AN EXPLORATION OF THE COMMITMENT TO HOME CULTURE AND HOME CULTURAL GROUPS OF CHINESE INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN BRITISH HIGHER EDUCATION

YINGXIANG XU

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Abstract

This research explores the experiences of Chinese international students in British higher education and their commitment to their home society, expressed through the maintenance of both their home culture and close social connections with members of their home cultural group. The research topic is framed by Berry's model of acculturation, cross-cultural communication theories, and a social capital perspective. These perspectives have been utilized to guide exploration. A mixed-methods approach to data collection was used and consisted of a questionnaire survey and in-depth interviews with four students and one university leader. The analysis indicated that these students' maintenance of their home culture manifested itself in respect of selecting a name for self-introduction; abandoning certain home educational practices to adopt the new ones; celebrating home festivals; and their consumption of entertainment programmes. The students commonly retained close social ties with their co-cultural peers in the UK, and families and friends in China outside class time. Underperforming students showed their dependency on co-cultural peers in the classroom as well, and together they had a relatively weak social contact with non-Chinese peers which often occurred only during class time. During contacts with the university, these students felt disappointed about not getting explicit and specific assistance for their academic difficulties; during informal contacts with non-Chinese peers, they felt the conflicts of values; and in the formal classroom interaction, underperforming students felt unfamiliar with the classroom culture and found it stressful to adapt. Some others participated in the beginning but abandoned subsequent participation due to the conflict with their previous home learning experiences. Finally, these students demonstrated a highly pragmatic attitude in deciding where and when to retain their home cultural practices or co-cultural contacts, depending on the analysis of their cross-cultural contact experiences, the social capital that could be acquired from their possible actions of acculturation, and the significance of all available social capital. The most common favoured social capitals being access to co-cultural companionship and co-cultural assistance in both academic and non-academic aspects of their experience in the UK.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 An overall picture of changing China and its students studying abroad

In China, the history of students travelling overseas for their education may be dated back to the mid-19th century. At that time, the Imperial Qing Dynasty, along with the Chinese traditional agricultural economy and its self-isolated society, was plagued by a series of civil rebellions, the two Opium Wars, and the resulting loss of sovereignty over territories such as Hong Kong (Huang, 2002). As a consequence, the apprehension of '*unprecedented turbulent situations in the past 3000 years*' was quickly nurtured amongst many forward-looking intellectuals and government officials (Cheng & Zhang, 2017, p. 195). They then initiated the '*Self-strengthening*' movement which identified the priority of acquiring and employing western knowledge in order to improve the state's overall capacity to defend itself (Fu, 1993, p. 148). Since then, China has slowly, yet officially opened its eyes and learned from the West (Cheng & Zhang, 2017). To fulfil the above-mentioned purposes, the Qing government funded and sent out 120 young Chinese students to the United States from 1872 to 1875, as well as some Chinese students and officers to Europe in 1875 and 1876 (Fu, 1993, p. 148).

It is worth mentioning however that this official programme to fund and send Chinese students to learn in overseas contexts ceased in 1881 due to the resistance of Conservatives, and those Chinese students were ordered to return home (Fu, 1993, p. 149). However, that did not stop Chinese students studying abroad. The reasons are: firstly, many of those Chinese students who were ordered to abandon overseas learning instead funded their children, relatives, and the young people who expressed an interest in learning abroad, to study in the western countries, without relying on government support (Wang, 2002, p. 50). Secondly, foreign governments have also developed sponsorship to fund Chinese students to study abroad. One example is that in 1908, the United States approved the transformation of the

unexpended Boxer indemnity fund, which was compensated by the Qing government and worth 120 million US dollars, into a long-term sponsorship to recruit and fund Chinese students to study in America (Wang, 2013, p. 174). Thirdly, in 1905, the Qing government finally abolished the Civil Service Examination and its related elite recruitment, even though that was a system that had lasted hundreds of years to select intellectuals who were proficient in traditional Chinese knowledge and etiquette into the government (Huang, 2002). Subsequently, many government officials were selected from returning Chinese international students. For example, amongst the 120 Chinese young students who were sent to the United States between 1872 and 1975: 14 were later assigned to diplomatic positions; 15 to the navy; and 5 to government administrative posts (Huang, 2002, p. 44). These social changes fostered the continuous wave of Chinese students studying abroad not only to acquire new knowledge but also to secure their future personal prosperity. Indeed, in 1911 alone while the Qing Dynasty and Imperial China collapsed, the United States received 650 Chinese international students and Japan received over 3,000 (Wei, 2012, p. 143).

