-graduate courses only a few linked this to finding employment quicker and most linked this to monetary cost, something which would be covered by their parents. In actual fact the majority of participants seemed to express no particular desire to complete their education and move quickly into employment, many expressed a desire to continue their education and to some extent even appeared to be 'killing time'. This was a very significant finding which led to the inclusion in my study of the concept of liminality and van Gennep's (1960) theory on ‘The Rites of Passage’ which will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 7.

Bauman (2000, p. 117) suggests that something is only of value if sacrifices are made in its appropriation. If the sacrifices made by CIS are minimal should we therefore consider the value that they receive to be minimal also? And what about those who are making a significant financial sacrifice, CIS' parents, what benefit do they gain?

It is my contention that that there is also status and esteem value to be gained by CIS' parents in having their children studying overseas. This might be through access to consumption opportunities facilitated by their children, as in the case of Guo (p16p1.5) and his purchase of luxury handbags to order for his parents. This might also be through a type of vicarious consumption, something which (Veblen, 1899, p.55) identified in his study of the leisure class whereby the wealthy express their status through other connected individuals, including their children:

> "Many of these gain, and also many of the other aristocracy of less degree, have in turn attached to their persons a more or less comprehensive group of vicarious consumers in the persons of their wives and children, their servants, retainers etc."

As Guo (p16p1.5) explained (see section 4.2.2.) he was encouraged to study abroad as his parents had many friends who had sent their children overseas and had told them what a good experience it was. Perhaps this was their friends way of showing that they could afford to send their children overseas. Perhaps their children had also shipped home luxury handbags with which they could impress their friends. Perhaps they had explained how their children had travelled around Europe, been up the Eiffel Tower, marvelled at the Mona Lisa. Holbrook (1999) explains that the value of a status act does not fully 'register' if others don't know the act has been performed. The sharing of children's experience relating to their overseas study is a status act.

For Baudrillard (2017, p. 79-81) status is the social essence and "status by birth, a status of grace and excellence" is the ideal. He suggests that although this status is unattainable by the lower and middle classes they might instead find *salvation by consumption* and attain status by rising up the social ladder that is the structured social field of consumption. Perhaps then, for many of the 'new rich' families in China that Wu (p9p4) and Gao (p18p5) discuss - families that have possibly made significant sums of money in the 'one-way bet' Chinese real estate market that has seen prices skyrocket in recent years (Bloomberg News, 2019) - the sacrifices associated with sending their children to study overseas are weighed against the benefits of the social salvation that such consumption might bring. These are interesting questions that emerged during my study and are explored in more detail the following chapters.

This contention supports previous research which suggests that overseas education for Chinese is today seen as less about the good jobs and higher salaries that it might bring and more for the social status and upward mobility that it can provide (e.g. Fong, 2011; Griffiths, 2012).

4.11 Chapter Summary

The aim of this chapter was to identify the value that CIS seek from their overseas study experience. From the data collected a total of seven different value types emerged. I proposed that two of these, status and esteem, were of a higher order than the other types identified and were linked to a search for identity which many young Chinese find difficult due to the very structured nature of their early childhood. I argued that the other five value types identified - freedom/independence; cultural experience; hedonic experience; qualification; and, employability – were linked to that search for identity through status and esteem.

A number of sacrifices linked to overseas study were also identified within this chapter, however it was argued that these sacrifices were outweighed by the benefits gained, particularly in respect to status, not only for CIS but also for their parents.

In the next chapter I will discuss how the value that CIS seek is created.

Chapter 5 On Value Creation

5.1 Chapter Introduction

This is the second of four chapters which set out my findings, each based around the conceptual framework introduced in Section 3.7.5 of Chapter 3. The previous chapter discussed the key areas of value that Chinese International Students (CIS) sought from their overseas study experience and highlighted some of the ways in which these were influenced by the socio-cultural environment from which they came. Some of these influences will be discussed further in this Chapter and also in more detail in Chapter 6. However, the main focus of this chapter is how the value that CIS seek, as identified in Chapter 4, is created.

In the literature review it was established that there were different theories as to how value is created. Of particular interest to this study are the competing views of Service Logic, with its emphasis on value facilitation and the view that value co-creation only takes place in the joint customer-provider sphere (Grönroos, 2017; Grönroos & Ravald, 2011; Grönroos & Voima, 2013), and Service Dominant (S-D) Logic which argues that all value is co-created (Lusch & Vargo, 2006; Vargo & Lusch, 2004, 2008, 2016). Also of relevance to this study is the extent to which interaction and engagement, key factors affecting value co-creation, are influenced by cultural difference as suggested by Rod et al. (2014).

The chapter is divided into four sections and these relate to Vargo and Lusch's (2016, p. 7) 'narrative and process of S-D logic' (see Section 2.2.5.1 of the Literature Review) which suggests that value co-creation is a process in which actors are involved in resource integration and service exchange which is enabled and constrained by institutions and institutional arrangements. The first section discussed in this chapter relates to the actors involved in CIS' value creation. These are the main actors as identified through my interviews with participants, and I discuss some of the difficulties and challenges CIS face in their interactions with these actors. The second section relates to resource integration and highlights how both operant and operand resources (Vargo & Lusch, 2008, 2016) are integral to the value creation process within which CIS seek to create the value identified in Chapter 4. The third section is concerned with service exchange, within which resources are integrated, and introduces three factors which are significant in the extent to which they enable or constrain value co-creation. The fourth section discusses how institutions, particularly HEIs and the institutional nature of culture, enable or constrain value creation, and how they form part of the value co-creation ecosystem within which CIS exist. Finally, I end this chapter with a discussion of the different views on value creation as posited by both Service logic and S-D logic and reflect on the contextual nature of value creation.

This chapter addresses the second research question: RQ2 - How is the value that Chinese International Students (CIS) seek created? In Section 3.7.5 a Conceptual Framework was introduced which provides an overview of my findings and which each of my findings chapters contributes to. This chapter relates to the area of the Conceptual Framework coloured YELLOW, see Figure 19 below.

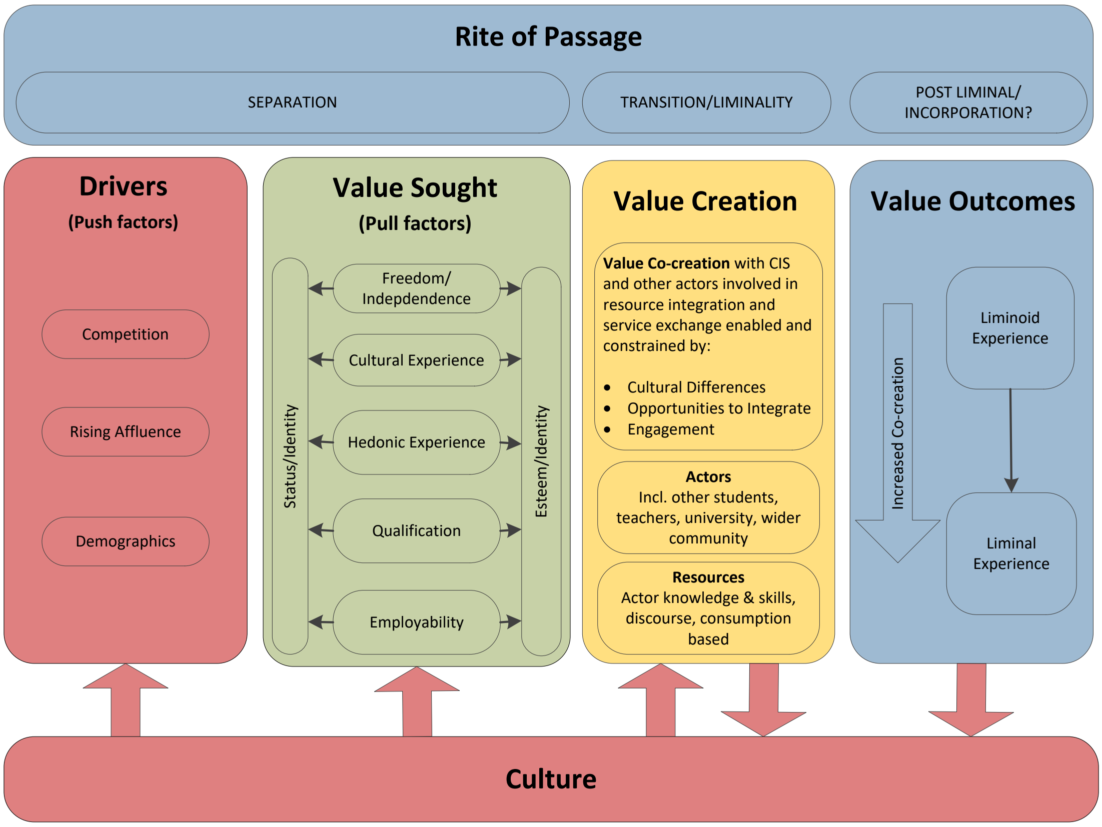

Figure 19 - Conceptual Framework - Chapter 5 Relates to Yellow Area
Source: Author

5.2 Actors

Within S-D logic the term 'actors' is used to refer to all parties that are involved in some form of exchange and replaces labels such as 'consumers', 'producers', and 'suppliers' (Lusch & Vargo, 2014). During the initial stages of my data collection I became concerned that there was very little evidence emerging of specific organisations that CIS co-create value with. Indeed, for many participants their interaction with other parties was in many respects quite limited. However, over the course of my interviews a number of actors were identified by participants predominantly within and around the higher education environment in which they studied, for example fellow students and teachers. Whilst this might not seem surprising, the fact that there were few outside of this environment highlighted difficulties that CIS found interacting in their wider socio-cultural surroundings. In this section I discuss each of the actors identified in turn and provide empirical observations on CISs' interactions with them.

5.2.1 Fellow Students

Previous research has suggested that international students, particularly Chinese, find interaction with local students difficult (Bamber, 2014; Montgomery & McDowell, 2009; Tian & Lowe, 2009; Townsend & Poh, 2008) and these findings were consistent with the experience of many of this study's participants, as Chen (p5b1) discusses:

> "… it is difficult to communicate with the local people. It's hard for us, me or my classmates, to communicate with our British classmates. So, in the class we sit together and they sit together. When the classes are over we just go back [home], there is no time to communicate or exchange our ideas or something."

Liu (p4b1) has similar feelings, suggesting that it is difficult to make friends with local people and that it is almost as though there are two separate groups within her environment:

> " I don't have local friends. No, it's like two circles. We don't talk too much. We have [some] communication when we have class. Normally there is no communication."

These are typical of comments made by most participants and for many some of the difficulties in connecting with locals appear to be related to language as Liu (p4b1) suggests:

> "… when I study in [the] UK I don't have strong passion on making friends with local persons because of language. I still think I have very poor English, it's hard to communicate. I'm afraid I may say [something] in wrong way."

Liu (p4b1) seems to blame herself for part of the problem, suggesting that it is because her English is not good enough. Sometimes communication is complicated further by difficulties understanding local accents, as Zhou (p10m1) explains:

> "For Yorkshire people, for Sheffield, the local accent is not very easy to understand for a foreigner. [In] my group there

> is a Sheffield girl and she always talks too fast, I can't understand what she said.”

Whilst language itself is described by many of the CIS as an issue, this is further compounded by cultural differences. Liu (p4b1) explained that her biggest problem was that she did not understand what local students were talking about. When asked to explain whether this was due to the language or the culture, she replied:

> ”[The] Culture. If we have class they sometimes will talk politics or celebrity. We have no idea about it, it's hard to express for us.”

This lack of shared cultural knowledge leaves CIS with little common ground on which they might build relationships. Whilst this cultural knowledge, and improved language skills, could be developed through greater interaction many participants stated that they often lacked opportunities to interact with home students as Li (p2m1) suggests:

> "I don’t get many chances to speak to local people, they are only one British in our class, only one. We have 24, 25 students, only one [British].

Even when there are opportunities, as with the one British student in Li's (p2m1) class, CIS are sometimes reluctant to take advantage of these. Li (p2m1) explains that she is nervous to talk with her British classmate as she feels he has "strict views" on certain things. When asked to expand on this Zhang (p3m2) describes a situation when she and Li (p2m1) were at a party and the British student did not like some of the music that was playing. She explains:

> "When we play some music, yes, he doesn't like it… "can we change it?" [he said]. In China we don't say that we just both listen and wait for it to pass [Li (p2m1) & Zhang (p3m2) both laugh]… and we don't say it very directly, if we say it directly some people in China will say it's so rude and not polite."

From this example, the 'strict views' to which Li (p2m1) refers are perhaps not so much strict in the sense we might use the term but more so in respect of how he expresses his views in a more direct way than is culturally acceptable in China.

For CIS that have been in the UK for some time we might expect that they will have had more opportunity to interact. However, for Zhao (p8p4), who has been in the UK more than 4 years, this does not seem to be the case and for her things do not appear to have got any easier despite the length of time spent in the country:

> "… a general problem for most Chinese people, their friends circle is very limited and it is so hard for us to get involved in local people's lives. It's hard to have friends we can talk [to] every day... in my department, in my living space most of them are Chinese, and my teacher is Chinese, although we speak English in the class their pronunciation and speech they are Chinese so that's the main reason for us. We cannot improve a lot."

The number of CIS at UK universities, and particularly on certain courses, does appear to be an issue that affects the degree to which CIS interact with non-Chinese and this is something that is further discussed in Section 5.2.4.2.

5.2.2 Teachers

Teaching staff can have a significant influence on the experience of CIS (Bamber, 2014; Santini et al., 2017; Simpson & Tan, 2008; Townsend & Poh, 2008) and this was evidenced by the responses of a number of participants. In particular, Liu (p4b1), when asked if she has had any particularly good experiences with people in the UK, singles out her teacher:

> "[He] is [a] very, very good one. I think he is the English gentleman what I think, very typical. Gentle, nice… knowledgeable."

Although she refers to her teacher as knowledgeable it appears from our conversation that it is more her teacher's manner that she likes as this fits with the 'polite British' stereotype she arrived in the UK with. Her feelings are similar to those shared by Chen (p5b1) who referred to her experience with one of her tutors when she first arrived in the UK, the tutor's job was to support student's during this early period. She describes her tutor as a "very, very kind lady" who she still keeps in touch with even though she is now in a different city.

The influence of teaching staff and tutors, particularly in the early days of CIS' time in the UK, is clearly significant. Hu (p15m1), when talking about one of her pre-sessional tutors discusses how it had a positive effect on her confidence:

> "… the centre's teacher also encourages you, how to say something, and [they] always say you are good student, don't worry about that, because before I always worry that I cannot pass exams, that I need to go home. So yes, this [initial] one year gives me more confidence."

When Wang (p1m1) is describing one of her most memorable experiences, a trip to the seaside as part of her induction, she discusses how she went there with "my teacher and friends, a big group… I feel so happy". These examples are consistent with previous research that highlights the extent to which teaching and supervisory staff play an important role in student satisfaction (Santini et al., 2017). Teaching staff also play a significant role in helping students to integrate with their fellow students and this is something that continues from their early arrival and pre-sessional type activities into their transition to their degree level studies. Unfortunately, the extent to which they are able to facilitate integration is not always sufficient as Yang (p6b1) explains:

> "I think teachers try to [mix students] at the beginning but I think it [does] not work. UK students talk with UK students and Chinese students with Chinese students."

Yang (p6b1) feels that teachers give up trying to mix students together because it is too difficult. She also suggests that some teachers don't always know how to deal with Chinese students and that there seems to be a general feeling that language is an issue when perhaps it is more complicated than that:

> "… some teachers, most I think, most teacher in the UK think Chinese students don't speak in class, don't like to answer, to ask questions. I think sometimes it's not [the case]… we need time to think [about] what [the] teacher said and what

> they have told us. So this takes times I think. And when we know what [the] teacher want to talk [about with] us then I think the time has passed. Sometimes I think not all the words we have recognised [encountered] before so sometimes we need to check the dictionary and [our] phones to explain that."

As I discussed previously in the Section 5.2.1, it appears to be a combination of language and cultural issues that inhibit collaboration between CIS and home students. It would seem that similar issues are also present in the relationship between teachers and CIS. Yang (p6b1), upon receiving a significantly lower score than she anticipated in one of her assessments, explained how she felt her low score was likely due to misinterpretation of linguistic and cultural differences. She was unhappy that she was not able to get the opportunity to explain her way to thinking. This, in turn, had led her to question why international students had to pay significantly higher tuition fees if they were unable to access what she felt was a basic level of support for such students.

Some of the participants who were studying at PhD level seemed to have more individual interaction with their supervisors, but then this is to be expected given the more one-to-one nature of such relationships. A number of them spoke specifically about the benefits of their interaction. Ma (p13p2) talked about how he "learned a lot of knowledge from my supervisor and from my colleagues" and Wu (p9p4) described how she specifically wanted to work with a British supervisor because she wanted to know 'a different way of thinking'. It is interesting to note, however, that Wu (p9p4) does not know whether her supervisor speaks Chinese despite the subject of her thesis being Chinese film. When asked about this during our conversation she replied:

> "I'm not sure, she said she can read it but I'm not sure if she can speak it. I don't know how many languages she can speak."

Ordinarily, knowing how many languages somebody speaks might not be unusual but not to know if your supervisor speaks your own language, a language particularly relevant to your chosen subject area, seems to suggest that the relationship is not as close as it might be. However, whether this is because of any cultural differences or just because of different individual supervision styles is difficult to say. Wu (p9p4) did appear to develop a good relationship with her Masters level supervisor, as I discuss later in Section 5.3.2.

Guo (p16p1.5) also discusses how he is able to learn a lot from his supervisor, who he describes as “quite famous in our field” and indicates how he was a deciding factor in his coming to the UK. However, he goes on to explain… “Of course, since my supervisor is from China the proportion of Chinese students in our lab will be higher”. Guo's (p16p1.5) supervisor's fame might therefore not be the only reason he came to the UK and we can only wonder whether he would have been able to learn as much from a supervisor who was not Chinese.

5.2.3 University Support Services

Universities provide specific support and activities for international students in order to help them integrate and to make the most of their time in the UK. These activities are provided both through the university itself and through students unions and can include activities like conversation clubs, which encourage students of different nationalities to communicate and share their experiences and trips to various different regional and national locations to enable students to travel and experience different parts of the UK. Whilst there does appear to be a good general awareness of these types of activities among participants the extent to which they are taken up differs considerably between them.

Huang (p7b2) is particularly active and likes to get heavily involved:

> “I have been involved in loads of university activities and events because I don’t just want to stay with the Chinese people. If I just stay with the Chinese people, if I just stay and play computer games every day, get a relationship, what’s my purpose here?”

Whilst Huang (p7b2) sees these types of activities as a good way of experiencing the UK culture. He also wanted to share his own culture with others and was instrumental in setting up a Chinese Interest Society through his Students Union. A few other participants also showed an interest in sharing their culture with others, including Wang (p1m1) who was also fairly active through her Students Union in terms of participating in events and activities:

> "We've got, every Wednesday, the conversation club for international students, we do some quiz, and we have got workshops. That's interesting… I've been there many times, not many Chinese but a little."

Wang (p1m1) has also attended some of the university organised trips, she recalls a trip to Cambridge that she particularly enjoyed, although she explains that she now prefers to arrange her own travel. This seems consistent with the responses from a number of other participants, like Wu (p9p4) and Gao (p18p5) for instance, who both talk about attending such trips during their initial time in the UK but now also seem to prefer to make their own arrangements.

Wang's (p1m1) comment about there not being many Chinese involved in conversation club type activities seems to link with a general consensus from participants that they do not necessarily find value in these activities or prefer to do their own thing. Zhang (p3m2) is aware of the Conversation Clubs but does not attend them. When asked why she replies:

> "I don't want [to]. And they just do the 'Bingo Game!' and just get to know each other."