In the subsequent Republican period, studying abroad became a popular choice for Chinese students. For instance, between 1921 and 1925, a total of 1189 students were funded by the government to study in Europe and United States, along with 638 self-funded students; then in 1929 alone, the number of self-funded Chinese international students increased to 1577 (Yu & Ran, 2015). The reason for the fast-growing volume of Chinese international students was connected closely to the fast-changing Chinese social context. The Chinese Republic gradually developed a modern government and education system and relaxed restrictions in many aspects of public life, such as publication, speech, the development of new educational institutions, and government elections, in contrast to the previous Imperial regime. In this context, returning Chinese international students often found a greater level of social

recognition as well as greater choice for personal development. Indeed, 52% of the members of the first Chinese Parliament in the Republic period had received overseas education (Huang, 2002, p. 47). Even Sun Yat-sen and Chiang Kai-shek, who are the two most important heads of the state in the Republic period due to their efforts to gain China's independence and end warlordism, had received their education in British-colonized Hong Kong and Japan, respectively. However, the sending of Chinese students for overseas education was severely disrupted between 1937 and 1949 due to Japan's total invasion into China and the subsequent Second World War and civil war between the Republic regime and the Communist party (Yu & Ran, 2015).

After the Communist party took power in 1949, study abroad became an available option for Chinese students again, but this time, their destinations changed. Through the 1950s, approximately 10,000 Chinese students were funded and sent by the new government to receive education and training in the Soviet Union and East Europe (Thogersen, 2016, p. 299). Such a move could be viewed as coordinating with the fast-changing social context in that period. That is, the Communist Chinese government attempted to reform the education system, economic system, social rules, and political system largely according to the Soviet model and established a good relationship with the Soviet Union. As a result, sending students to Soviet countries appeared rational and convenient to secure the opportunity to master Soviet technologies which had been proven to be successful in the Soviet camp and were critical to China's development (McGuire, 2010). Many returning Chinese international students from the Soviet countries were subsequently promoted as the backbone of Chinese science development and government. For example, the most gifted returning students have played key roles in China's nuclear and missile technology development (McGuire, 2010, p. 380); and Li Peng, who studied engineering, finally became the Premier of Communist China

from 1987 to 1998 (Thogersen, 2016, p. 299). However, the collapse of friendship with the Soviet Union in the 1960s, together with the governmental malfunction, social chaos and collapse of the educational system brought about by the Cultural Revolution in the 1970s, have seriously interrupted the sending of Chinese students (Gao, 2015). The Cultural Revolution ultimately ceased in 1978 as the new government leader Deng Xiaoping gained power (Gao, 2015). Incidentally, Deng was also a Chinese international student who had been to France in his early life before he returned home for the revolution.

Following 1978, the renowned 'Reform and Opening-up Policy' that was designed by Deng Xiaoping, developed across China. The term refers not only to the liberalization of the economic system and political ideology, but also to the emphasis on education as the key to economic development, and the intention to break China's academic isolation in the 1960s and 1970s (Thogersen, 2016). In 1992, the State Education Commission further introduced the official principle, promising that the Chinese government would encourage Chinese students to study abroad, motivate these students to come back after their overseas education, and grant them the freedom to both leave and return to China (Simon & Cao, 2009, p. 219). These political changes rapidly revived the trend of sending Chinese students to study in western developed countries. According to the Ministry of Education of China (2018), between 1978 and 2017, a total of 5.19 million Chinese students received education abroad; and in 2017 alone, over 600,000 Chinese students went overseas for their education, which is an 11% increase in comparison with the amount in 2016. Furthermore, at present, self-funded students have become the majority of those studying abroad. In 2017, only 31.2 thousand Chinese students went abroad with support from the government (Ministry of Education, 2018), which is less than 10% of the total amount of Chinese international students for that year. Overseas education is now rather a '*commodity*', or a type of educational investment,

for individuals and families in China to purchase in the hope of producing certain types of return later (Thogersen, 2016, p. 300). Meanwhile, this volume of Chinese international students, as well as the large annual growth rate, have made China the largest source of international students in the world (Hao, Wen & Welch, 2016).