Zhang (p3m2) laughs when she refers to the 'Bingo Game' and her tone seems to suggest that she finds this a little beneath her. She goes on to explain that she does not find these types of session useful and just prefers to go home after class. This is a similar response to a number of other participants, including Chen (p5b1) who stated that she was:

> "… not interested in social, in these activities. I like to go home and do what I like to do. I like to relax, relaxing thing. But Students Union provide lots of chance and lots of activities, it's obvious if you see the e-mails, lots of e-mails."

Chen (p5b1) does not expand on what she means by 'relax' but interestingly uses the term 'lazy' to describe herself. This term was also used by Zhou (p10m1) when she explained how she had attended a conversation club a couple of times but then decided that she would no longer attend purely because she was lazy and wanted to stay at home. Although both of these Participants used the term 'lazy' it is possible that they were just using this as an expression to avoid saying that the activities were not useful to them or that they found them difficult.

Li (p2m1) also started using one of the university initiatives, a mentoring scheme whereby newly arriving international students are allocated mentors, either home students or internationals who have been at the university for at least one year already, however she did not complete the program, as she explains:

> "I attend something similar to this [conversation club] but it's not to get you to talk to local people it's the global, it's from different countries. They want you to make friends from different countries. But I think it's not useful for me because I think the purpose for this scheme is to help you to be familiar with life here because the students you will talk with have already been here for 4 or 5 months so they just want them to tell you how to live here, how to go shopping, how to buy something or how to study here."

This seems like a very helpful way of helping CIS to settle when they first arrive in the UK and an opportunity for them to gain some intercultural experience. However, Li (p2m1) seemed to be disappointed that the student she was paired with was not from the UK, which might have provided her a better insight into the culture of local people. Also for newly arriving CIS an easier way of getting to know the local environment is often presented to them in the form of other CIS who have already been in the UK for some time, as Li (p2m1) goes on to explain:

> "But because when I came here I have already met some classmates even from different countries or some classmates like her [she is referring to the other interviewee, p#3] who has already been here for one year. So they have already taught me about something like this so I don't need the

> scheme so I just wrote an e-mail saying I want to be removed from this scheme to give the opportunity to other people."

In actual fact the scheme does aim to partner international students with local mentors but unfortunately the demand for local mentors is not met by a sufficient supply of local students wishing to participate in such schemes. This is similar with conversation club type activities which tend to be predominantly attended by international students rather than home students and is consistent with previous research that has identified a reluctance of home students to involve themselves in intercultural activities (e.g., Montgomery & McDowell, 2009; Tian & Lowe, 2009). It is perhaps partly for this reason why students such as Li (p2m1), arriving in the UK to learn about UK culture and meet local people, do not find sufficient value in such activities to continue attending.

5.2.4 Other actors

The actors discussed in the sections above were the main ones identified during participant interviews, however there were two other sets of actors that featured significantly in a number of interviews: older local people and fellow Chinese. I will discuss each of these in the following sections.

5.2.4.1 Older local people

Whilst most participants seemed to find the local people generally quite friendly there were a number of instances that stood out in participants minds involving those of older generations. Huang (p7b2) describes how he had met many older people in the street who she describes as being "really friendly to me". Li (p2m1) talks about her experience talking with an older member of the public when travelling by train. She describes the man as being somebody of her grandfathers age who started a conversation by asking where she was from and where she was going. When asked what she had learned from her conversation she remarked:

> "… that life can be really, really different. For example, my grandpa and grandma's generation prefer to stay at home and

> talk with neighbours and do some little work out [exercise] with the neighbours."

Li (p2m1) is referring here to the use of communal exercise yards and the activities that many older Chinese do in their local communities which is very different from how the older generations in the UK pass time in their later years, as she goes on to explain:

> "… here it is totally different, they want to travel overseas to see different countries, they have a regular holiday with different people to [the] same place. I know one couple they just go Turkey twice a year. Yeah, so different, totally different."

Xu (p11p5) had a similar experience where she met someone she described as a *"very old lady"* in a café:

> "… she is just curious about me and my friend and she said 'are you from China or somewhere' and she just said that she got married a long time ago and got divorced and now she just don't want to get married again but she has a boyfriend and they are very [happy], they stay together and she felt very happy and she said that I don't need to get married again, I really enjoy it."

These encounters seem to provide participants with a type of cultural experience that they might not otherwise be able to access, despite the academic and non-academic activities that universities provide. These brief encounters are like windows into the everyday life of local people that provide the type of detail CIS are unable to gain from within the university environment.

5.2.4.2 Fellow Chinese

Another significant type of actor, significant in so much as they reduce the interaction with others, are fellow Chinese. As Li (p2m1) pointed out when explaining why she stopped attending mentoring sessions, upon arrival she met a number of fellow Chinese who had already been at the university for a while and were already familiar with the local environment (see Section 5.2.3).

Many Chinese find themselves in classes that consist predominantly of other Chinese students and therefore have a network of potential new friends they can go shopping, travel and socialise with. There are also their existing family and friend networks back home with whom they can create value through personal shopping (daigou) activities (see Section 4.5.1).

5.3 Resources

As discussed in the literature review, Section 2.2.5.1, resources can be either operand or operant - with the former representing tangible resources acted upon by others and the latter tending to be intangible, often related to knowledge and skills, that act upon other resources (Vargo & Lusch, 2008, 2016).

A number of resources were identified as significant for value creation and due to the nature of some of the value sought, for example cultural experience and educational knowledge, much of which was itself intangible, the resources relating to that value creating activity were also intangible. These resources include the knowledge and skills possessed by many of the actors identified in the previous section but also discourses available to CIS within UK culture that do not exist in CIS' home culture, or are at least less prominent, and can be considered as operant resources. Other resources, for example those linked to some of the more hedonic type of value sought, take the form of more tangible resources and can be considered as operand resources. In the following section these resources are discussed in more detail.

5.3.1 Actors as resources

A number of the different type of value sought, as identified in Chapter 4, for example cultural experience, a qualification, and employability, are very much linked to the knowledge and skills possessed by certain actors that CIS encounter during their overseas study experience. Other students, teachers, and the general population play a significant role in enabling CIS to gain these types of value sought. However, the process by which this value is created does not always run smoothly, as we saw in Section 5.2, above. There are a number of factors that act to constrain this process and these are discussed in more detail in Section 5.4,

5.3.2 Discourse as resources

One of the key findings highlighted in Chapter 4 was the relationship between the value sought by CIS and how that related to status and esteem to support their identity. Burr (2015) suggests that identities are constructed through discourse yet there are a limited number of culturally available discourses on offer out of which individuals might fashion themselves. For some participants there was evidence that particular discourses, which have become more readily available to them during their time spent in the UK, were having a significant influence on their personal development. For example, Wu (p9p4) talked about how she had been unfamiliar with feminism prior to her time in the UK but that one of her supervisors was a feminist and as a result of their discussions she had become very interested in this area. As she explains:

> "[My] supervisor, she is a British, and she is old. She is retired… She is the first one told me about feminism. Because feminism and film is related closely, like the British film Suffragette, lots of films about feminism. She told me that because she's a feminist and she told me 20 years ago she is the only female to go into a meeting… she thought it was unequal because there was a man there said 'this room is for men, not for you' so, yeah, lots of influence from her."

I remarked to Wu (p9p4) that my understanding was that feminism was becoming more popular in China and asked if this was correct. She explained that:

> "Feminism in China is quite different from the western countries. Because China pay attention on the social status and class… we focus on the worker and maybe… farmer, like this. In western [countries] I think people prefer your personal identity, right. And they are different for men and women. In China I think this question is hidden under the class."

The differences that Wu (p9p4) talks about here might well be linked back to what Hofstede (1980) defines as a collectivist culture whereas many western societies exhibit more individualist tendencies. However, the key point here is that Wu (p9p4) is being exposed to, and informed by, a discourse that is not readily available to her in her own country.

Similarly, with a number of other female participants, whilst there might be less of an explicit link to feminism, the idea that women can enjoy more individual freedom and not, as Gao (p18p5) suggests, 'be pushed into a relationship by parents', is a well received and influential discourse on what life could be like. Xu (p11p5) also discusses the pressure put on Chinese women to get married and have children and links this to freedom of choice more generally:

> "… [in the UK] you can do whatever you want and also maybe the LGBT issues, because one of my close friends, she is a… could I say lesbian?"

I tell her she can, although I believe she is confirming that she is using the correct word here rather than asking if this is an acceptable term. She continues…

> "… I knew that issue when we were in the university [in China]… [but] she can't tell her parents about this issue… [even though] she has a girlfriend… because she is [the] only child in her family… but if you stay in the UK at least you will [be able to] say you are a lesbian… or [that] you can't get married."

Xu (p11p5) goes on to talk about how company HR departments are less likely to hire women who are not yet married as they believe at some point they will need time off to get married and have children. She compares this with her understanding of UK employment law, the protection that is given to pregnant employees, and the maternity leave and social welfare available. Although she is keen to return to China she remarks that what she will miss most about the UK is that a person is not judged so much.

A discourse can be considered as a frame of reference (Burr, 2015) and time spent in the UK provides CIS with new culturally embedded narratives, a type of operant resource, with which they can reframe their self and their life world (Helkkula et al., 2019). The new perspectives that are gained from this process can potentially have a significant effect on CIS' culture and this is something that is discussed in more detail in Chapter 6.

5.3.3 Consumption Based Activity Resources

There are a number of resources that are accessible to CIS through their consumption activities and these can be linked closely to some of the hedonic type of value highlighted in Section 4.5. For example, a number of participants discussed the benefits of the UK as a place where they could access goods that are unavailable in China or in the very least were available at a good price and guaranteed level of quality in the UK, for example cosmetics and luxury handbags. Often the latter being sourced not for the CIS themselves but for others, either as gifts for family and friends or purchased by CIS acting as personal shoppers, as what is known in China as Daigou (see Section 4.5.1).

Other participants referred to the benefits of the UK as a place where they are able to watch live football matches, particularly premier league matches with the likes of Manchester United or Manchester City. The latter being a regular destination for Liu (p4b1) and her friend who were season ticket holders (see Section 4.5.2).

Perhaps more significant than the other two areas were activities related to travel in which we might consider our national parks, the Peak District for example, a popular destination for many CIS, as a type of operand resource. We also saw how many CIS used the UK as a base from which to access Europe and the many attractions it offers those with the money and time to travel (see Section 4.5.3).

Whether it is shopping, football, or travel, these are all resource based activities that are only fully accessible to CIS because they are in the UK.

5.4 Service Exchange

According to S-D logic, service exchange involves the integration of resources by various actors which can be either enabled or constrained by institutions or institutional arrangements (Vargo & Lusch, 2016). From my interviews with participants three main factors emerged that have an effect on service exchange: cultural differences; opportunities to integrate; and, engagement. These three factors are discussed below.

5.4.1 Cultural Differences

As we saw in Section 5.2 a number of participants found it difficult to interact with other actors. Whilst in some instances this appeared to be due to language difficulties the extent to which cultural differences affected interaction was significant. A number of participants indicated that this was due to different communication styles, Wang (p1m1) stated that she felt she needed to communicate differently with people in the UK if she wanted to be understood:

> "…sometimes you have to speak very clearly to British people and then they can understand you. Otherwise they don't know your way of thinking. Sometimes I talk to British people and… [you] just [need to] say what to do, [explain] what's your objective. Because I think [when] I talk with Chinese people we don't target things very clearly."

Wang's (p1m1) statement nicely encapsulates the difference in communication styles between a high-context culture, like China, and low-context culture, like the UK (de Mooij, 2019, p. 52). In high-context cultures there is less need for explicit verbal communication as information flows more easily due to shared cultural heritage and symbols. In lower-context cultures verbal communication does need to be much more direct as Wang (p1m1) is suggesting is the case when she is communicating in the UK. It is this type of direct communication that Li (p2m1) and Zhang (p3m2) considered 'rude and not polite' when their British classmate remarked that he did not like the music that was playing at their party and asked if he could change it (see Section 5.2.1). When discussing this particular situation Zhang (p3m2) pointed out that what is "common sense in [the] UK is not common sense in China" and what she is referring to here is the fact that we have different frames of reference, different cultural understandings and different symbols around which we communicate.

As Liu (p4b1) pointed out (see Section 5.2.1), the UK has different politics and different celebrities and CIS are unable to understand discussions in which these are referenced. Popular culture differs significantly between the two nations and many CIS prefer to spend their time watching Chinese news or TV shows. These problems are exacerbated by the different ways in which many UK based students and CIS typically spend their leisure time. Huang (p7b2) explains how, unlike some other groups of university students, CIS do not enjoy socialising in pubs or clubs:

> "… the young generation just go to Karaoke, this is really cheap, they are doing karaoke like the pub here… and the club, do you realise the club in China is like a bit different, in China they might be doing a bit dirty business… I'm not sure I can mention that word, you know in China the club is totally different."

It is not clear what Huang (p7b2) means by 'dirty business' exactly, and I did not feel it necessary during the interview to ask him to expand on this, however it is clear from other participants that this is a type of establishment that CIS might initially avoid, Yang (p6b1) suggests that

> "… most Chinese students don't like to go to [the] pub... because in China we are not allowed… our parents don't like us to go to these kind of places. Because they don't like us to drink or do drugs… they think it is not a safe place for us."

Wang (p1m1) explains that young Chinese don't go to pubs very often because "it is not our culture," however she accepts that bars in the UK are different. Zhang (p3m2) agrees, she explains that "to drink is really dangerous in China for Chinese girls. So we think different things. But when we come here it's just fine". Li (p2m1) explains how she was initially worried about how not liking pubs might affect her ability to meet people:

> "… because I know the people here like pubs but I don't so sometimes before I came here I'm afraid if I can make friends with local people I don't like this so maybe a little worried about this. But, actually when I [am] here I think… I enjoy pubs. Yes, in pubs [you] can chat with each other and friends, meet new people and I like some low alcohol drinks such as Cider because it's a little sweet and we don't have it in China so I like it."

These cultural differences in ways of socialising can limit the extent to which CIS are able to integrate. Although Li (p2m1) shows it is possible to adapt to these different circumstances. It is also possible that this might turn out to be only a temporary adaptation to gain some cultural experience as we saw with Ho (p17p2) who watched football games in the pub for the first few months after he arrived but then later watched them from home where he felt more comfortable, see Section 4.5.2.

Ho (p17p2) did make an attempt at integration though and he provides a good example of how some CIS really do wish to improve their use of English and their knowledge of UK culture but find it difficult to integrate in order to do this. Despite being surrounded by numerous English speaking natives he finds it easier to pay for an English teacher to talk with him on a weekly basis, as he explains:

> "… some of my colleagues are Brits [but] our communication is just limited to our research, we don't have more communication in the real life… and [with my English teacher] we talk [about] something more regarding to life, like that, but our relationship is also based on the [fact that] he's a teacher and I'm a student, I have to pay for him every week. Apart from him I don't have too many interactions with Brits."

What we are seeing here is a prime example of how value-in-exchange plays a significant part of the co-creation process. Although Rod et al (2014) suggest that value-in-exchange might take place instead of value co-creation, as Vargo et al. (2008) argue, it is sometimes a necessary activity to facilitate value creation when resources are not normally available.

5.4.2 Opportunities to Integrate

There were two significant areas in which opportunities to integrate effected the value co-creation process, these were class composition and living arrangements, and these are discussed in the following sections.

5.4.2.1 Class composition

Many of the participants reported that there was a predominance of Chinese students in their classrooms. Wang (p1m1) stated that on her course "most of the students were Chinese", although she explained that she did not mind this as she got on well with most of them. Ho (p17p2) explained that 6 of the 10 people on his course were Chinese and Zhou (p10m1) suggested that approximately half of her course were fellow Chinese. Li (p2m1) and Zhang (p3m2) had only 1 UK classmate out of more than 20 although as Li (p2m1) explained "he does the part time study so he isn't very present in the class". Opportunities to integrate with UK classmates are sometimes limited within classes as previously discussed in Section 5.2.1.

The extent to which classes are dominated by Chinese depends to some extent on the level of the course and the entry method. Wu (p9p4), currently studying for her PhD, explains how she works within a multi-national learning environment and how this is beneficial to her studies:

> "… you can see a thing from different perspective, like I also talk about film with my colleagues, they [are] from Finland, they [are] from Hungary, they are from Britain, they are from Germany, lots of different places… they give me lots of different ideas. If you see a Chinese film you may have a different opinion from me."

This is a great example of the kind of co-creation that can talk place within an educational setting and the type of activity that has been identified as a way of enriching the learning encounter(Ledden et al., 2011; Naidoo et al., 2011; Ng & Forbes, 2009; Nixon et al., 2018). However, Wu (p9p4) explains that her situation was very different at undergraduate and Masters level:

> "… for the post graduate and undergraduate I still stay with Chinese. Because the 2+2 you know your friends, you go together and apply the same post graduate school, yeah. And for the PhD study, this half year I made some western friends."

Luo (p20p5) finds herself in a similar situation now as only one of two Chinese students studying a PhD in her department, as she explains:

> "Yes, all the department, only two Chinese people… when I came here my language [was] terrible, I only can understand 30% of the people, what the people say, and my friend ['s are] really patient they just try to speak slow and sometimes they look at me and look at my face, if I feel confused they just… they know what word I am confused [about] and then they use another word to explain it. Then after a few times I feel like, oh I can understand better, and after I learn myself a little bit, try to learn more language."

A key factor influencing the degree to which exchange takes place within the classroom environment is the extent to which teachers are able to integrate international and home students. Clearly for those classes that are predominantly Chinese this is difficult, however for other classes this is at least a possibility. Unfortunately, some participants suggested that teachers sometimes give up trying to do this as it can be difficult, as I discussed in Section 5.2.2. It is likely that this difficulty is not wholly down to a reluctance on CIS' part as previous studies have suggested that UK student sometimes lack the intercultural capabilities to make the most of these international networking opportunities (Montgomery & McDowell, 2009).

5.4.2.2 Living Arrangements

Living arrangements were also a factor that affected service exchange in terms of the extent to which CIS gained a cultural experience. Wang (p1m1) had chosen to live with a host family and as a result was gaining a significant amount of cultural experience. Lin (p19m1) also shared her experience of staying with a host family, although this was on a previous visit to the UK for a one month 'summer camp'. She explained how she had thoroughly enjoyed her experience and still kept in touch with her host family, making contact every couple of months.

Some CIS opt for a more conventional student experience by staying in student accommodation. Li (p2m1) for example chose this option which gives her some opportunity to mix with other nationalities although there is a downside to this:

> "…they come from different countries but one of them is local people, they will invite us to attend the party and I think every week. So it's a little noisy for me because when I am in China, even here, I prefer to sleep before 12 o'clock. But if they have a party it will be really noisy."

Mostly, CIS choose to live with other Chinese or, at least, students from similar cultural backgrounds, as Zhang (p3m2) explains when comparing her situation with Li's (p2m1):

> "Before I was here we rent a house with my friend but now they just leave so I just stay in that house with a new roommate. And my roommate [is] from Malaysia, also from Asian area so both of us quite nice [and] don't have much parties."

Whilst there are advantages to sharing accommodation with people that you can communicate with easily there are also disadvantages too in that there are less opportunities to communicate with and build friendships with people of other nationalities, as Zhao (p8p4) explains:

> "In my house, they are all Chinese people and I still have Chinese friends here and my daughter has Chinese friends here because we play we can just communicate with other Chinese naturally but we only have Chinese friends."

This lack of opportunity further compounds the problem of cultural differences discussed in Section 5.4.1 as less interaction means fewer opportunities for CIS to learn about and overcome those cultural differences.

5.4.3 Engagement

As I discussed in 1.4, for value co-creation to take place some form of interaction is necessary (Grönroos, 2017; Grönroos & Ravald, 2011; Grönroos & Voima, 2013; Vargo & Lusch, 2016). In the previous two sections I have discussed some of the cultural and opportunity barriers that act as constraints on value co-creation. However, the level of interaction that takes place is also influenced by levels of 'customer engagement' which Brodie et al. (2011, p. 258) suggest represents a 'psychological state which occurs by virtue of interactive customer experience'. A few participants, like Huang (p7b2), are able to engage easily, however for many CIS this appears not to be the case and Huang (p7b2) explains why he thinks this is so:

> "… [for CIS there is] the challenge of getting involved. You know, the English is always the language barrier. Yes, it's always the problem of the Chinese students wherever [they are] in UK… It really is quite [a] challenge for us. I just get used to it, I just enjoy losing face, I don't care about how people judge my English or what. I just say language is a tool, just use it and practice and you get better, you make progress. But some other Chinese people they think "oh, I'm so shy to talk, I'm afraid, I can't make a British friend, I can't do this, I can't do that", they don't even trust themselves."

Huang's (p7b2) comments seem to suggest that the psychological state of some CIS is a barrier to their engagement which we can link to the university support services discussed in Section 5.2.3. These are essentially what Storbacka et al. (2016, p. 3001) consider to be 'engagement platforms' where actors can engage with other actors in resource integration, however there appears to be a limited amount of engagement from CIS, perhaps for the reasons Huang (p7b2) suggests. Wang (p1m1) discusses how there are few CIS who attend the Conversation Club, Zhang (p3m2) mocks the "Bingo Game" activities, and Li (p2m1) talks of how she no longer attends the mentoring sessions as she does not find them useful. Chen (p5b1) and Zhou (p10m1) both suggest that they are too lazy to attend these types of session. McColl-Kennedy and Cheung (2019) suggest that whilst co-creation requires effort some activities require more than others and it appears that the intercultural challenges that CIS face are too effortful for some to overcome and they therefore choose not to engage.

However, it is important to bear in mind that co-creation involves more than one set of actors and effort is required not only on the part of CIS but also on the part of students of other nationalities. Yang (p6b1) describes what is perhaps rather an extreme example of another student not wanting to engage:

> "One day something strange [happened] to me when I sit next to a foreign student, I don’t know where she come from, and sit next to her but she immediately stand up change another side seat. I don’t know why! It’s my smell is bad? I don’t know."

I understood from our discussion that Yang (p6b1) was using the term 'foreign student' here in terms of them not being Chinese and whilst it is possible that they were from somewhere other than the UK I suspect they were a home student. Previous research on the internationalisation of HE has suggested that it is these students who are less successful in developing contact, communication and friendships with students from other countries (Tian & Lowe, 2009).

5.5 Institutions and Ecosystems

Ecosystems, and the institutions that exist within them, frame the service exchange that takes place between actors (Akaka & Chandler, 2019). This extended view of the service environment considers exchange at multiple, interrelated levels and takes into account the importance of socio-historic context in the framing of value and its co-creation (Akaka & Chandler, 2019). Figure 20, below, depicts how these levels relate to the service ecosystem around CIS.

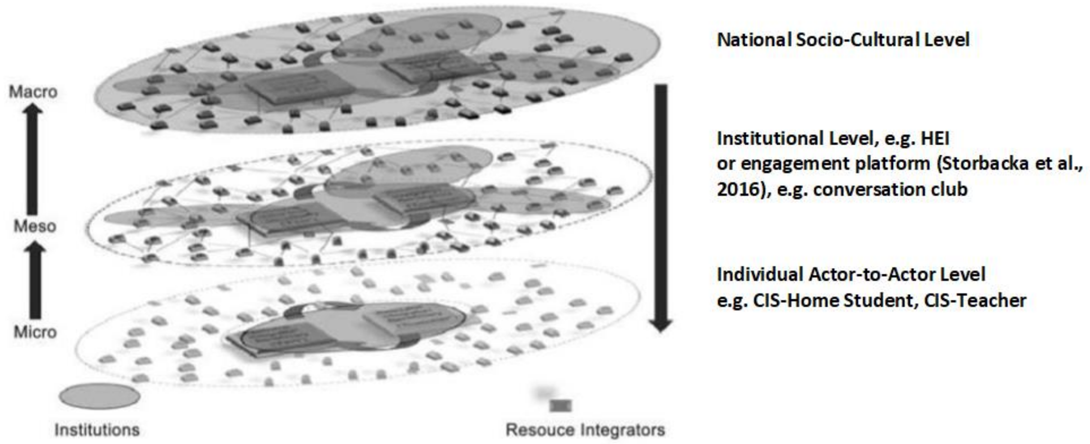

Figure 20 - Overseas Study Service Ecosystem
Source: Author, adapted from (Lusch & Vargo, 2014, p. 171)

The interrelationships between each of these levels are significant, for example we might consider the way in which Li (p2m1) and Zhang (p3m2) relate to their relationship with the British student in their class (discussed in Section 5.2.1). At the micro, individual actor-to-actor level they find it difficult to engage with him due to cultural differences which stem from each actors prior experience in their macro, socio-cultural environment. Similarly, it is these cultural differences that appear to be limiting engagement at the meso, institutional level, where potentially value enhancing engagement platforms like the conversation clubs and mentoring schemes are little used. CIS experiences at micro and meso level, in turn, potentially impact on macro level environmental factors also, this is discussed in Section 6.4.

5.6 Concluding Discussion and Chapter Findings

In Section 2.2.5.4 of the Literature Review I highlighted Oertzen et al.'s (2018) reference to there being a lack of conceptual clarity in how value is created, specifically between the differing views of Service Logic, which states that co-creation can only take place within the customer/provider joint sphere, and of S-D logic which argues that value is always co-created. I also highlighted the suggestion by Rod et al. (2014) that value-in-exchange, rather than value co-creation, might be a more appropriate concept for value creation in an intercultural context. I will now consider these issues in the context of my study.

In Chapter 4 I highlighted a number of different types of value sought by CIS and in this Chapter I have identified some of the actors and resources involved in creating that value. However, some of the resources identified are not provided by the same actors. If we take discourse for example, this is a significant resource in the extent to which it is used by some CIS to help shape their identity, which I link to the value types of status and esteem (see Section 4.8). Whilst some of these discourses were accessed through discussions with teachers or supervisors, in the case of Wu (p9p4) and her introduction to feminism for example (see Section 5.3.2), and therefore take place within what we might consider the joint customer/provider sphere (Grönroos, 2017; Grönroos & Ravald, 2011; Grönroos & Voima, 2013), others do not and these discourses are available to CIS merely through their access to UK culture. However, their access to UK culture has been made possible only through their relationship with the university in which they study.

Similarly, with regards to travel related activities, which form a significant part of the hedonic value that CIS seek from their experience, whilst some locations are visited as part of university led activities many of these are arranged by CIS themselves. This is especially the case when CIS have been in the UK for some time and have developed the confidence and knowledge to arrange their own trips, to the Peak District for example, which a number of participants identified as a popular destination (see Section 4.5.3). Yet again though, without the access to the UK that their university experience gives them, this might not have been possible.

A key difference between the views of Service Logic and S-D Logic related to the concept of *interaction*. From a Service Logic perspective the emphasis is on *direct* interaction, which only takes place either face-to-face or through use of smart technologies, and Service Logic argues that if there is no *direct* interaction then no value co-creation takes place

(Grönroos, 2017; Grönroos & Ravald, 2011; Grönroos & Voima, 2013). Whereas, from an S-D Logic perspective it is argued that co-creation is not limited only to such *direct* interactions but can also be generated through the integration of resources provided by many sources including institutions and across a full range of market-facing, private and public actors. If we consider the two examples provided above, the interaction with discourse and the interaction with a travel destination, for instance the Peak District, these two interactions are linked to the status, esteem, and hedonic types of value sought by CIS. Are we to consider that this value could be created solely by CIS themselves, as Service Logic would suggest, or might we consider this as being value that is co-created, which would be the argument of S-D Logic?

The suggestion by Vargo et al. (2008) that value-in-exchange remains an important part of the value co-creation process is relevant here. Whilst it may appear that CIS are able to create their own value while they are in the UK, their access to UK based resources is facilitated by their relationship with their universities. Resources previously unavailable to them, i.e. the discourses and travel locations referred to in our previous two examples, have been accessed through a value-in-exchange type transaction which forms part of a wider co-creation relationship with the university. This relationship sits within the larger context of a particular value co-creation ecosystem, as discussed in Section 5.5.

Direct interaction is an important part of value co-creation, however in this study the data shows that whilst value is still created in the absence of direct interaction, that creation is still indirectly dependent on other actors and resources that form part of a service ecosystem without which no value creation would exist. Therefore, I argue that the value CIS create is always *co-created*.

These finding support the development of literature in a number of ways. First, they supports the S-D logic position that value is always co-created and this provides some clarity to the conceptual confusion highlighted by Oertzen et al. (2018). Second, these findings clarify the role of value-in-exchange as an important part of the value co-creation process, as proposed by Vargo et al. (2008), rather than as an alternative to value co-creation as suggested might be the case by Rod et al. (2014). Finally, they address calls for further research on value co-creation at meso and micro levels of abstraction (e.g. Frow & Payne, 2019; Helkkula et al., 2019; Vargo & Lusch, 2017) and within different service settings (e.g. McColl-Kennedy & Cheung, 2019).

5.7 Chapter Summary

The aim of this chapter was to consider how the value that CIS seek, as identified in Chapter 4, was created. From the data collected I identified a number of different actors and resources involved in the value creation process along with a number of factors that influence the extent to which service exchange takes place. I have considered contemporary literature on value creation and established that the value CIS seek and obtain from their overseas study experience is always co-created as it involves a range of actors and resources that are to be found within a particular service ecosystem.

One of the key factors influencing the extent to which service exchange took place was that of cultural difference and in the next Chapter I will consider this in more detail.

Chapter 6 The Influence of Culture on Value

6.1 Chapter Introduction

This is the third of four chapters which set out my findings, each based around the conceptual framework introduced in Section 3.7.5 of Chapter 3. In the previous chapter I analysed how value was created for Chinese International Students (CIS) and highlighted that it was always co-created, as argued by Service Dominant (S-D) Logic (Vargo & Lusch, 2004, 2008, 2016). However, the role of culture and the extent to which it influenced value co-creation was significant with many CIS finding it difficult to integrate with local people, both in and out of the university environment. In this chapter I look at the wider role of culture, not just in terms of how it affects value co-creation but also in terms of how it relates to ideas of value itself and its connection with an overseas study experience.

We know from a priori literature that values are a product of culture (Rokeach, 1973) and that values are influential in determining perceptions of value (Vinson et al., 1977). Value is therefore considered to be a social construction (Edvardsson et al., 2011; Karababa & Kjeldgaard, 2014; Peñaloza & Venkatesh, 2006) heavily influenced by the socio-cultural context (Akaka, Vargo, et al., 2013; Chandler & Vargo, 2011; Edvardsson et al., 2011).

Confucian values are still considered to be predominant in the lives of Chinese people (Zhang, Grigoriou, & Li, 2008) however the extent to which such values are influential changes. Whilst the opening up of the Chinese economy in the 1980s saw a move towards a more westernized consumer society more recent developments have seen a return to favour of more traditional cultural preferences (C. L. Wang & Lin, 2009). Dumont (1980) suggested that value systems can fall prey to individualism. How might this affect decisions around value in what Hofstede's (1980) research considers to be a collectivist society?

I begin this chapter with a discussion on values and how values within Chinese society appear to be changing between the different generations. I then move on to discuss how these changing values influence and relate to the drivers for CIS overseas study and argue that the culture and values of older generations contribute to the 'push' factors in overseas study whilst the culture and values of younger generations relate more to the 'pull' factors. Finally, and with reference to Helkkula, Dube, and Arnould's (2019, p. 123) observation that "culture is both a context for, and a product of, value co-creation", I discuss how value co-creation activities within CIS' overseas study are changing their cultural behaviour and understanding and leading to a hybridized culture (Asgary & Walle, 2002).

This chapter addresses the third research question: RQ3 - What influence does culture have on value and the value creation process? In Section 3.7.5 a Conceptual Framework was introduced which provides an overview of my findings and which each of my findings chapters contributes to. This chapter relates to the area of the Conceptual Framework coloured RED, see Figure 21, below.

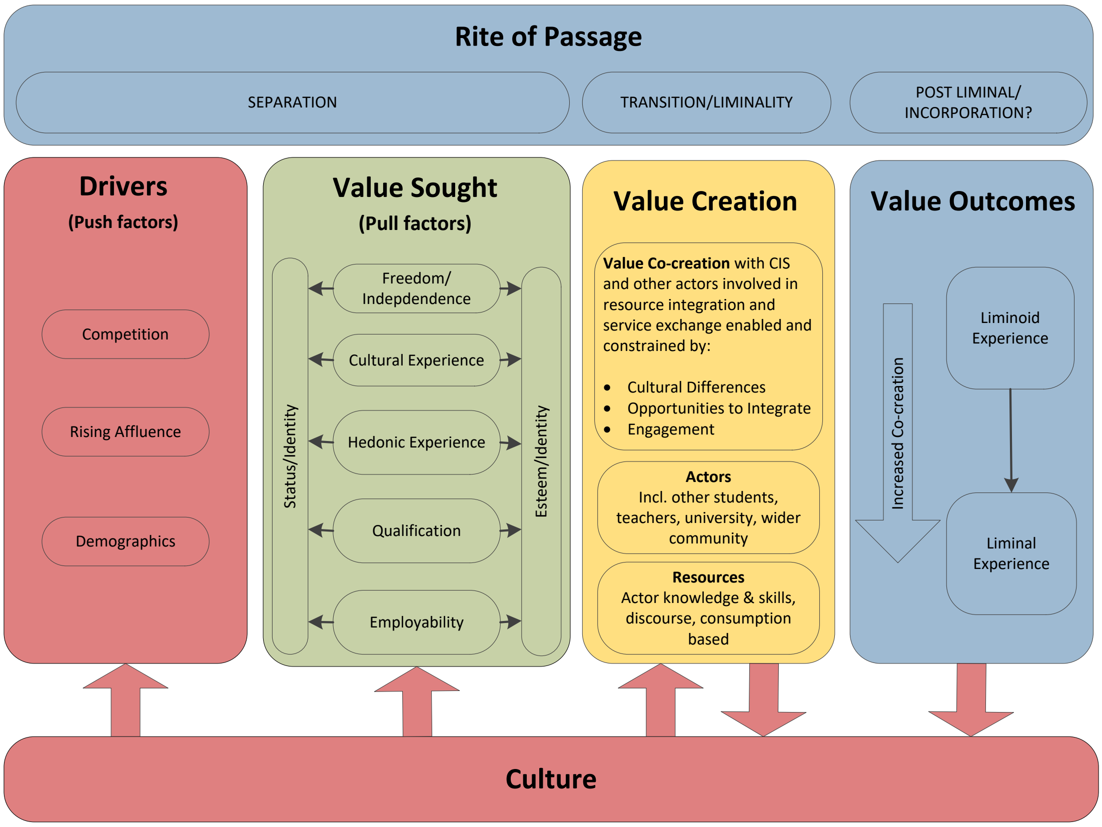

Figure 21 - Conceptual Framework - Chapter 6 Relates to Red Area
Source: Author

6.2 *Values vs. Value*

During my interviews with many of the participants our discussions turned to the topic of Confucius and the influence that his teachings have on Chinese society. A number of participants spoke at length about how Confucius' thinking formed only a part of Chinese culture, albeit significant, but one which very much emphasized what might be described as societal harmony through control. In this section I discuss the changing role of Confucianism within Chinese society and the effect that this is having on younger generations.

6.2.1 The diminishing role of Confucianism and Rise of the New Rich

The role of Confucianism in China has changed over recent years but has a long history. Xu (p11p5) provided a good introduction to the historical context for Confucius' influence on Chinese society:

> "I think Confucius is just part of the culture, I think why it has become the mainstream is because in the Han dynasty the emperor used that idea to govern the people. Because before the Han dynasty…there was another idea, Daoism, that governs the people's ideas. And I think [in] the Qing dynasty there is lot of different [ideas], not just Confucian, Daoism there are a lot of scholars who have different ideas. I think that is just the philosophy part of Chinese culture."

Xu (p11p5) has a very good understanding of the historical context of Confucian thinking which she gained through having an interest in history and the opportunity to explore such things in her high school, which she described as having a much more open curriculum than is usually the case in Chinese high schools. Whilst some of the other participants were not as clear in their understanding of Confucian philosophy the idea that there were elements of control associated within this way of thinking were evident. As Sun (p12p3) highlighted:

> "I'm not pretty sure what Confucian values [are], I know Confucius but I'm not pretty sure what exactly it is. For me it is mainly [to] keep polite and keep patient to other people or to err… no idea, not too much idea… and to obey authorities, yes… I think so, the main, the core of these values is to obey the authorities."

When asked whether such values were widespread in China he suggested that this was the case but questioned whether people really adhered those values:

> "Yes, I'd say much or less is true. People obey the authorities very much, but sometimes they just [do so] under [the] table they talk like that but actually they have to do that."

Here Sun (p12p3) is suggesting that whilst for many Chinese there is an awareness of what Confucian values are, and the reason why they are promoted, they are only given token status rather than fully applied. Zhou (p10m1) seems to suggest something similar as, when asked whether China was a Confucian society and people were influenced by Confucian ideas, she suggests:

> "I think half-half. Because when I was in school the teacher always teach me, you know the text books always teach us 'Louyu', it's edited by Kongzi [Kongzi is the Chinese name of

> Confucius – 'Louyu' is the book 'Dialects']… or some values like respect, respect old people and protect young people and start from other people. It's all mentioned by Confucius."

Zhou (p10m1) later clarifies that by 'half-half' she means that maybe people understand Confucius' ideas and ways of doing things, because they are taught throughout school in China, but that they do not necessarily follow them.

It is possible that much of the ambiguity around Confucian ideas derives from the changing philosophies that have governed the country during the 20th century, in particular the extent to which, first, Chairman Mao's Cultural Revolution and then, later, Deng Xiaoping's opening up of the Chinese economy, influenced peoples thinking (C. L. Wang & Lin, 2009). This possibility is supported by Zhao's (p8p4) comment in which she described how in the past the Chinese people had considered the teaching of Confucius to be the most appropriate for society but that a result of the Cultural Revolution was that these teachings were put aside, as she explains:

> "… we give it up [Confucianism] and we don't have [a] new one [philosophy] and we don't know what we should do next and what we should obey in our daily life, what are our rules for daily life? … the world change[d] so quickly for the next twenty years."

For many, it seemed that the extent to which people were still influenced by Confucian values depended a lot on their family background, as Gao (p18p5) explains:

> "… it depends, it depends… erm, for example your family background, that is the first thing… for example, some families they are well educated… these kind of families will have that kind of very Confucian [values], like being nice to people."

As it appeared in our discussion on status in Section 4.8, Wu (p9p4) seems to be from just such a family as that described by Gao (p18p5). When asked if Confucian thinking had an influence on her she was clear that this was the case and explained how she was from a very traditional family in which her mother had studied Buddhism and Confucius and encouraged her to do the same. However, not all Chinese families have such links to the past and the increasing opportunities to make money, together with the influence that this can have on a society's values, can be significant. Gao (p18p5) contrasted the families she describes as having a good background with those that find themselves suddenly wealthy, the *baofahu* (see Section 4.8), and suggested that some of those families did not have a long history and might not hold the Confucian values that a more traditional family might.