It is important to remind ourselves though that there is a key reason for Chinese families and individuals to choose 'studying abroad' as an educational 'commodity', namely the rapidly-changing Chinese economy. After adopting the 'Reform and Opening-up policy', the Chinese economy has enjoyed continuously explosive growth. China's gross domestic product increased more than twenty-fold between 1978 and 2010, and since then China has become the second-largest economy in the world (Peng, Sun & Lu, 2012, p. 36). Such strong economic growth has greatly improved Chinese people's wealth and living standards, since the real per capita income of China increased 16 times between 1978 and 2014 (The World Bank, 2018, p. 23) and over 850 million of Chinese people have been lifted from poverty (The World Bank, 2019), leaving only 3.3% of Chinese population currently living below the national poverty line (Amadeo, 2019). Thus it is not a surprise to see the dramatic rise in Chinese people's purchasing power. According to the report of Bloomberg (2018), the value of Chinese people's consumption grew by $1.1 trillion between 2010 and 2015, which contributed to a quarter of the global consumption growth. Consequently, that has provided a strong economic basis for the trend of sending Chinese students to study abroad. Indeed, the growth in the number of Chinese international students since the 1980s has been found by Liu (2014, p. 38) to statistically correlate with the growth of the Chinese economy.

Whilst the Chinese economy developed rapidly, so equally did Chinese society. As the World Bank (2018: 23) suggested, in the past 35 years, '*China has transformed itself from an*

impoverished and mostly agrarian economy to an increasingly wealthy, internationalized, and urban economy'. For example, major cities such as Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, and Shenzhen, have rapidly developed and been widely recognized as the most internationalized regions in the world; and many other cities, such as Zhuhai, Suzhou, Xiamen, Ningbo, and Tianjin, have also become regions with huge volumes of international trade (China Daily, 2017). Moreover, service business, private enterprise, household consumption and innovation have altogether become the new focuses in Chinese society, as they have been regarded as the new ways to produce social prosperity, and they have indeed already produced more economic output than the traditional industries (The World Bank, 2018). In this rapidly changing social context, Chinese international students have become more liable to return to their home society, both to enjoy the internationalized lifestyle and utilize their acquired new technology, advanced knowledge, global vision, and innovation skills for a good career future (Hao et.al., 2016). As a result, according to the Ministry of Education (2018), 2.31 million Chinese international students have returned to their home society after their foreign degree studies in the period between 2012 and 2017, and that amount has accounted for 74% of the total amount of returning Chinese international students between 1978 and 2017.

In conclusion, the changing picture of both China and Chinese students studying abroad in the recent 150 years demonstrates the strong association between these two subjects. Through a sequence of chaos and growth, Chinese society has experienced considerable change, namely moving from a traditional society which was self-isolated, reliant on the agricultural economy, and ruled under the Confucian norms, to a modern society that is much more internationalized and liberalized at present. From a pragmatic viewpoint, the economic success achieved in the course of social change has physically facilitated Chinese students' overseas learning, whether through the form of government funding or increased family

income, though during the eras of national instability or foreign invasion such a case was interrupted. Moreover, when China has enjoyed economic growth and domestic development, Chinese students have been motivated to study abroad and then return to their home society after overseas learning so as to pursue a better personal future to serve the country along with their acquired technologies, knowledge, and experiences from overseas. Further, the changing picture of China and Chinese students studying abroad has informed the fact that Chinese society often respects and rewards outstanding Chinese international students, especially those returning Chinese students who could serve as the bridge to utilize overseas knowledge and technologies into the contexts that they are working in Chinese society. As a result, it should not be surprising to observe that the upsurge of Chinese students learning abroad and their home returning across the recent 150 years have always been associated with the periods when Chinese society experienced optimistic change and demanded rapid development.