This rise in *Baofahu*, or *new rich* as Veblen (1899) would describe them, appears to be a direct result of China's opening of the economy, when more opportunities for wealth creation arrived, as Zhao (p8p4) explains:

> "… people get rich[er] and rich[er] and they have more chance. In the past if I want to earn money I don't know how, because we try to separate everything equally but when they opened the world [opened up the economy] we can earn the money for ourselves. And we have more chance, we can earn money from many methods and we don't need to go to work for the government. We don't need to have a job here. We can have a job in a company and we can become our own boss. I can have my own company, my business. That is impossible in the past, but from Deng Xiaoping's period, that becomes possible, that makes people rich[er] and rich[er]."

However, whilst more wealth might seem to be a good thing the speed with which this has been generated is problematic. Zhao (p8p4) suggests that whilst historically China had been guided by a clear set of values that clarity, as a result of the many societal changes that have taken place, no longer exists:

> "So many, many problems come because we don't have any experience from this situation. We lived in the equal situation for long time. We, the people around us are all similar, they are no different. But after that [opening up of the economy] the difference comes out, bigger and bigger. So, they [the people] are confused, they don't know which way is right and which way is wrong. And that time, that period, that time [changed so quickly it] didn't give them [time] to think about it. The change [happened] quickly and we don't know. We don't have time to think about it."

What Zhao (p8p4) is suggesting is that a result of the rapid changes in society over the twentieth century has led to the Chinese losing a sense of themselves, their values. That because the changes have occurred over such a rapid period there has been no time to adjust to these changes and establish a new set of values, of beliefs, rules to govern their daily lives. No clear way in which they can determine right from wrong. She suggests that the key determinant of behaviour now is money:

> "Chinese people have more and more money, you know money can change a lot and lot of things. So sometimes they just think if you have more money you are a successful man or woman… so sometimes we treat it as the only way. We don't care where is the money come from, how did you get it, we don't care."

Wu (p9p4) appears to agree with these sentiments. She explains how historically China had, as a socialist country, paid equal attention to social status within groups, e.g. workers or farmers, as opposed to western countries which were more concerned with personal identity. However, she believes that now everything depends on "how much money you have". She goes on to describe how for young Chinese, although they understand the basic principles of Confucian values as taught to them in school, they reject traditional culture in favour of being more individual:

> "… they want to be the new person, they want to be fashion[able]… I discuss this problem with my friends, like all the things for the Confucius [are] only used in school, only used in exams, and actually it didn't influence our lives."

This rejection of traditional culture, and the differences between generations is discussed further in the next section.

6.2.2 Younger generations and the growth of individualism

One of the criticisms within national culture frameworks has been the extent to which these truly reflect the whole of a nation's society (see Dervin, 2011; Steenkamp, 2001). Within all societies there are cultural differences between generations and the studies of these differences are generally carried out under the umbrella of 'Generational Cohort Theory' which derived from the original work of Karl Mannheim (Edmunds & Turner, 2005) and in Western societies these generations are commonly referred to as Generations X, Y, and Z. Similar generational differences are also to be found in China, however these differences between generations are perhaps more profound as a result of specific government policy, in particular the one-child policy that was introduced in China in 1978. In Chinese society these different generations tend to be referred to by the decade in which people were born, e.g. children born in the 1980's are referred to as *BaLingHou*, or 'after 80's children' (see Bergstrom, 2012).

A number of participants talked about these generational differences. Hu (p15m1) for example discussed how Confucianism was more important with the older generations than it is nowadays:

> "Ah. I think that is useful in the before, maybe after 70 or after 60 [People born in the 1970s or 1960s]. After 80, after 90 some of the people is not so familiar with this. Maybe in some of the family things have this one, you need to take care of your parents, you need to respect to them. And also some of the parents have some of the older [customs], they use the older. I use this word because the parents like you do something, you need to do something [i.e. filial piety, respect for elders]. So, that is basic on this one, Confucius. But the new gener[ation]… how to say, new people, I mean 90 after, the students, they don't think too much, they just want to do [be] the best one, do [be] themselves, so they don't trust anyone, don't mention about take care of the parents thinking, just [be] themselves. So it's not too much I think."

Hu (p15m1) is highlighting a move away from filial piety, a key Confucian value (Fang, 2003) to a more self-centred approach that highlights a significant difference between generations. Huang (p7b2) discusses this in more detail, and provides an example of how this 'generation gap' has resulted in different ideas:

> "… so grandparents and the parents they think in different ways. Like for example we got some history with Japanese which is during the grandparent's generation and they can't

> understand why people are going to Japan, why people buy Japanese stuff, why are they doing this with Japan. So they were thinking "why? I can't understand, we had a war with them?" But the parent's generation it's better, they can understand, they can accept it, Japanese culture. And like the younger generation, lots of people like the comic book, the culture of Japan, so they can know Japanese culture, when they really talking about… they treat the thing, treat one thing differently."

This is an interesting example of how culture influences values and we see here a change over three generations, from hate, to acceptance, to a kind of fascination which influences consumption choices. Li (p2m1) is herself an example of this trend, she described how she travelled to Japan twice in the previous year because she was very much interested in the culture, in particular Japanese Manga comic books.

A similar example of how the younger generations are increasingly embracing other cultures is described by Gao (p18p5) who describes a recent trend in China of young people becoming interested in Hip Hop (see Lee & Su, 2019):

> "… and there is a very trendy culture thing, popped up recently, it's the hip hop. We didn't have that in China because hip hop was originally from like the street culture and you know, street culture is not a very popular one in China. But because of one tv show in china, it's now the most popular in China and everyone since fell in love with hip hop because they think they are like breakdance and it's just something new to most Chinese people."

Interestingly, she suggests that the rate of change in China is much quicker than in places like the UK, which she considers to be a more mature society:

> "… I think China is growing rapidly, that is why people from each generation they cannot understand each other because the things change so much. And the young generation, like the ones doing the hip hop, are mostly around 1995, so it' JiuWuHou."

As mentioned previously, it is common in China to refer to the different generations by the decade within which they were born (see Bergstrom, 2012). The use of the term JiuWuHou, which represents people born after 1995, is significant as it suggests a more granular breakdown of generational segments. When asked to expand on this Gao (p18p5) clarified that this was indeed the case:

> "Yeah, so like you can see the difference between, like 10 years and 5 years, it's different. Yeah, that's the start point of the individualism in China."

Here we have another significant statement, the idea that the younger generations in China, which is considered to be very much a collectivist culture (Hofstede, 1980), might be becoming more individualist in their outlook. Gao (p18p5) is clear though that this only applies to the younger generations:

> "… we are still a… what's that word… collective, like a group, a society, because of the one child policy the education changed and it is hard to, for example me, it's hard to stand on others shoes, for example if you don't have a sister or brother, sometimes it is hard for you to share things with people and then the individualism comes out, for the young generation."

When Gao (p18p5) refers to it being hard to *stand on other shoes* what she means is that this is difficult to *step into* others shoes and see things from a perspective other than ones own. However, it is not just the one-child policy that appears to be fuelling a rise in individualism it is also the lack, in Luo's (p20p5) opinion, of some kind of belief system. She suggests that whilst it is perhaps good to have some kind of Confucius way of thinking not everybody fully understands or believes in such ways. She feels this lack of a shared belief system is a problem:

> "We don't have belief, faith. You know we didn't go to the church we don't have that kind of proper things. Because now here [in the UK] go[ing] to church is kind of good ways, I think most people try to go to church and do something. But in China we don't have that one and I think some people are confused of their life."

Whilst Luo's (p20p5) ideas about the extent to which people in the UK go to church might be somewhat inaccurate, her comments about people in China being confused in their life echo those of Zhao (p8p4) which I discussed earlier. They believe that the very significant changes in Chinese society over the previous century, including the Cultural Revolution, the one-child policy, and the opening up of China's economy, have resulted in people being confused about their values - the 'system of values' that Rokeach (1973) talks about is broken. This is particularly so for the younger generations and as Dumont (1980) suggests without a value system then value becomes something that is determined by the individual.

Therefore, whilst China as a whole might yet be considered a collectivist culture there are suggestions that younger generations are becoming more individualist in their outlook. Perhaps Gao (p18p5) sums up the reason for this best:

> "[The] older generation were raised in [a] Confucian culture but the young generation is under the environment of globalism and a big part of that is Western culture."

The younger generations then are becoming increasingly a part of a transnational consumer culture (Askegaard et al., 2005; Fang, 2006) that is becoming more and more influential on their identities and consumption behaviour (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2017; Bardhi et al., 2012, 2018) and in Chapter 4 we saw some evidence of this in terms of the value that CIS were seeking from their overseas experience.

6.2.3 The Re-introduction of Confucian Thought

Confucianism was initially rejected by the early Communist leaders of China but has recently been making a comeback (Fam, Yang, & Hyman, 2009). This re-introduction can be seen as a way to counter the growing influence of Western culture that has occurred since China was opened up to the global economy in the early 1980's (C. L. Wang & Lin, 2009). This influence has been considerable in terms of how it has altered the country's value system and Zhao (p8p4) believes this was something the Chinese government had not considered.

> "… I think even in the past, for the government, they didn't realise the importance of this thing… common people's

> values… but now they [the government try] to let the people think in a better way… if they find something is right, they will report it widely. In the past they never do that, they don't think that is important. They think people can judge it by themselves but actually they don't… We didn't set up our core value, we try to… we try to respect Confucius recently, we try to use his opinion because we think it should still be for people… we cannot give up our traditional spirit. That is why Chinese people become Chinese. No matter what the world change, Chinese people is still different from Western people, we still have to keep some special things, such as the family, still need to get together in such important vacation or holiday."

Her references to family and to important vacations or holidays reflects recent government policy changes which have focused attention on the importance of the family unit. These have included, for example, changes to the national holiday system so that workers now have 2 days compulsory holiday around the Qingming (Tomb Sweeping) Festival, a time when families will traditionally meet up and pay their respects to their deceased ancestors (SCMP, 2008). Such policies are intended to re-balance citizens thinking between economic progress and fundamental family values, as Zhao (p8p4) goes on to explain:

> "… so I think they try to change something to keep the core spirit about Chinese people… in the past they want to be the same as Western people because they think everything is right. But now they find they can't be the Western people… everybody wants to have a house and a big garden. We want to have a free service in the hospital, [but] how can China afford those things? They can't. So they just to… how to say… ask the traditional value to make you think you need to contribute more, you need to contribute [first] and then you ask something and you need to sacrifice yourself first and you need to respect old people… you have to look after children."

During our conversation Gao (p18p5) refers to China's *Core Socialist Principles*. These are a set of six virtues and six virtuous actions that have been introduced by the Communist Party under Xi Jinping (Gow, 2017).

> *"… that is some[thing] President Xi [is] promoting a lot in China and well, it's not very nice to ask the little kids to recite them and it's kind of part of the exam. But it's good for little*

> *children or the people in China to know about them because we… the difference of the peoples prospects… no, the money they have is ranged a lot from like very rich to very poor and their values are different so if we have the middle one, like general one for everyone, I think that could be good, to teach the rich people do not bully the poor and to teach the poor not to look down on themselves. And some of them* [the Six Virtues]*, I don't think we have in China… hmm, I can't remember any, but… I saw, because I went to Beijing when Xi is promoting this and it's everywhere and I saw some of the phrases and I think, ah, we don't have that in China. We haven't yet."*

For many of the participants schools and universities had been the main areas in which they had encountered Confucian principles and ideas but now, perhaps after concerns that Chinese society did lack a central belief system, one which sat comfortably with their chosen style of governance, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) were encapsulating such thoughts within these *Core Socialist Principles* to be encountered at the local bus or subway stations (Gow, 2017). Whilst these particular principles are new the underpinning aim of promoting a harmonious society is not. The previous president, Hu Jintao, promoted a policy of the *Socialist Rule of Law* in the late 1990's, however Choukroune (2009) suggested that this policy was more Marxist than Confucian.

Wu (p9p4) felt that the recent incorporation of Confucian values was not something solely restricted to the domestic arena. Having been raised in a family in which philosophy was considered an important part of education she is perhaps more attune to such Confucian ideas and considered how these appeared to be integral to a number of China's outward looking initiatives, including the 'One Belt, One Road' economic project (Kuo & Kommenda, n.d.) designed to emulate the economic significance of the historical Silk Road trading route:

> "… it is a new policy for Xi. I think it includes a very traditional meaning in China from Kong [Confucius]. Yi Dai, Yi Lu [One Belt, One Road] the Silk Road and also a route from the sea. It is related to them, for me it show the meaning of Kong [Confucius]… and the opening ceremony of Beijing's Olympic Games, it shows this character, it is a very Chinese philosophy, it means 'combination', this maybe combination

> of different countries, combination of the economy or travel, everything, for Xi's new policy."

Confucian philosophy was also incorporated in the opening of Beijing's Olympics with the revival of the old Confucius saying 'Friends have come from afar, how happy we are' (Fam et al., 2009, p. 393). Confucius has been described as the 'standard-bearer of China's soft power' (The Economist, 2019) and the increasing number of Confucius Institutes globally, many of which are located within overseas universities, is testament to the extent to which China wishes to be perceived as a Confucian society.

That a nation should promote its values both domestically and internationally is not out of the ordinary. Within the UK, schools are required, as part of the national curriculum, to promote British Values. These same values are also projected internationally through organizations like the British Council. What is at odds is the extent to which those values differ between generations. Whilst the Chinese government might wish for its people to reflect Confucian values the influence of global consumer values on younger generations appears strong.

6.3 The influence of culture on value sought

In Section 2.2.3 of the Literature Review I highlighted the significant relationship between culture, values, and the value that is sought from a product or service. I shall now consider how these relationships influences the value that is sought by CIS. I shall also consider whether the change in values between different generations, discussed in our previous section, is of significance. I shall do this with reference to Mazzarol and Soutar' s (2002) "Push-pull" framework (see Section 2.3.4 of the Literature Review).

6.3.1 Push factors

With regard to "push" factors first of all, the interview data highlighted a number of such factors that contributed to an increasing number of

Chinese studying overseas. These factors were broadly consistent with those identified in Section 2.3.4.1 of the Literature Review and can be broken down into three main areas.

The first push factor to consider is that of competition, a theme which can be further broken down into two sub categories, those of competition for university places and competition for employment. Competition for university places is becoming increasingly intense (Azmat et al., 2013; Brandenburg & Zhu, 2007; Xu, 2017) and this is most evident in the significance placed on the *gaokao* (National College Entrance Exam) (see Ash, 2016). Studying overseas is considered an easier way of getting a place at university, at least for those families that can afford it, as Ma (p13p2) explains when asked why some Chinese choose to study overseas:

> "I think one important reason is because of the college entrance exam and because there are too many students in China and not everyone can go to a very good university. And we have to take the entrance exam and I would say it is a very difficult and a lot of people aren't able to go to a decent university so their parents, if they have money, they would prefer to send them here to the UK... I would say it is easier for them to get the offer from the university here. They only need to just pass some language tests [IELTS]. I don't think the university in the UK care much about their scores in China."

Liu (p4b1) explains how the difficulties in entering a good Chinese university led to her parents deciding to send her to a Sino-British college as a way of avoiding the *gaokao* and of making the transition to an overseas university much easier. A decision that she thinks will give her a competitive advantage when looking for work. This is an increasingly important consideration given the rising levels of unemployment in Chinese graduates (Azmat et al., 2013; Brandenburg & Zhu, 2007; Leung, 2008; Melvin, 2006). Ho (p17p2) agrees that overseas study can result in better prospects as it means "there are more options for you if you have a language skill". Language skills aren't the only consideration though and Xu (p11p5) explains how parents are often involved in the decision to select their child's major:

> "… a lot of family I know, they told their children they have to choose business, they have to choose finance, you have to choose maths, because it's easier for you to find a job."

This appears consistent with Griffiths (2012, p. 45-46) suggestion that education is increasingly becoming valued for employment and status reasons rather than as something of value in itself. Competition for education is being driven throughout all levels of society within China (Ash, 2016) and is not just exclusive to those families with wealth, as Gao (p18p5) explains, referring to recent trends in China:

> "… everyone in China [is] trying to nurture their children, raise their children as the rich children, no matter how their background is. We have a saying in China 'zai chong bu neng qong zai nu', no matter how poor you are you have to educate your child well. So that kind of education is not [about] be[ing] nice or something, it is like go to this after school club, go to that after school club."

The second push factor to consider is that of rising wealth. In Section 6.2 I described how participants had considered the rapid increase in wealth to be having a significant effect on people's values. Many participants considered this increase in wealth to be one of the most significant factors in the increasing numbers choosing overseas study. Ho (p17p2) describes how the rise in "rich" families increases the options available for study:

> "For the bachelors students, first reason [they choose to study in the UK] is that they have a rich family, that is factor 1. And… it depends, because if they are rich they have more options, they can do their bachelors in China or abroad. But in China, also, there are two options, the first one is you've got a high score [gaokao], you can choose where to study in China or the UK. I think for these students they might think that the higher education is better in China. Of course in the UK the education is more international, that's very important reason, and if you take your undergraduate in the UK at least you can speak better English. That's a very important thing, means that if you are hunting a job there are more options for you if you have a language skill. And for others, maybe they don't study very well, so under these circumstances they can have better education in the UK than in China. If there are two universities, one in the UK and one in China, and you don't study very well, maybe in China you can't go to that

> university, they will reject you but if you have money you can go to the UK. But for these kind of student, they usually can't get to the good universities in the UK, but they can definitely get a better education in the UK than in China."

Previously a significant "pull" factor for overseas study had been the perception that some courses were better than local ones (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002). However, Ho (p17p2) seems to be suggesting that overseas study, at least in the UK, might be considered as something of a fall back position for those students who don't have the academic abilities to get into a good Chinese university but are from families with sufficient wealth to support them overseas. This is consistent with what Li (p2m1), who previously worked for an overseas study company in China, explained about how Chinese families were becoming richer and could afford the living expenses and tuition fee for overseas study. Guo (p16p1.5) makes similar comments, that the majority of students that come to the UK do so because they have money, however he makes a similar observation to Ho (p17p2) when he clarifies that "… to be honest I often think their study is not so good and so they have to study abroad".

The third significant push factor identified was that relating to demographics, in particular the factors relating to the impact of the one-child policy on China's population. As I previously noted in Section 4.6, Huang (p7b2) believes this has a significant influence on the commitment of CIS:

> "… society in China is like two [sets of] grandparents, parents and one child. And everyone is caring about that one child so we don't have to worry about everything, we just need to study, they [CIS] just do whatever they want… at least 40%, 50% of Chinese people that study abroad [do so] just because they can't go to the brilliant university in China they want [so come] here to… I call it 'holiday'."

Although it is certainly not the case for all CIS, some do seem to make the most of their time in the UK and many use it as a base for exploring the rest of Europe. The effect of the rising wealth within Chinese families and the focus of attention on the 'one-child' within those families has therefore been significant, not only in terms of the growth of CIS but in terms of the amount of money they are able to spend on consumption activities, for example travel, whilst they are overseas.

6.3.2 Pull factors

With regard to "pull" factors, Mazzarol and Soutar (2002) originally identified factors such as: the knowledge and awareness of a particular country; the quality and reputation of its educational system; alumni links; and cost of study, including living and other indirect study factors. Whilst all of these factors appear to be evident from discussions with participants some of them do not feature greatly. Alumni links for example was only mentioned by Zhang (p3m2) who described how her tutor in China had graduated from her UK university and recommended that she study there.

Another significant "pull" factor identified in the literature was the level of prestige gained from studying at an overseas university rather than a Chinese university (Altbach, 2004a; Azmat et al., 2013; Bamber, 2014; Barnes, 2007; M. Li & Bray, 2007; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; Wu, 2014). However, Participant responses suggested that this may no longer be the case and that students who were able to gain a higher gaokao score were more likely to favour study in a Chinese university. It is likely that the prestige of an overseas education has diminished as rising levels of wealth have made overseas study more accessible, and therefore less exclusive. Gao (p18p5) seems to confirm this when she discusses how the value of an overseas qualification seems to have reduced in the five years since she started her studies:

> "[There are] two reasons, one is the population who is doing the overseas study, it's much bigger than before, so that group is bigger and bigger and the things will be more valuable if the number is smaller and it's not. The other reason is I think it's back to that word, nationalism, it seems like the Chinese people more and more like to hire their own people, from their own culture."

The rise in the number of Chinese studying overseas is further supported with the use by universities of recruitment agents which Huang, Raimo, and Humfrey (2016) identified as another significant "pull" factor. Whilst this was not explored specifically during my interviews it was referenced by a couple of participants. Li (p2m1) for example discussed her time working for such an agency, a factor which made her such a useful 'informant', and Hu (p15m1) described how the offer from the agent she used of a £1,000 reduction in tuition fee was a significant factor in her choosing the university she did.

However, the most significant "pull" factors identified in this study were those discussed Chapter 4 which I argue are ultimately linked to a search for status and esteem, key components of identity.

6.3.3 Push-pull Factors and the Generation Gap

If we consider these push-pull factors in the context of the generation gaps highlighted in Section 6.2.2, above, we can see a difference in respect of how these factors relate to the different generations.

If we consider the push factors first of all, these are predominantly related to societal changes, the increasing amount of competition for university places and employment, the rising levels of wealth, and the demographic significance of the one-child policy. However, the approaches taken to dealing with these factors might be considered as more related to the cultural thinking of older generations, i.e. parents, grandparents, etc., in terms of how this emphasis on knowledge, as a means of affording status and improving opportunities, is considered significant. There is also evidence, as we have seen in previous sections that, parental involvement in the decision to study overseas is significant. Many of the participants have referred to their parents suggesting that they needed to go out of the country and gain cultural experience. As Hu (p15m1) explained, many parents "… just want the kids to have some experience overseas… and also these parents want the kids to have some language and communication skills".

There are pull factors that influence the CIS themselves, as we have discussed in detail in Chapter 4. However, there are also significant emotional costs placed on CIS studying overseas as we discussed in Section 4.9.3. In fact, from the interview data there were rarely any strong reasons provided for CIS deciding for themselves to come to the UK for study. Indeed, some of the strongest reasons were related to gaining a level of freedom that they did not get back home and for some of the more hedonic or experiential aspects of their activities in the UK, many of which were related to consumption. This perhaps explains the reason why there appears a reluctance on the part of some CIS to engage and this will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 7.

In summary, *push* factors relate more to the decision making of older generations with *pull* factors relating more to younger generations.

6.4 Culture as a product of value co-creation

In the previous sections of this chapter I have discussed how culture has influenced value and its creation. However, Helkkula, Dube, and Arnould (2019, p. 123) point out that "Culture is both a context for, and a product of, value co-creation". When different cultures come together to co-create value this can lead to a kind of cultural hybridization (Asgary & Walle, 2002). In the following section I discuss the influence that value co-creation has on the culture of CIS.

6.4.1 The Social Construction of Culture

If we consider culture to be something which is influenced by CIS' exposure to, and co-creation within, UK culture then we can see how behaviours are changing. Wang (p1m1) provides an interesting example of this when she discusses her dealings with UK bureaucracy, something which she feels the country does very well:

> "… one thing I want to mention, [the] British do very well, it's like when I first came here I feel [it is] not convenient but now I feel it's really good. You do many things by mail, not e-mail by mail. If you want to change your credit card password, even you want to get an insurance number, for the [job] applications, it's very clear, you just need to phone and call and it will be answered…. Fill the form and mail them and arrange a meeting or something."

Wang (p1m1) appears to have much more luck with Call Centres than I do. Perhaps her experience with UK bureaucracy is still in its infancy. Nevertheless, she is happy with this experience and prefers it to that of her home country, as she explains:

> "For me, my parents are always complaining [about] the Chinese government, they feel they are not effective. They feel when they go to the counter, if they talk with some people there, their attitude is not very good and sometimes they just speak to [tell] you "you need to get this done, you need to get that done, you need to go back and prepare this document… here [in the UK] it is very clear. They give you, there is a procedure, just follow this… in China maybe sometimes they don't look at that, they rely on other agency [departments]"

Wang (p1m1) goes on to explain how she feels the processes are very clear and just require some consideration in preparing the correct documents. By contrast she feels that the processes in China are less clear, inconsistent in some cases, and rely too much on being able to deal effectively with different kinds of people. Something which not everybody is able to do. As a result, she feels that these kinds of processes are better in the UK. This is not the case for many of her fellow students however, many of whom she thinks find it difficult to adapt to the different systems for getting things done.

Huang (p7b2) talked about the different ways of socializing and doing business between the two cultures. He suggested that in the UK there appeared to be a clearer distinction between social interaction and that relating to business. He felt that there were blurred lines between the two in China:

> "At the leisure time, you know Chinese people [are] always busy, I don't even know why. And when they have some business [they] need to talk [about], they always, you know… 'can zhuo wenhua', culture of food, the table, so when they have some business to do they will invite you, let's have a dinner together, then when you have a dinner, [you] have some drinks and talk about the business. But here, if you want to talk about the business or something you might just "let's go to coffee" and "let's just go grab some drinks"… I prefer to do it the British way."

His preference for what he describes as the 'British way' suggests that he has successfully adapted to this culturally different way of socializing. For Huang (p7b2) this is because he has had more opportunity to integrate (see Section 5.4.2) as he arrived in the UK for two years of study into a cohort with few other Chinese.

Whilst CIS might adopt new approaches and preferences to certain cultural practices from their time in the UK these can sometimes lead to difficult situations. Ma (p13p2) and Zhu (p14m2), for example, are both studying in the UK at the moment and are engaged to be married. Their preference is for a UK style wedding but their parents are not of the same opinion, as Zhu (p14m2) explains:

> "… we want to do it [get married] in the culture of UK but our parents just have [their] traditional culture, they want to do that, but we can't defend [deny] them…"

This is because in China, as previously discussed, filial piety - respect for ones parents - is very important. Zhu (p14m2) goes on to explain that they would prefer not to spend so much money on a large ceremony and instead use the money to travel. However, as Zhu (p14m2) explains:

> "We have to invite loads of people to our wedding, relatives, friends, and most of these friends are our parents, not ours. We need to invite them because they invite us to their ceremony as well. But we are not willing to do that actually, so it is very confusing… and sometimes [in] China, you know, if someone invite you to a dinner or something, or ask you to do something you are not willing to do it but you have to be modest and you have to say yes. But I think it is more simple in [the] UK, for British people, if you don't want to do it you just say no, yeah, I don't want to do it, I can't do it. But in China we can't do that because we think it is not a very good thing for us to refuse someone directly."

What Zhu (p14m2) is suggesting here is similar to what Huang (p7b2) discussed, this idea that within Chinese culture it is necessary to pay attention to other obligations which is a common characteristic of collectivist cultures (Hofstede, 1980). Despite wanting a British style wedding both Ma (p13p2) and Zhu (p14m2) acknowledge that they have no choice other than to return to China for a traditional style wedding because this is their parents wish and, as Zhu (p14m2) remarks "if our parents are happy, we are happy". However, Ma (p13p2) adds:

> "But we must be influenced by the British culture… we even plan to add some British things into our wedding, like asking our friends to hold a small party [for us], something like that."

This is an example of the cultural hybridization that Asgary and Walle (2002) identify as an outcome two cultures coming together.

6.4.2 A Taste of Freedom

Within Chinese society parents encourage their children to marry at an earlier age than in most Western societies and there can sometimes be significant pressure, particularly on women, to marry and start a family (see Kan, 2017; To, 2013). As was discussed previously in Section 4.9.2 this is something that can influence the choice of the UK as a study destination due to the shorter period of study required for a Masters degree.

For a number of participants their experience in the UK has given them a different perspective on the freedom to make decisions. In Section 4.3 I discussed Xu's (p11p5) experience of meeting an elderly divorcee who had told her about having a boyfriend and enjoying her life, how she did not want to get married again. Xu (p11p5) had found that such an interesting experience as it was something that she could not imagine happening in China.

Zhang (p3m2) shared similar thoughts on how UK culture seems to offer more opportunities:

> "… [in the UK] life can be very much more colourful. Yeah, because when I was a child I thought I just need to go to primary school and middle high school, high school, university, then get married have a child and be a parent, something like that. In here I know because my undergraduate classmate they are local people or from other place and their experience is totally different, like they will

> stop their education for travel to other country and get part time job and they learn some different language."

This is a very interesting statement from Zhang (p3m2) because what she is describing is very similar to what she is herself doing now in terms of experiencing another culture and learning another language. I think the difference here is the idea of having a break from education and finding something she might really like to do, as she explains:

> "… and through those years they can really find the job they like to do. One of my classmates she went to Spain for one year and when she [came] back she changed her main course to Tourism and language [and] she will [go] back to Spain to do some tourism stuff. I thought, 'wow' it's totally different. I can't imagine that kind of thing happen to me but she really [has] that kind of lifestyle."

For Zhang (p3m2), as with many other female CIS, the idea seems to be to get their education completed as early as possible to allow more time for finding a suitable partner (Kan, 2017; To, 2013). Her time in the UK allows her to imagine how things might be different though, as it does for Li (p2m1) who also has a different perspective about what she is now able do:

> "… in China when I was a student I need to follow [what] the teachers say, so what they say is right… [if I disagree in] an essay or writing they will say that it's not right. So how can you say my writing is not right? Here you just have to prove that what you are writing is right, or not wrong. They don't have the right to judge you so it's quite different. But I think, here, when I came here [to the UK] I be[came] more open to many things, different things."

The widened perspectives on society and education that participants experience in the UK appear to have a significant impact on their future outlook. However, the extent to which these might influence future generations needs also to be considered.

6.4.3 Generational learning

Li (p2m1) and Zhang (p3m2) discussed how the increasing number of Chinese studying overseas will mean more and more of them will return with new ideas and with different views. They suggest that not only will their generation be more open but it will influence the next generation. As Zhang (p3m2) suggests:

> "… because the culture in my father or grandfather's generation [is] not really open. But in our generation we can have opportunity to study overseas so we can see the different thing. So I think China will be more and more open."

Li (p2m1) adds that 'western ways' are already being adopted by some parents but she feels that in future this will happen on a bigger scale with the next generations:

> "My uncle is about 40 years old, he has two children, one girl and one boy. The girl is about 13 years old and he wants her to come to the UK to study. He tries to teach them in western ways but I don't think they [his methods] are western ways. The teaching ways he [uses are] influenced by his childhood, his traditional Chinese way. So, he tries to do something like this but he can't. Buy maybe our kids, we'll give more freedom for our kids, maybe… so it's different."

Triandis (2004) has suggested that rising affluence leads countries to become more individualist, but that this change takes place over several generations. Li (p2m1) and Zhang's (p3m2) comments indicate that they will be a part of this generational change.

6.4.4 The grass is not always greener

There are many things about UK culture that participants expressed a liking for and there are certain elements of our culture, such as the wider opportunities discussed in previous sections, that seem particularly appealing. However, there is another significant advantage of spending time in another culture and that is the ability to re-evaluate your own culture from a different perspective.

Xu (p11p5) explains how, after 5 years in the UK, she misses her home country and is now able to see it from a different perspective:

> "I think if I stay in my own country all the time I will just see the bad parts because all I know is [that] the western countries, they are very good, everything is good and everything in my own country is bad. Why we aren't like that,

> like America? But when I go abroad I know the reason why they do this and the reason why we can't do this."

She goes on to explain that she both loves and understands her own country better as a result of her experience living overseas. And that after such a long time away she wished to return home to China.

Although the possibility of immigration has sometimes been identified as a reason for Chinese embarking on an overseas study programme (e.g. Altbach, 2004b) the majority of participants indicated that they would eventually prefer to return home to China. A number indicated that they would like to stay for a while longer, to pursue further studies or employment opportunities, but ultimately they also desired to return home. Whilst some participants, like Xu (p11p5), mentioned above, and Wu (p9p4) who describes returning to China as her 'dream', it is because they are homesick and miss their family and friends (see Section 4.9.3). However, for others that desire might relate to a more deep rooted sense of identity, or potential lack of identity, as Zhao (p8p4) describes when talking about her reasons for wishing to return to China:

> *"… but now I think I need to go back to China because [of] my daughter, the identity you know. I think she cannot be British and other people will not treat her as a British and she is not Chinese anymore. So, I think she need to feel [that she] belongs to some culture or country. The atmosphere, the environment is much freer in the UK… in China you need to learn some rules and the relationship is quite complex in China. But what makes my decision is about my daughter. After I attended a workshop about the British Born Chinese and many, many people, British Chinese they think they are not Chinese and they are not British, they are banana [a derogatory term for Chinese born outside China – yellow on the outside, white on the inside], I think my husband is still feel difficult to live here, especially for his job, for living. If I have any chance to get a job in China we will all go back. I think at least she [her daughter] need to think about herself as Chinese."*

For those participants that have been in the UK longer there does appear to be a difference in their way of thinking, their perspective has broadened and they are able to consider things from more perspectives.

Ultimately though they retain much of their cultural foundation, as Gao (p18p5) explains when asked how being in the UK has affected her:

> "... it is different, but deep inside I still think I'm like Chinese, like the identity, I'm still a Chinese. I'm still like a person who are in the Confucius philosophy and I like to keep the interrelationship as good as possible and not just being myself regardless of what others think of me. It's just, I think it probably looks like a lake, so you've got like the soil, which is Confucius, and the water up on the top, like surface water, and the ripples is from Western culture, yeah. [laughs a little]."

This is a great metaphor, particularly the concept of 'ripples' perhaps as these new perspectives that CIS have gained have the potential to cause issues. Lin (p19m1) discussed how her time in the UK had affected her relationship with her partner:

> "Actually, I think I have not changed but my boyfriend said I [have] changed a lot, [that I am] totally different. He said my thinking habits are different, totally different."

It is possible that these different ways of thinking will be more significant when CIS return to their home country. Luo (p20p5) also discusses the same rules and complexities of managing relationships that Zhao (p8p4) talked about. She explains how it is always necessary to be polite in China and to be careful not to show your opinions too directly. She believes that she is quite effective at managing this and changes her behaviour depending on whether it is her Chinese or non-Chinese friends that she is with. However, when asked if she feels she could work effectively in both cultures she feels that she could but is concerned that she might struggle with Chinese employers. When asked why she explains:

> "...too much opinions. You know, some people don't want that lot of opinion. They want more people [to] learn things and use them in the proper way, not learn things and be creative. They want some people to finish this kind of job, they don't want you to have other things [ideas], just you finish it. People like me, when I do this work I want to say "why don't you want to do [it] this way, that will save you 10 minutes, you don't need to do that [and] waste your time, and then if you do that in that way you can earn more money, you save

> your basic cost for this kind of thing, why don’t you want to do that?”. Maybe [then] they don’t want me…”

She explains that even though she might be saving them money those employers would prefer her to just get on with the job:

> “… because if they know that will save them money, but [it is necessary to] change things to save that money, [and] will need a long time. They maybe say “ah, only one month or two month, or this is only once, earn this money for one time”, they don’t need that kind of saving, they just do it.” … I don’t have that energy [power], [that] right to do that kind of thing. [It is] Just like I’m still nobody, try[ing] to be somebody, but nobody have no chance to speak out. One day, when I become somebody, when I can speak something, I will.”

Luo (p20p5) laughs when she explains this to me, she suggests that maybe she will be a nobody for the rest of her life but that at least she will be an ‘individual nobody’.

Perhaps Gao's (p18p5) comment below sums up some of the difficulties that those CIS that have spent a good deal of time in the UK might find when they return to China:

> "… it seems like Chinese people more and more like to hire their own people, from their own culture… no, our own culture (she laughs). It's like being [an] outsider of [both] the UK and China."

This idea of being between two cultures links nicely to Turner's (1982) consideration of liminality as being *betwixt and between* two positions. This is something that will be discussed in more details in the following Chapter.

6.5 Concluding Discussion and Findings

In the Literature Review I discussed how there was a significant link between culture, values and value (see Section 2.2.3.) and how many scholars had therefore argued that value was a social construction heavily influenced by socio-cultural context (see Section 2.2.5.5). The findings from data collected discussed in this Chapter highlight how the value that CIS seek, or indeed their parents seek through their children, as identified in Chapter 4, is strongly influenced by the socio-cultural environment in China. In particular, the data suggested that increased competition, rising affluence, and demographic issues such as the one-child policy were significant *push* factors (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002). The data also suggested that these issues influenced *pull* factors (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002), in particular the search for status value. These findings develop the contemporary literature around value as a social construction (e.g. Akaka, Vargo, et al., 2013; Edvardsson et al., 2011) and develop arguments for the importance of considering value co-creation in the context of multi-level ecosystems (see Frow & Payne, 2019; Helkkula et al., 2019; Vargo & Lusch, 2017).

The findings in this chapter also support and develop the argument that culture is not just a context for value co-creation but is also a product of co-creation (Helkkula et al., 2019). The data collected highlighted the extent to which some CIS, as a result of the value co-creation process, develop ideas and behaviours that are substantially different from those of their pre-overseas study experience leading to the development of a more transnational or hybridized culture (Asgary & Walle, 2002; Fang, 2006). Furthermore, the findings on how this might influence future generations (see Section 6.4.3) support the suggestion made by Triandis (2004) that the increased affluence of a country will lead to it becoming more individualist over a number of generations.

Finally, the data collected supports the suggestion by Faure and Fang (2008) that a paradox exists between China's old value system and that being developed by younger generations. This can lead to CIS feeling as though they are *betwixt and between* two different cultures.

6.6 Chapter Summary

The aim of this chapter was to consider the influence that culture had on value and the value creation process. From the data collected I identified a number of socio-economic issues that impacted on *push-pull* factors of Chinese International Student mobility and on the value that CIS seek from their overseas study experience. My findings supported contemporary literature on value as a social construction and the benefits of taking a service ecosystems view of value co-creation. Data discussed in this chapter also highlighted how the value co-creation process was leading to the development of a more transnational hybridized culture and discussed the effects this might have on future generations.

My findings also noted the extent to which some CIS found themselves in a *betwixt and between* position and this will be discussed further in the next Chapter.

Chapter 7 Overseas Study as a Liminal Experience

7.1 Introduction

This is the last of the four chapters which set out my findings, each based around the conceptual framework introduced in Section 3.7.5 of Chapter 3. The purpose of this chapter is to consolidate my study within a framework based on van Gennep's (1960) theory on The Rites of Passage of which a central theme is the concept of *liminality*. This concept did not feature in my original thesis design but emerged as a significant theme through analysis of my empirical data. The responses from a number of participants seemed to indicate that they were almost ‘killing time’ and it was these responses that led me to the work of Arnold van Gennep (1960) and Victor Turner (1982) that I introduced in Section 2.4 of the Literature Review.

In this chapter I first discuss the data from which the theme of killing time emerged and discuss how we might relate this to other consumption related themes that emerged in this study. I then discuss why Rites of Passage, van Gennep's (1960) theory on social transitions, of which liminality is a central part, is appropriate for my study and relate the three stages of the Rites of Passage to Chinese International Students (CIS). Finally, I argue that whilst some CIS are subject to a *liminal* experience during their overseas study, others, in particular those that appeared to be killing time rather than fully engaging with their overseas experience, are only subject to what Turner (1982) describes as a *liminoid* experience which I argue is related to the marketization of higher education (HE).

Previous studies on liminality within the context of education and in particular those studies relating to education in an intercultural context (see Section 2.4.5) formed a firm basis for the inclusion of liminality. In addition, and as I discussed in Section 3.4 of my Methodology, the concept of liminality had particular resonance with my own personal experience and upon its introduction to my study enabled me to draw on that experience during analysis of the data in a hermeneutic phenomenological manner.

In Section 3.7.5 a Conceptual Framework was introduced which provides an overview of my findings and which each of my findings chapters contribute to. This chapter relates to the area of the Conceptual Framework coloured BLUE, see Figure 22, below.

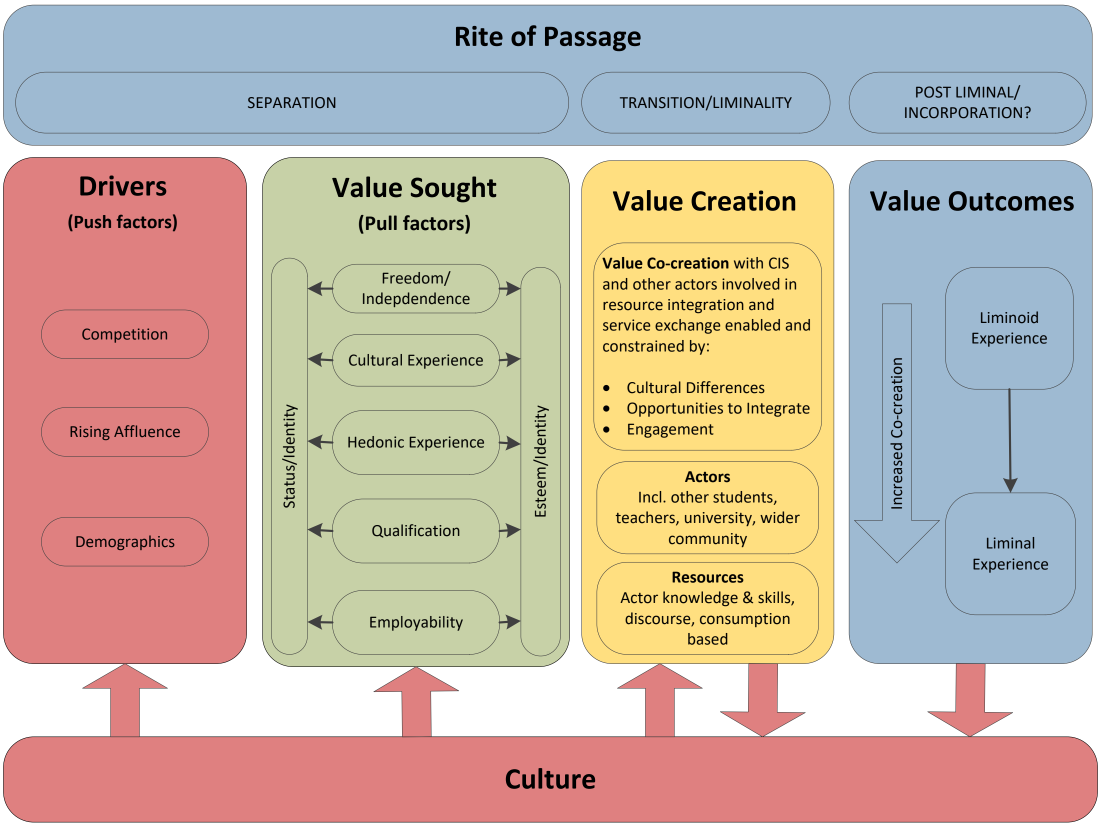

Figure 22 - Conceptual Framework - Chapter 7 Relates to Blue Area
Source: Author

7.2 The Killing of Time

Whilst some people spend much of their time trying to earn a living, for others time is an opportunity for play. Baudrillard (2017, p. 172) suggested that this is related to the ideology of leisure which he describes as the consumption of time, with free time being:

> “the entire ludic activity one fills it up with… the freedom to waste one’s time, and possibly, even to ‘kill’ it, to expand it as pure loss…”

The idea that some CIS were merely killing time arose when considering some of the activities that they were involving themselves in, particularly those with a hedonic aspect. For instance, those relating to activities associated with football such as those that Ma (p13p2), Zhu (p14m2), and Ho (p17p2) have enjoyed for brief periods or that the likes of Liu (p4b1) and her friend enjoy regularly as season ticket holders for Manchester City (see Section 4.5.2). The frequent travel that many CIS seem to enjoy is another good example of how time is used, not just for the regular travel within the UK that most CIS seem to enjoy but also the trips throughout Europe that Gao (p18p5), Ma (p13p2), and Liu (p4b1) discuss (see Section 4.5.3). These types of activity certainly fall within what Baudrillard (2017) describes as *ludic*.

Interview data suggested that some CIS were in no particular hurry to finish their education and find employment, despite employability being one of the types of value some suggested they were seeking. The majority of the undergraduates interviewed expressed a desire to continue on to a master’s course, which Chen (p5b1) suggested was because she felt she had not “made enough progress for working.” Chen (p5b1) had the option of doing a placement year as part of her course but chose not to, when asked why she replied “I don’t want to work recently”. Wang (p1m1) was the only undergraduate interviewed who had chosen to opt for a work placement but was hoping that this would be in the Maldives, which suggested this might relate more to the hedonic than employability, as I mentioned in Section 4.7.

A similar reluctance to find employment also appeared within the data collected from CIS at levels other than undergraduate. Zhang (p3m2) for example was nearing the end of her Masters study and would soon be returning to China where she said she would “enjoy those days I don’t have any job I need to do”. Zhao (p8p4) described how, having returned home to China before eventually coming back to the UK for her PhD, “I even reject some job opportunities because I don't want to work". The data seems to suggest that for some CIS the rising affluence of many Chinese families not only enables them to send their children overseas for study, it also enables them to send them for extended periods of study and support a range of leisure based consumption activities alongside that study. Whilst it was the 'killing of time' that introduced me to van Gennep's (1960) concept of liminality further research into this concept showed me how it had a wider application to my study and I shall discuss this further in the following section.

7.3 Overseas Study as a Rite of Passage

Van Gennep (1960) introduced his theory on the Rites of Passage by drawing together a number of observations on the similarities between major life passages such as birth, puberty, marriage, and death. However, he saw a much broader application for this theory as he considered life to be "a series of passages from one age to another and one occupation to another" or from "one defined position to another which is equally well defined" (van Gennep, 1960, p.3).

In the Literature Review (see Section 2.4) I discuss how the concept of liminality was recognized as significant by Victor Turner, the British anthropologist who further developed van Gennep's work (see Turner, 1982) and experienced his own period of liminality during a time in between jobs located in different countries. In the Literature Review (see Section 2.4.5) I also consider how the concept of liminality has been used within higher education and two of the studies reviewed are of particular significance to this research. The first is that conducted by Simpson et al. (2009) whose study of Chinese MBA students indicated a similar desire for intercultural learning and the development of international capabilities as those expressed by participants of this study. Simpson et al. (2009) found that those MBA students, upon returning to China, found themselves in a liminal 'intercultural' space. The second study was conducted by Lan and Wu (2016) whose study of Taiwanese students studying in China showed that the students had found themselves in a 'liminal terrain' between Chinese and Taiwanese identity.

The aim of this study was to identify the value that CIS sought from their overseas study experience and how that value was created. In Chapter 4 I discussed a number of different types of value that participants of this study identified as being sought and I argue that there was a strong relationship between each of those types identified and the value types of *status* and *esteem* (see Holbrook, 1999) and, ultimately, a search for identity. Van Gennep's (1960) theory of The Rites of Passage is particularly relevant to this study because of the way in which the concept of liminality helps us to understand the process of identity transition (see Beech, 2011 and Ybema et al., 2009) and in particular that space in between two distinct identity positions such as those that Victor Turner, the Chinese MBA students (Simpson et al, 2009), and the Taiwanese students studying in China (Lan & Wu, 2016) found themselves in.

Each of the participants within the study came from a similar pre-liminal position in terms of their previous upbringing and study within a local education setting in China (see Section 3.7.3 on Research Sample). This study has identified that a key value sought by CIS is the development of a greater intercultural awareness and understanding, similar to that sought by the Chinese MBA students in Simpson et al.'s (2009) study. They seek to become what Asgary and Walle (2002) refer to as *global citizens* (see Section 2.2.6.1 & 2.2.6.2) and this represents the post-liminal state to which CIS seek to transition. There is evidence that some CIS achieve this transition but not all do. Many of the participants are still within a liminal period and some, I propose, appear to be more content with a *liminoid*, as opposed to *liminal*, experience. In the remainder of this Chapter I will discuss this in more detail drawing on the three phases of The Rites of Passage that van Gennep (1960) identified: Separation; Transition (Liminality); and Incorporation (Post-liminal).

7.3.1 Separation

Interview data indicated that for many of the participants the decision to come to the UK to study appeared to be more a result of socio-economic *push* factors (see Section 6.3) than personal desire. The term *push* used by Mazzarol and Soutar (2002) to consider factors relating to international student mobility seems very apt for some CIS as it appears almost as if they are pushed out of their own country by socio-cultural factors beyond their control. These include: increasing competition for good university places because, as Ma (p13p2) highlighted "there are too many students in China and not everyone can find a very good university"; and rising levels of affluence by which parents can afford to send their only child overseas for what they perceive as a better education, as Ho (p17p2) suggested "for bachelors students, first reason [they choose to study in the UK] is that they have a rich family". It is these types of socio-cultural factors (discussed in more detail in Section 6.3) that have led to the increasing number of CIS studying overseas.

However, it is not just the idea that the education is better overseas that is driving this increase in numbers it is the increasing way in which overseas study is seen by Chinese parents as a way of improving their child's social mobility and social status (see Fong, 2011; Griffiths, 2012), as Hu (p15m1) suggests when explaining why many Chinese parents want their children to get a Masterl's degree:

> "[They] just want the kids to have some experience in the overseas… because in China [they] have some limitation for you [to] get knowledge or [for] your communication… parents want their kids [to] have some [of] the language and communication skills." (see Section 4.4 for a more detailed discussion).

One of the key findings of van Gennep's (1960) study was that passage from one social position to another was always identified with some form of territorial passage. In some cases that might merely be from one room to another but it can also be as significant as a passage from one country to another, as would be the case with CIS.

In Section 2.2.6.2 of the literature review I discussed how increasing *global flows* (Appadurai, 1990) had led to a state of *liquid modernity* (Bauman, 2000), a state of fluidity and constant change. A symptom of this, according to Ybema et al. (2009), is an increasing individualism and an associated search for identity. According to Gao (p18p5) this increasing individualism has been further exacerbated in China by the one-child policy:

> "… because of the one-child policy the education changed and it is hard to, for example me, it's hard to stand in others shoes, for example if you don't have a sister or brother, sometimes it is hard for your to share things with people and then the individualism comes out, for the younger generation."

It is this search for identity, through the value of status and esteem, that CIS are ultimately engaged in through their overseas study experience (see Section 4.8). *Pushed* from their home country they are *pulled* to the UK where, following the strictly controlled educational environment they have been brought up in, they find the freedom and independence to develop their own identities, as Huang (p7b2) suggests:

> "… the environment [here] will push you forward, with push you [to] do your assignment good, do your academic [work] good. And, what's more it will just… make you more independent. And you are yourself [alone] abroad now, you have to do everything yourself, you have to sort it out, by yourself. And even if you have friends you have to be independent, you have to be strong". (see Section 4.3 for more detailed discussion).

Upon their arrival in the UK they enter what van Gennep (1960) identified as a transitional period, a period which can sometimes include a certain autonomy, as Huang (p7b2) describes above, and this is very much what CIS find when they arrive in the UK (see Section 4.3 for more detailed discussion). It is within this transitional period, often referred to as the *liminal* phase (Thomassen, 2009) that CIS begin to explore possible new identities, it is this phase which I shall discuss in the following section.

7.3.2 Liminality

It is during this transitional period that the search for identity begins. Ybema et al. (2009) state that identities are co-constructed through individuals' interaction with social structures that surround them. Beech (2011) makes a similar observation, suggesting that liminal identity work involves a dialogue between the inner-self and an outer social-identity. Beech (2011) conceptualizes this dialogue into three types of practice; *experimentation*; *reflection*; and *recognition* (see Section 2.4.2 of the Literature Review). Analysis of the interview data shows each of these three different types of practice taking place. I discuss each of these below.

7.3.2.1 Experimentation

The first identity practice Beech (2011) proposes is *experimentation* in which individuals try out different versions or aspects of themselves. We can see how CIS experiment with their new found freedom and independence, as Huang (p7b2) remarked:

> "…you are yourself [alone] abroad now, you have to do everything yourself… you have to be independent, you have to be strong".

Noble and Walker (1997) highlighted how consumption can be used as a way of making liminal transitions and a number of CIS experiment with consumption activities in trying out new identities. Some use their location in the UK to provide luxury goods for friends and family back home, acting as personal shoppers as a way to earn status or money, while others shop for themselves because, as Hu (p15m1) suggests, they like to display that they are rich:

> "Some people just by something [for] themselves because they think they like a luxury life, "I need this bag", "I need these high heels", and that is to display [that they are] rich." (see Section 4.5.1 for more detailed discussion).

Others experiment with activities like football as a way of integrating, for example Ma (p13p2) & Zhu (p14m2) attending football matches as a way of trying to integrate with local people:

> Ma (p13p2) "… we even go to see Sheffield Wednesday and yell with the local people together."
> Interviewer – "Did you enjoy that?"

Ma (p13p2) – "Really enjoy that!"
Interviewer – "Would you say you liked football now?"
Ma (p13p2_ - "No."

Similarly with Ho (p17p2) who initially watched football in his local pub before eventually deciding he would watch at home on his own , perhaps because having experimented with this possible new version of himself he finds it does not suit him. (See section 4.5.2 for more detailed discussion).

Most CIS appear to set out with the intention of integrating with local people and gaining cultural experience. As part of their *experimentation* they try out some of the initiatives the university offers to help them integrate and gain cultural experience, however, as I discussed in Section 5.2.3, more often than not CIS fail to engage with these for a prolonged period. Some suggest that these activities are not useful, as Zhang (p3m2) remarked with her reference to the 'Bingo Game', or that they are too lazy to get involved as Chen (p5b1) and Zhou (p10m1) suggested about themselves. What many CIS find when they arrive in the UK is that the environment is different from their preconceptions, as Li (p2m1) commented:

> "… before I came here I think the people here… like talking to each other just like the American people. But when I came here I think they prefer to stay in their group".

The reality for many CIS appears to be that their initial *experiments* in fitting into their new environments and perhaps forming a new identity are constrained by: cultural differences - "If we have class they [local students] will talk politics or celebrity. We have no idea about it, it's hard to express for us", Liu (p4b1); opportunities to integrate – "I don't get many chances to speak to local people, they are only one British in our class, only one. We have 24, 25 students, only one British", Li (p2m1); and a lack of engagement – "[I'm] not interested in social, in these activities. I like to go home and do what I like to do", Chen (p5b1). These factors are discussed in more detail in section 5.4. For some CIS the data indicates that this leads to a period of *reflection* to which I shall now turn.

7.3.2.2 Reflection

Reflection is the second identity practice Beech (2011) proposes and this involves individual self-questioning prompted by the social environment around them. For some of the undergraduates, those with less time in the UK, there was little empirical evidence from the interview data that they had undertaken any significant reflection on their experience. It is possible that some of them are still experimenting during the early stages of their experience and therefore have less to reflect on. However, for some of the other CIS there was a significant amount of data showing evidence of reflection.

Whilst in some cases it was difficult to establish whether reflection was just taking place as a result of the interview prompting that reflection. In others it seemed clear that the Participants had reflected deeply on the matters being discussed. For example, when discussing freedom of choice with Li (p2m1), Zhang (p3m2), and Xu (p11p5) who had all clearly reflected on their experiences in the UK and compared them with their previous understandings regarding expectations on behaviour, especially for women, for example:

> "… in the UK, if you are very unique people, people will not judge you like you are different from them. Maybe they just don't care whether you are different from them. Maybe they just don't care whether you are the same or not, but if you go back in China people will say why you are not just follow the rules in the society, you need to go to get married, maybe at some stage and give birth to a children at some stage, you have to do something, something at a very specific time…" Xu (p11p5) (see Sections 4.3 and 6.4.2 for more detailed discussion).

As Burr (2015) points out, there are only a limited number of discourses available from which individuals might fashion their identity (see Section 2.2.6.2 of Literature Review) and a number of participants used the discourses available to them in the UK as resources to help them reflect on their own identities. In addition to those reflections around freedom discussed above, another significant example of this is Wu (p9p4) who was becoming closely engaged with feminism, an interest in which was initially sparked by her supervisor:

> "… she is the first one told me about feminism… she told me 20 years ago she is the only female to into a meeting… she thought it was unequal because there was a man there said "this room is for me, not for you" so, yeah, lot's of influence from her". (see Section 5.3.2 for further discussion).

For some CIS their reflection leads to a recognition of how much they have changed and this is discussed further in the following section.

7.3.2.3 Recognition

The final identity practice that Beech (2011) describes is *recognition*, when individuals go through a gradual process of dawning in which they realise they have changed. Although many of the Participants show evidence of reflection only a few appear to have recognised the extent to which this change has taken place. Those that do recognise this change find themselves in between two cultures, like Gao (p18p5) who talks about of the influence that both China and the UK have on her identity:

> "… deep inside I still think I'm like Chinese, like the identity, I'm still a Chinese. I'm still like a person who are in the Confucius philosophy and I like to keep the interrelationship as good as possible and not just being myself regardless of what others think of me. It's just, I think it probably looks like a lake, so you've got like the soil, which is Confucius, and the water up on the top, like surface water, and the ripples is from Western culture." (see Section 6.4.4 for more detailed discussion).

Zhao (p8p4) has also recognised the potential implications of being caught *betwixt and between* (Turner, 1982) two cultures which is why she has decided to return home to China to avoid her daughter ending up in such a situation:

> "… but now I think I need to go back to China because [of] my daughter, the identity you know. I think she cannot be British and other people will not treat her as a British ad she is not Chinese anymore. So, I think she need to feel [that she] belongs to some culture or country." (Section 6.4.4 for more detailed discussion).

Xu (p11p5) and Luo (p20p5) both showed signs of having recognised how they have changed. Xu (p11p5) feels that she now has a much greater understanding of her home country as a result of her experience and has realised how much she loves it. Which is why she feels, after having enjoyed her experience overseas, that she wishes to return home:

> “I think if I stay in my own country all the time I will just see the bad parts because all I know is [that] the Western countries, they are very good, everything is good and everything in my own country is bad. Why we aren’t like that, like America? But when I go abroad I know the reason why they do this and the reason why we can’t do that.”

For Luo (p20p5) there is the concern that she is now too opinionated to get on well with many Chinese employers (see Section 4.7 and 6.4.4). Luo (p20p5) understands she is in a different position from those around her though and that she needs to adapt her behaviour to fit the situation. During our interview we discussed different behaviours between the two cultures and I asked her to give me an example of how she dealt with this, she chose a simple example to illustrate her point:

> Luo (p20p5): “In China, if you want to eat an apple, you have two people, you put the apple on the table, you want it, but you will say “do you want the apple?” The person might say “no, I don’t want it”, and then you get it. But here’s it more like “oh, there’s an apple, I want it”, but in China it’s more like to think about others. We care about how people think about you, so we always be very, polite? It’s kind of polite, be careful, to not show our opinion as directly, try to hide a little bit, so this is different.”
>
> Interview: “What about you now then?”
>
> Luo (p20p5): “Depends on where I am. If I am with Chinese friend I will say “do you want it?”, but if I’m in British circle I just say “I want it”. So, it depends on kind of people. Is that good or not? I’m not sure. Just like different. I just know they are different. I don’t want to be very different. But… try to join in to the place.”

Luo (p20p5) is acknowledging that she is different in both situations, in both circles, but that she is aware of this and will adapt her behaviour to fit it. Ybema, Beech, and Ellis (2011) describe this as being in a state of perpetual betweenness in which a *perpetual liminar*, in this case Luo (p20p5), needs to constantly reposition their ‘self’ in relation to the social context they find themselves in. The extensive length of time in which some CIS find themselves in a liminal position can be an issue in some cases as I discuss in the following section.

7.3.2.4 The Temporal Aspect of Liminality

One of the prior research themes on liminality that Söderlund and Borg (2017) identified (see Section 2.4.3) was that of *process* and, in considering the temporal aspect of processes, they highlighted potential issues around how individuals handle the pressure of tensions that arise from prolonged periods of liminality. In Chapter 5 I highlighted how some CIS seemed unable to deal with the cultural differences they encountered with local actors and became less engaged in some of the resource integrating activities that might well have led to value co-creation. This disengagement is one way in which CIS deal with the pressure of inhabiting their liminal position. Interview data suggests that this pressure might also manifest itself as an emotional cost such as the stress which Zhao (p8p4) highlighted as a possible result of more intensive study in the UK when compared with China:

> "In the one year course there is much stressful… we just feel we need to finish [a] three years course in one year because in China we are not so intensive (see Section 4.9.3 for more detailed discussion).

Another emotional cost resulting from an extended time in a liminal position was that of homesickness which Luo (p20p5) raises when describing how she misses her family:

> "I have really happy family, my parents really, really love me and my grandparents pay a lot of attention and I have really good aunties and uncles and my cousins, they are so nice, so I miss them." (also, see Section 4.9.3 for more detailed discussion).

Söderlund and Borg (2017) suggested that it would be useful to examine the differences between longer and shorter periods of liminality. In addition to the effects of a longer period mentioned above, this study highlighted a number of other significant differences between longer and shorter liminal periods. The data suggested that it was only those CIS who had spent the longest amount of time in the UK that had reached the *recognition* phase described by Beech (2011). However, consider Lin's (p19m1) statement, highlighted in Section 6.4.4, that whilst she had not considered herself to have changed, her boyfriend thought that she had changed a lot:

> "Actually, I think I have not changed but my boyfriend said I [have] changed a lot, [that I am] totally different. He said my thinking habits are different, totally different."

Lin (p19m1) has only been in the UK for approximately one year which suggests that, whilst change can take place after this relatively short length of time, it takes much longer to reflect on this before recognising that you have in fact changed.

Furthermore, the data suggested that each of the CIS who had reached the *recognition* phase had also previously struggled with the same cultural differences that had led to other CIS disengaging. It therefore appears that continued engagement, despite the difficulties presented by cultural differences, leads not only to actual change but also to recognition of that change. The data therefore suggests that for CIS a prolonged period of liminality is a necessity for achieving that liminal transition.

7.3.3 Post-Liminal/Incorporation

The post-liminal phase is the stage at which individuals are now returned to society in a different state (Thomassen, 2009). It is the stage at which they can emerge from the liminal phase with "a new identity or social status" (Andrews & Roberts, 2015, p. 132). As I discuss in Section 7.3, for many CIS that new identity involves them becoming more culturally aware global citizens rewarded both socially and economically through the added status and esteem value that such a new identity might bring. Unfortunately, one of the limitations of this study is that some of the participants still appear to be within the liminal phase of their experience. However, from the interview data we are able to make a number of observations.

First, the data indicated that a number of CIS interviewed had reached the *recognition* phase that Beech (2011) describes. This indicates that they have undergone a kind of 'living through' and 'thinking back' that Turner (1982, p. 18) equates to having completed an experience, or, as Gadamer (1979, p. 62) put it they have undertaken an adventure which "is 'passed through', like a test, from which one emerges enriched and more mature". In short, they have had a liminal experience from which they have emerged changed. The interview data seems to indicate that Zhao (p8p4), Wu (p9p4), Xu (p11p5), Gao (p18p5), and Luo (p20p5) have all passed through such a liminal experience as can be inferred from some of the comments highlighted in Section 6.4.4, for example in how Gao (p18p5) uses the analogy of a lake to describe herself, with the soil underneath the lake representing Confucian ideas which support the water above which is rippled with Western culture.

A second observation that can be made from the data is that a number of the CIS interviewed, whilst perhaps not having reached the *recognition* phase, show signs of *reflection* (Beech, 2011). Data collected from interviews with Li (p2m1), Zhang (p3m2), and Huang (p7b2) show clear signs of reflection, for example when Li (p2m1) is reflecting on the different education styles and how she feels that has made her more open:

> "… in China when I was a student I need to follow [what] the teachers say, so what they say is right… [if I disagree in] an essay or writing they will say that it's not right. So how can you say my writing is not right? Here you just have to prove that what you are writing is right, or not wrong. They don't have the right to judge you so it's quite different. But I think here, when I came here [to the UK] I be[came] more open to many things, different things."

There are also indications from the data that these CIS may have undergone a similar liminal experience as those mentioned above, albeit without explicitly recognising that this is the case, similar to Lin (p19m1) who is unable to see a change in herself but whose boyfriend thinks she has changed considerably (see Section 6.4.4 for further discussion).

What is clear from the data is that those CIS that have experienced recognition and reflection have also had more engagement with other actors and been involved in more resource integration, whether that be with the skills and knowledge of other actors, or through their engagement with discourse. This engagement and integration of resources is at the heart of the value co-creation discussed in Chapter 5 and it is those CIS that have been most involved in value co-creation that appear to have had a liminal experience.

7.3.3.1 A Liminoid Experience

For some of the other CIS it appears, at least at the stage of their liminal period at which they were interviewed, that they had not been able to engage as successfully with other actors, or with some of the discourses available, and their engagement had therefore been limited to the more hedonic or consumption based activities. The data suggests that this group of CIS would include Liu (p4b1), Chen (p5b1), Yang (p6b1), Zhou (p10m1), and would most likely include the 40-50% of CIS that Huang (p7b2) is referring to when he makes this comment:

> "… at least 40%, 50% or Chinese people that study abroad [do so] just because they can't go to the brilliant university in China, they [came] here to… I call it 'holiday'. Yes, just get a certificate because here you can just pay the money and then go to the university." (see Section 4.6 for further discussion).

It is these CIS that have been less successful in value co-creation and I propose that we should consider their experience in the context of Turner's (1982, p. 55) concept of the *liminoid*, i.e. something that was 'played at', rather than 'worked at' and which has resulted in an experience which has been 'not quite liminal'. This proposition links with accusations that higher education is becoming increasingly marketized and this is something that I explore further, below.

7.4 The Liminoid Experience and the Marketization of HE

In Section 2.3.3 of the Literature Review I discussed the marketization of HE and concerns that non-elite universities might become just 'another component of consumer society' (Ritzer, 1996, p. 186). Perhaps this is already the case when it comes to providing the value that CIS seek from their overseas study experience. Miller (2010) proposed three models of commodified higher education, the first of which, the credentialism model, in which universities provide certification of learning, would cater for the needs of those CIS merely seeking a qualification (see Section 4.6). The second model proposed, the skills model which steers clear of pedagogies that encourage learning in favour of providing transferable skills, would provide the employability that many CIS seek (see Section 4.7).

The third model that Miller (2010, p. 203) proposes is the consumption model for which it is argued that "globalisation and post-modernism are twin forces that have shaped the way in which students approach higher education and the experiences that accompany it". I propose that for many CIS their overseas study is a consumption experience linked to more than a university education. As I discussed in Chapter 4, there are a variety of different types of value that CIS seek from their experience many of which are related more to their being in the UK than to their actual association with a university. Turner (1982, p. 55) suggested that a liminoid experience "often is a commodity, which one selects and pays for". It is my contention that the value of an overseas study experience for many CIS is that it provides them with a liminoid experience, a 'playful as-if experience' (Thomassen, 2009, p. 15) in which they can take a break from the pressures placed upon them by society before returning home and trying to find their place within society.

7.5 Chapter Discussion and Findings

As I highlighted in Chapter 4, there are a number of different types of value that CIS seek from their overseas study experience. I also highlighted in Chapter 6 that culture plays a significant role, not only in forming these ideas of value, but also as a factor in the extent to which CIS are able to co-create these types of value, as initially discussed in

Chapter 5. I now make a number of further propositions regarding the value of overseas study for CIS.

First, I propose that part of the value that CIS seek from their overseas study experience is the value that it provides them as a liminal space. A space far away from the societal pressure that Chinese face in their younger years (see Sections 4.3, 4.8, and 6.3). It is for this reason that, despite evidence to suggest the shorter one year master's course in the UK is an important factor in choice of study destination (see Section 4.9), that many students appear to be 'killing time' (see Section 7.2). I therefore further propose that van Gennep's (1960) theory on 'The Rites of Passage' is an appropriate lens through which to view the overseas study experience of CIS.

In applying van Gennep's (1960) work to my study it has enabled me to draw on related literature in order to better understand CIS' experience. One area in which this has proved particularly insightful has been that relating to the area of consumption and its relationship to Turner's (1982) concept of a 'liminoid' experience. From this I contend that in addition to consumption being significant as a means to an end in liminal transitions (see Noble & Walker, 1997) it is also significant as an end in itself as part of a liminoid experience for many CIS.

These findings provide significant insight into the value that CIS seek from their overseas study experience, in particular the finding that many CIS might well be seeking a purely liminoid experience. Whilst there are many criticisms that the UK higher education system is increasingly offering what some describe as a marketized consumption experience, it is important to note that there appears to be a significant market for just such an experience.

In addition to the practical implications of these findings they also support the development of literature in two important ways. First, they develop the contemporary literature on the value of higher education (e.g. Gallarza et al., 2017; Ng & Forbes, 2009; Woodall et al., 2014) and international student mobility (Altbach & de Wit, 2017; Azmat et al., 2013; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002, 2012). Secondly, they add to the body of literature on liminality and identity construction (Beech, 2011; Ybema et al., 2011, 2009), and address the call by Söderlund and Borg (2017, p. 19) for more empirical research around the concept of liminality and in particular the temporality of liminality.

7.6 Chapter Summary

The aim of this chapter was to consolidate my findings using van Gennep's (1960) theory on 'The Rites of Passage'. I have highlighted how this theory, and in particular the concepts of *liminality* and of *liminoid* experience, can be related to the findings of the previous three chapters to provide useful insight into the value that CIS seek from their overseas study experience. From this insight I have argued that for some CIS their experience might well be more liminoid than liminal but that this might well meet a value seeking activity of finding a liminal space in which to escape socio-cultural pressures that they have faced in their home country.

In my next chapter I conclude my study and discuss the contributions it makes to theory and practice.

Chapter 8 Key Findings and Contributions

8.1 Chapter Introduction

This study began in 2015 and derived from my genuine interest in the area of value and how its application to the area of Chinese International Students (CIS) in the UK might help improve not only their experience but that of their fellow students. A review of contemporary literature highlighted a lack of research which specifically focussed on the area of value, a central concept in marketing thought (Holbrook, 1999), and how that might relate to CIS experience. My study generated a significant amount of rich data which has enabled me to present a number of finding over the preceding four chapters.

The purpose of this chapter is to show how those findings have led to a number of original contributions to knowledge. I start the chapter with a reflection on my findings before moving on to show how these represent original contributions to knowledge based on the work of Corley and Gioia (2011) and of Nicholson, LaPlaca, Al-Abdin, Breese, and Khan (2018). I then discuss how those findings might contribute to practice before addressing the limitations of the study and making suggestions as to areas that might benefit from further research. Finally, I end this chapter, and my study, with a personal reflection.

8.2 Reflections on My Research Questions

As I established in my literature review, many scholars consider value to be a social construction and that the context within which value is created is of great significance. Therefore, any study of value needs to be conducted within a particular context and take into account the sociocultural circumstances which surround it. Whilst there have been other studies on CIS and overseas study there have been no specific studies that have looked at this from a value perspective and taken into account circumstances of both their home country and the UK higher education environment. As such this study provides insight into an important area that has previously been neglected.

My study identified the extent to which sociocultural circumstances in China, in particular those relating to competition, rising affluence, and demographic changes, are significant push factors for Chinese overseas study and play a significant role in shaping the value that is sought by CIS. A number of value types were identified as being sought by CIS but data indicated that ultimately these could all be related to the value types of status and esteem which in turn were linked to a search for identity.

Having identified what value CIS were seeking I then considered how this value was created. In comparing the competing views of Service Logic and Service Dominant (S-D) Logic I argued that the value sought by CIS was always co created thus supporting the S-D logic view on value co-creation. My study identified the actors that were involved in value co-creation and the resources that were integrated as part of that value co-creation. I also identified a number of factors that acted to enable or constrain that value co-creation. Cultural differences we're identified as one of those factors however, contrary to Rod et al.'s (2014) suggestion that value-in-exchange might replace value co-creation in intercultural situations I highlighted how value-in-exchange formed a part of the value co-creation process as argued by Vargo et al. (2008). Another significant factor identified was that of engagement and I demonstrated not only how engagement influenced value co-creation at the micro level but also how levels of engagement where themselves influenced by macro level environmental factors.

Culture played a significant role in both the forming of ideas about value and in the value co-creation process. My study identified how culture influenced the drivers of CIS overseas study at both push and pull levels (see Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002). I also identified how culture differed between different generations of Chinese as a result of global consumer culture. Furthermore, my study showed how culture not only influences value co-creation but is also a product of value co-creation (Akaka, Vargo, et al., 2013; Helkkula et al., 2019) as the process has a significant influence on CIS’ cultural understanding.

Something which emerged from the data, which I was able to identify by reflecting on my own experience, was the link to van Gennep's (1960) theory on The Rites of Passage. This revelatory insight enabled me to establish an overarching theoretical framework for the experience of CIS. Furthermore, I was able to build on this by drawing on Turner's (1982) concept of the liminoid and argue that the extent to which value co-creation takes place has a significant influence on the outcome of CIS' overseas study experience.

I present a detailed list of my key findings in Table 3, below, which also indicates: the Section of the Literature Review in which the associated literature can be found; and, the Section of this thesis in which the highlighted findings are discussed.

Table 3 - Key Findings

Key Findings		Related Literature Review Section	Discussed in Findings Section
	Key Findings from Chapter 4 Covering Research Question 1 – What value do CIS seek from their overseas study experience?		
1	Freedom and independence were identified as key aspects of the value that CIS seek. This seemed to be particularly the case for females who suggested a greater level of parental control and societal pressure to get married and have children. Whilst similar finding have previously been identified (e.g. Bamber, 2014; Gallarza et al., 2017) to the best of my knowledge this is the first time that these findings have been specifically linked to the socio-cultural nature of value creation.	2.2.5.5	4.3
2	Cultural experience forms part of the value sought but not always exclusively from the perspective of CIS – empirical data suggested that the focus on cultural experience sometimes came from parents of CIS rather than the CIS themselves which suggests a socio-cultural link to this particular aspect of value sought.	2.2.5.5	4.4
3	There was a significant link to hedonic experience, in particular to consumption experiences relating to, for example, shopping, football, and perhaps most significantly to travel. Whilst previous studies have identified hedonic value (see Holbrook, 1999) as something that international students might seek (e.g. Gallarza et al., 2017) to the best of my knowledge none have linked hedonic value and consumption experiences to liminal identity practices (see Beech, 2011; Ybema et al., 2011) or Turner's, (1982) concept of a *liminoid* experience.	2.3.5	4.5 (see also 7.3.2 & 7.3.3.1)
4	An element of aesthetic value, linked to the idea of *Britishness*, was identified as a potential aspect of value sought. To the best of my knowledge no previous study has linked aesthetic value (see Holbrook, 1999) to international student mobility.	2.3.4.2	4.5.4
5	The qualification was identified as a potential source of value and in particular for some CIS it appeared to represent the most important form of value sought. There was empirical evidence to suggest a link between choosing overseas study and the pressures placed on Chinese youth by the Chinese University Entrance Exam (Gaokao) which suggests a socio-cultural link to this particular aspect of value sought.	2.2.5.5	4.6

6	Employability was identified as a type of value sought and was linked to the difficulties in finding a good position in China due to the rising number of Chinese graduates.	2.2.5.5	4.7
7	Each of the value types identified were linked to the value associated with status and esteem (see Holbrook, 1999) which was seen as becoming increasingly important as a result of rising levels of affluence in China.	2.2.5.5	4.8
8	A number of sacrifices were linked to overseas study including monetary costs – although it was noted that this burden mostly fell on family resources rather than those linked to the CIS and that families appeared sufficiently able to support these costs due to rising levels of affluence.	2.2.5.5	4.9.1
9	Time was also identified as a potential cost although data showed that the shorter period of study in the UK, particularly for master's degrees, was seen as beneficial as it meant losing less time to study that could instead be used for starting a family, which was considered especially important by Chinese families.	2.2.5.5	4.9.2
10	The value identified as being sought by CIS was linked to the socio-cultural situation in China, in particular to the rising levels of affluence, and it is argued there is an element of 'vicarious consumption' (Veblen, 1899) that exists in the decision to send Chinese children overseas and that this was linked to status value. To the best of my knowledge no previous study has identified vicarious consumption as a factor related to international student mobility.	2.3.4	4.10
	Key Findings from Chapter 5 Covering Research Question 2 – How is the value that CIS seek created?		
11	A number of significant actors involved in the value co-creation process of CIS studying in the UK were identified. Although a number of the actors identified were not unexpected, e.g. fellow students and university staff, an interesting finding was the extent to which older people created value for CIS. To the best of my knowledge no previous studies have highlighted the extent to which the older generation have been a source of value creation for CIS.	2.3.4	5.2
12	A number of significant resources, including the skills and knowledge of other actors and those related to consumption based activities, were identified. The role of discourse as a resource, in particular discourses that become available to CIS as a result of their immersion in a new culture, was identified as significant for CIS' value creation. To the best of my knowledge this is the first time that discourse has been identified as a resource linked to the value of international student experience.	2.3.5	5.3.2

13	Interview data showed how value co-creation can take place at the classroom with Wu (p9p4) describing how her learning experience was enhanced through sharing different perspectives on film with students from different countries.	2.3.2	5.4.2.1
14	A number of significant factors that influence the extent to which service exchange is enabled or constrained were identified. These include cultural differences, opportunities to integrate, and engagement. With regard to the latter factor, Storbacka et al. (2016) consider actor engagement to be the micro-foundation of value co-creation. To the best of my knowledge no previous studies have identified engagement as a significant factor in value creation activities within higher education.	2.2.5.4	5.4
	Key Findings from Chapter 6 Covering Research Question 3 – What influence does culture have on value and the value creation process?		
15	My study provided empirical evidence of different generational attitudes within Chinese culture including data which suggests that those generational differences are becoming more profound due to the speed at which attitudes among Chinese youth are changing. The data suggested that cultural differences were now being referred to by 5 year generational gaps rather than the previous 10 year gaps (see Bergstrom, 2012).	2.2.6	6.2.2
16	Interview data suggested that younger generations of Chinese had a more individualist (see Hofstede, 1980) outlook. The data also suggested that the overseas study experience of CIS might increase the level of individualism through exposure to new ideas that are later passed on to future generations which supports the suggestion by Triandis (2004) that as countries became more affluent they also became more individualist over a number of generations.	2.2.6.2	6.5
17	Interview data indicated a significant relationship between socio-cultural factors and *push-pull* factors of CIS mobility (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002), in particular the influence of those relating to competition, rising affluence, and demographic changes.	2.2.5.4 & 2.2.5.5	6.3
18	The data collected highlighted the extent to which some CIS, as a result of the value co-creation process, develop ideas and behaviours that are substantially different from those of their pre-overseas study experience leading to the development of a more transnational or hybridized culture (Asgary & Walle, 2002; Fang, 2006).	2.2.6	6.5

	Key Findings from Chapter 7 – In which van Gennep's (1960) work on 'The Rites of Passage' was incorporated into my study		
19	Interview data indicated that the value of an overseas study experience for some CIS was that it provides them with a liminal space in which they are able to develop their own sense of identity. To the best of my knowledge no previous studies have identified a similar finding.	2.4.5	7.5
20	Data analysis revealed that CIS behaviour during their overseas study experience can be viewed through a lens of liminal identity practice (see Beech, 2011; Ybema et al., 2011).	2.4.2	7.3.2
21	I was able to apply the concept of a *perpetual liminar* to CIS behaviour which represents a further *incremental contribution* (Corley & Gioia, 2011; Nicholson et al., 2018) to the literature on liminality in direct response to calls by Söderlund and Borg (2017) for further empirical research around the concept of liminality.	2.4.2	7.3.2.3
22	Through data analysis I was able to identify a link between the length of time CIS had been in the UK and the different phases of liminal identity practice (see Beech, 2011) they had experienced.	2.4.3	7.3.2.4
23	Through data analysis I was able to apply the concept of a liminoid experience (see Turner, 1982) to the higher education industry and argue that for some CIS their overseas study experience is the equivalent of a commodity purchased in the search for a liminoid experience.	2.3.4 & 2.4.1	7.3.3.1 & 7.4

8.3 Contributions to Theory

In this study I reviewed three broad streams of literature, those relating to: value; the Internationalization of Higher Education (HE); and liminality. After completing this study and setting out my findings I have made the following contributions.

My first research question was to consider what value CIS seek from their overseas study experience. Whilst there have previously been a small number of studies on the value of higher education for international students (e.g. Gallarza et al., 2017; Woodall et al., 2014) none of these have specifically focussed on Chinese International Students. Given the contextual nature of value (e.g. Helkkula et al., 2019; Holbrook, 1999), the extent to which it is considered to be socially constructed (e.g. Edvardsson et al., 2011; Karababa & Kjeldgaard, 2014), and the importance of CIS to UK higher education I considered this to be an area that required further attention.

My study highlighted a number of different types of value that CIS seek from their overseas study experience and the data showed that each of these could be linked to the socio-cultural context from which CIS derive (see Key Findings 1-10 in Table 3). As a result of this significant link between culture and the value that CIS seek I contend that my findings have gone beyond those of previous studies and thus provided an *incremental insight* (Corley & Gioia, 2011) to the internationalization of HE literature by focussing on this important yet *neglected* (Nicholson et al., 2018) area of research. In providing insight into the value that CIS seek from their overseas study experience I have responded to the call by Woodall et al. (2014) for further studies that consider the cultural or socio-economic aspects of student value. These findings are important because a better understanding of the value that CIS seek may improve universities ability to recruit and satisfy increasing numbers of CIS.

A further significant finding on the value that CIS seek from their overseas study experience resulted from data which suggested CIS were 'killing time'. This led to the proposal that another type of value that CIS seek from their overseas study experience is for the value that it presents to them as a liminal space in which they can try to establish their identity (see Key Findings 19-23 in Table 3). This is a *revelatory contribution* because to the best of my knowledge it is something that has not yet been "seen, known, or conceived" (Corley & Gioia, 2011, p. 17) and was discovered through the use of a *multiple lens* strategy (Nicholson et al., 2018).

My second research question was to about how the value that CIS seek is created. Oertzen et al. (2018) have already highlighted a lack of conceptual clarity in how value is created, in particular between the views of Service Logic (see Grönroos, 2017; Grönroos & Ravald, 2011; Grönroos & Voima, 2013) and Service Dominant (S-D) Logic (see Vargo & Lusch, 2004, 2008, 2016). It has also been suggested that a more traditional value-in-exchange paradigm might better suit cultures such as that of the Chinese, there is therefore a need to consider different perspectives on value co-creation in cross-cultural situations (Rod et al., 2014).

In my study I applied Vargo and Lusch's (2016) narrative and process of S-D logic model and an ecosystems perspective (Frow & Payne, 2019; Lusch & Vargo, 2014; Vargo & Lusch, 2016) in my data analysis which resulted in two findings. First, that the value CIS seek from their overseas study experience is always co-created. I argue that this is because all of the resources that CIS use in their value creating activity are only accessible as a result of CIS' relationship with the university. Therefore, even if the university is not involved with micro level co-creation activity they are still involved at the meso level. This supports the S-D logic argument that all value is co-created (Vargo & Lusch, 2004, 2008, 2016). Second, that with regard to the value that CIS seek from their overseas study experience, value-in-exchange, rather than being viewed as an alternative to value co-creation as considered a possibility by Rod et al. (2014), is an integral part of the value co-creation process as suggested by Vargo et al. (2008). I argue this on similar grounds to the previous point, i.e. that whilst micro-level activity may not include the university in all value creating activity it is only because of the initial meso level value-in-exchange that such activities are enabled. These two findings make an *incremental contribution* (Corley & Gioia, 2011) to the literature on value creation by providing empirical insight into areas of theoretical confusion (see Nicholson et al., 2018).

To the best of my knowledge this study represents the first time in which Vargo and Lusch's (2016) narrative and process of S-D logic model and an ecosystems perspective (Frow & Payne, 2019; Lusch & Vargo, 2014; Vargo & Lusch, 2016) have been applied in the context of Chinese International Student mobility and experience. This new application therefore represents an *incremental contribution* (Corley & Gioia, 2011; Nicholson et al., 2018) in direct response to calls for further empirical research at meso and micro levels of abstraction (see Frow & Payne, 2019; Helkkula et al., 2019; Vargo & Lusch, 2017) and within different service settings to those already studied (see McColl-Kennedy & Cheung, 2019). This is an important *methodological contribution* (Tracy, 2010) as it allows us to test theories that have mostly only been considered from a conceptual basis. In addition, it has enabled the identification of a number of key findings (see Table 3, findings 11-14) that might otherwise have remained undiscovered.

My third research question was to establish what influence culture has on value and the value co-creation process. Previous studies on value creation have highlighted the importance of culture in value creation (e.g. Akaka, Schau, et al., 2013; Chandler & Vargo, 2011; Helkkula et al., 2019). My research highlighted a number of important findings (see Findings 15-17 in Table 3). First, it highlighted the link between culture and value by showing how culture was significant in forming the push-pull factors (see Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002) of CIS mobility, for example in how rising affluence and demographic changes act as *push* factors with the desire for more freedom and independence, a product of those same demographic factors, acting as a *pull* factor. This represents and *incremental contribution* (Corley & Gioia, 2011; Nicholson et al., 2018) to value and value co-creation literature which argues that value is socially constructed (e.g. Edvardsson et al., 2011; Karababa & Kjeldgaard, 2014; Peñaloza & Venkatesh, 2006) and to the literature on international student mobility (e.g. Azmat et al., 2013; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002, 2012).

The second finding linked to my third research question related to the extent to which value co-creation influences culture. Data analysis showed that value creating activities led to changes in CIS behaviour to the extent that they were showing evidence of a hybridized culture (Asgary & Walle, 2002), for example in how Gao (p18p5) referred to herself as being neither part of UK or Chinese culture but rather as someone who is influenced by both (see Finding 18 in Table 3). This supports the S-D logic and ecosystems perspective that argues culture does not only influence value co-creation but is itself influenced by that co-creation activity and thus makes an *incremental contribution* (Corley & Gioia, 2011; Nicholson et al., 2018) to the literature on service ecosystems (e.g. Frow & Payne, 2019; Helkkula et al., 2019).

A fourth set of contributions were made following the introduction of theory relating to the concept of liminality. To the best of my knowledge no previous studies have combined the concepts of both value and liminality to the study of CIS. This combining of ideas has proved useful in identifying a number of findings, for example that part of the value that CIS seek relates to the liminal space overseas study provides them and also how the experience of some CIS can be explained using Turner's (1982) concept of a *liminoid* experience. These findings represent *revelatory contributions* through the application of multiple lenses (Corley & Gioia, 2011; Nicholson et al., 2018).

The introduction of liminality literature to the study also led to *incremental contributions* (Corley & Gioia, 2011; Nicholson et al., 2018) to the literature on liminal identity practices (Beech, 2011; Ybema et al., 2011) through the application of theory to a new context. These contributions meet specific calls for further empirical work in this area (see Söderlund & Borg, 2017). These findings are also important from a practical perspective as well as they can provide universities with a better understanding of the CIS experience.

8.4 Contributions to Practice

This study is an important area for research given the significant contribution that CIS make to the regional and national economies. Therefore, from a practical perspective the findings of this study are significant. The Higher Education industry is becoming increasingly marketized and there is a growing amount of competition for students. Many universities have become reliant on the tuition fees of international students and, as I discussed in Section 1.3.1, CIS represent a significant source of income for many universities. It is therefore important that universities have a good understanding of what it is that drives CIS to study in the UK.

It seems clear from the data collected that there are significant benefits from value co-creation in the study experience. Those students that were able to engage had a more profound, liminal experience than those who did not. It is important therefore that universities consider the factors that can help enable value co-creation and in applying an S-D Logic perspective to this study I have been able to present valuable insight which will provide UK universities with a deeper understanding of how they might facilitate a more valuable experience to CIS.

8.5 Limitations and Future Research Opportunities

There are a number of limitations to this study each of which presents opportunities for further research. The first limitation relates to the research sample which, consistent with research that is undertaken from a qualitative perspective, was relatively small. Whilst this approach enabled the collection of a significant amount of rich data regarding the value that CIS seek from their overseas study experience and how that value is created, the smaller sample means that the scope for generalizability is limited. In addition, the sample was taken from a specific regional area of the country and there may therefore be some specific idiosyncratic aspects to CIS who choose this particular location, which potentially limits transferability. However, this presents an opportunity for future research. Akaka and Chandler (2019, p. 142) suggest that a service ecosystem can be viewed like a large bucket of water with research conducted at the meso level being like analysing a glass of water and that conducted at the micro level being like analysing a teaspoon of water. Continuing this analogy we might consider analysing different teaspoons of water from the same glass, which in this case represents higher education in the UK. Our teaspoons may include other CIS in different geographic locations or they may include different nationalities in order to establish how the value they seek might be contextually different from that of CIS.

A second limitation relates to the temporal aspect of participants' liminal journey. The data suggested that a number of participants had experienced a liminal change as a result of their overseas study in the UK. However, some of the other participants were in the early stages of their overseas study experience and had not had significant time to reflect on their experience so far. Perhaps of greater significance is that all of the participants were still located in the UK and this could well limit the extent to which the data reflects the post-liminal aspects of van Gennep's (1960) theory. Further research on the value of an overseas study experience with participants who have already returned to China would therefore be beneficial. Such research would provide rich data on the post-liminal experience of CIS who have had an opportunity to reflect on their time in the UK and how that has influenced their lived experience now that they are back in their home country.

8.6 Personal Reflection

It has often been said that doing a PhD is similar to being on a journey, however the term journey can seem a little mundane. Therefore, I prefer to think of my PhD as having been like Gadamer's (1979, p. 62) idea of an experience, that of the undertaking of an adventure, something which is passed through and from which one will emerge enriched and enlightened. I prefer this description because my experience has been far from mundane in terms of how it has stimulated my own self-reflection. Whilst there was very much a personal element to my PhD from the outset, the emergence of liminality as a theme made it more so because just as Victor Turner discovered van Gennep's (1960) work during his own period of liminality (Thomassen, 2009), so too did I.

The *separation* phase occurred for me, initially, when I departed the UK for what I might best describe as a gap year studying Spanish in Barcelona. I had worked for 15 years in a job that I had increasingly come to dislike and needed a change. I had money in my pocket and time to kill and that is essentially what I did for a year while I was trying to find out who I was, or who I would become. It took me a while to figure that out actually, in fact I feel like I am only just emerging from my liminal period, about to cross the threshold into my new self. Since my initial move to Spain I have relocated to China and then back here to the UK. It was this last move that was the hardest because from a successful period in China, where I had developed and run my own business, I returned to the UK with no job and an uncomfortable feeling of reverse culture shock. When I returned to the UK I enrolled on a master's program to develop my knowledge and gain a qualification that I hoped would enable me to get a teaching position in the UK. The transition from business owner and professional trainer in China to student in the UK, where I had previously held significant management roles, was difficult. In my late 40s, and with a wife and two small children, this new position that I occupied caused significant disruption to my concept of self and my identity, to my status and esteem, two of the key value types identified by Holbrook (1999).

It is difficult to get a teaching job with a master’s degree now. To teach at a university, which is where I wanted to be, you need a PhD and so that was the reason I started mine. Despite having gained a teaching position I still feel like I am in a liminal state, still *betwixt and between,* which is why I can relate to some of the participants in my study. Not only from my current position but also from my time in liminal positions in other countries. It is through this *fusion of horizons* between my own experience and that of my participants that led me to some of the key findings of my study. However, in exploring those findings, and in exploring my own liminality through this study, I feel I will have emerged from this adventure enlightened.

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Appendix 1 - Participant Information Sheet

A research project on cultural difference and the co-creation of value

Sheffield Hallam University | Sheffield Business School

Information Sheet for Potential Participants

1. Introduction
I would like to invite you to take part in a research project that will look at how value is created within an intercultural environment.

2. Why is this research being done?
The project is part of my PhD research at Sheffield Hallam University. Before returning to study at Sheffield Hallam I spent six years working in Beijing. There is an increasing amount of collaboration taking place between Britain and China on both an individual and corporate level. I hope that my research will help to ensure those collaborations result in greater value for both British and Chinese.

3. Why have you asked me to take part?
I am looking for Chinese International Students to participate in my research as your experience living in the UK means you are influenced by two cultures, your native Chinese culture and the British culture within which you are currently living. I am interested in whether those two cultures impact on each other and affect your idea of value.

4. What will I be required to do?
If you are interested in taking part in my research simply e-mail me at d.hattersley@shu.ac.uk. We will then arrange a convenient time to meet somewhere on campus where we can have a conversation about your time in the UK. During our conversation I hope to get an understanding of why you chose to come to the UK for study and what you enjoy doing while you are here. If you are happy that I do so I will record the conversation so that I am sure I capture all of the detail.

5. How much time will participation involve?
Our initial interview will probably take around 30 minutes. A second interview of similar length might then take place a month or so later.

6. What are the advantages of taking part?
You may find the project interesting and be happy to share your experience about the things you enjoy within the UK. You may also enjoy the opportunity to practice your conversational English.

7. Are there any disadvantages of taking part?
It may be that you find conversation in your non-native language difficult and feel uncomfortable in the interview.

8. Will my participation be confidential?
Any recordings of conversations will only be accessible by myself and my supervisor and transcript data will be anonymised through the use of pseudonyms. If you choose to take part in the research you can be assured of your confidentiality.

9. What if I do not wish to take part?
Participation is totally voluntary. You are not obliged to take part and you do not need to give a reason if you decide not to be involved.

10. What if I change my mind during the study?
If you initially decide to take part in the study but later change your mind that is ok. You are free to withdraw at any time.

11. What should I do now?
If you are interested in taking part in the study send me an e-mail and I will contact you so we can arrange to meet at a time convenient to you. I can be contacted at d.hattersley@shu.ac.uk.

Researcher: David J Hattersley, Sheffield Business School, Sheffield Hallam University, Howard St, Sheffield S1 1WB

Supervisor: Jameson Gill, Sheffield Business School, Sheffield Hallam University, Howard St, Sheffield S1 1WB

v1 – January 2016

文化差异与共创价值的调查研究课题

Sheffield Hallam University | Sheffield Business School

<u>准参与者信息单</u>

简介

我希望能邀请您来参与这项关于在多元文化下共创价值的调查研究课题。

为何选定此课题？

这个课题是我在谢菲尔德哈雷姆大学的博士课题。在我重返谢哈学习之前，我曾经在北京工作了六年。无论个人还是公司之间，中英之间的各种合作交流在不断加强。我希望我的这个研究课题可以帮助中英合作取得更大的价值。

为何邀请您来参与？

做为在英国的中国留学生， 你有着原有的中国文化并接受到现所在的英国文化的共同影响。我希望能了解到这两种文化是否互相影响并且对你的价值观也有所影响。

需要您做什么？

如果您对我的课题感兴趣，请发送邮件到 d.hattersley@shu.ac.uk. 我们可以安排一个互为合适的时间地点在校区内见面。我希望能对您做一次访问。其间，我希望能了解到你为什么选择来英国学习，你在英国期间希望做些什么。如果你同意，我会记录谈话内容以便了解详情。

需要您多少时间？

第一次访谈约 30 分钟，大概一个月以后进行第二次访谈，也在 30 分钟左右。

参与有何受益？

您也许对此课题有兴趣并且愿意与我分享你在英国的经历。你也可以就此练习英语对话能力。

参与有何风险？

您可能会对非母语的访谈有些不适应。

信息保密？

所有访谈内容仅限我本人和我的导师使用，对话内容信息录入会被化名使用。如果您选择参与，会对你和你所提供信息进行保密。

参与自愿性？

参与完全自愿。你完全可以自愿选择是否参与，选择不参与也无需理由。

是否可以中途改变?

如果你开始选择参与但是中途改变决定，完全可以任何时间自由退出。

希望参与请:

如果你对此课题调查有兴趣参与，请电邮： d.hattersley@shu.ac.uk

我会与您尽快联系，安排访谈时间。

课题研究人: David J Hattersley, Sheffield Business School, Sheffield Hallam University, Howard St, Sheffield S1 1WB

博导: Jameson Gill, Sheffield Business School, Sheffield Hallam University, Howard St, Sheffield S1 1WB

v1 – January 2016

Sheffield Hallam University | Sheffield Business School

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Title of Research: Cultural Difference and the Co-creation of Value

Please answer the following questions by ticking the response that applies

	YES	NO
1. I have read the Information Sheet for this study and have had details of the study explained to me.	☐	☐
2. My questions about the study have been answered to my satisfaction and I understand that I may ask further questions at any point.	☐	☐
3. I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study within the time limits outlined in the Information Sheet, without giving a reason for my withdrawal or to decline to answer any particular questions in the study without any consequences to my future treatment by the researcher.	☐	☐
4. I agree to provide information to the researchers under the conditions of confidentiality set out in the Information Sheet.	☐	☐
5. I wish to participate in the study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.	☐	☐
6. I consent to the information collected for the purposes of this research study, once anonymised (so that I cannot be identified), to be used for any other research purposes.	☐	☐

Participant's Signature: ____ **Date:** ___________

Participant's Name (Printed): ___________________________________

Contact details: ____

____

Researcher's Name (Printed): __________________________________

Researcher's Signature: ______________________________________

Researcher's contact details:
David J Hattersley
Sheffield Business School, Sheffield Hallam University, Howard Street, Sheffield S1 1WB
e-mail: d.hattersley@shu.ac.uk
Telephone 0746 369 9959

Please keep your copy of the consent form and the information sheet together.

Participant Consent Form V1 – 06/01/17

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参与者知情同意书

调查课题：文化差异与共创价值

请阅读下列问题并在答案下划勾

	是	否
1. 我已阅读为此项调查提供的“准参与者信息单” 并了解详情。	☐	☐
2. 我对此项调查的所有问题都已得到满意回答而且我可以在任何时间提出进一步问题。	☐	☐
3. 我明白我可以在“准参与者信息单”中规定的时间内自由地，无需原因地退出此项调查，或者可以拒绝回答某些调查问题并且无需承担后果。	☐	☐
4. 根据“准参与者信息单”中的保密条件，我同意向调查者提供信息。	☐	☐
5. 根据“准参与者信息单”中的条件，我自愿参与此项调查。	☐	☐
6. 我同意为此项调查提供的信息可以匿名应用到其它调查研究中。	☐	☐

参与者姓名：______________________________ 日期：__________

参与者签字：______________________________

联系信息：____

____

调查者姓名：________________________

调查者签字：__________________________

调查者联系信息：
David J Hattersley
Sheffield Business School, Sheffield Hallam University, Howard Street, Sheffield S1 1WB
e-mail: d.hattersley@shu.ac.uk
Telephone 0746 369 9959

请将此“参与者知情同意书”与“准参与者信息单”一同保存。