Over the past two decades, institutions of higher education in many English-speaking western developed countries, for instance, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States, have witnessed strong growth in the enrolment of Chinese international students (Hao et.al., 2016; Zhou, Jindal-Snape, Topping & Todman, 2008). Consequently, it imposed the significance for the stakeholders in overseas higher education e.g. the lecturers, researchers, and the management of institutions – which are collectively responsible for delivering education to international students – to understand a context, namely that based on the socio-historical movements described above, Chinese international students traditionally have had a strong connection with their home society. Such a connection has been facilitated by the rapid development of Chinese society across different periods since the rapid social development has permitted those students to go abroad for foreign education and motivated them to return home for a potentially better opportunity for personal development. Thus, for

the stakeholders in overseas higher education, the above circumstance has suggested that it is expected, indeed reasonable, to recognize Chinese international students' strong sociocultural and psychological attachment to their home society in their overseas learning experiences. The key is not only that Chinese society is the homeplace to foster and cultivate Chinese international students. However, it is also a sociocultural system that offers these students some significant 'capitals' once they finished overseas learning and returned home, such as improved economic resources, a familiar social environment with a liberated lifestyle, a thriving labour market and career opportunity, high social demand for their acquired overseas knowledge and experiences, and high social recognition.

1.2 Understandings of Chinese international students' cross-cultural contact and their commitment to home society in the overseas environment

As briefly introduced in the previous section, China adopted liberal political and economic policies after 1978 and experienced continued economic growth up to the present day. Meanwhile, the number of Chinese students who went abroad to receive higher education has increased each year. For instance, in 2015 alone, a total number of 523,700 Chinese students were studying overseas for degree-level education, which shows an increase of 13.9% from the amount in 2014 and over 400% increase from the amount in 2006 (The State Council of People's Republic of China, 2016; UNESCO, 2013). Given this background of international student mobility, Chinese international students' contacts with their overseas learning environments have become an important issue for academic studies to explore.

Unfortunately, at present, many existing academic studies suggested that in their contacts with the overseas learning environment, Chinese international students have tended to share a variety of challenging experiences, particularly when they are living and studying in developed and English-speaking western countries such as Australia, New Zealand, United

Kingdom, and the United States (see, for example, Holmes, 2004, 2005; Lee, Lei & Sue, 2000; Wan, 2001; Zhang & Brunton, 2007; Zhou & Todman, 2009). In general, the suggested challenging experiences for these students include problems and difficulties in accommodating to a new, overseas learning environment, during both their daily classroom learning and their social life outside the classroom (Henze & Zhu, 2012).

Concerning the implementation of daily classroom learning in general, Chinese international students have been often reported by existing academic studies as showing reluctance to participate in group classroom activities with lecturers and their classmates from other cultures (see, for example, Upton, 1989; Holmes, 2004, 2005; Zhang & Brunton, 2007); non-linguistic difficulty in understanding lecturers' expectations of response and language if they are beyond the usual patterns of lecturing (Sun & Chen, 1999; Wang, 2014; Wu, 2009); inappropriate expectations of lecturer's roles and lecturers' ways of communication with students in classroom teaching (Cortazzi & Jin, 1997; Cortazzi et al., 2009; Holmes, 2005; Wang, 2014; Yan & Berliner, 2009); and unfamiliarity with the key expectations and norms of learning in overseas universities, especially in terms of critical thinking, independent learning, and plagiarism (Lee et al., 2000; Liu, 2002, 2010; Volet & Renshaw, 1996). Further, on occasion, Chinese international students have been reported as demonstrating a mixture of the above difficulties. For instance, in a study of a New Zealand university (Holmes, 2004; 2005), some Chinese international students have reported their unwillingness to ask questions to lecturers during the class, as well as their anxiety regarding answering lecturers' in-class questions and participating in classroom discussion. The reasons for these problematic experiences found by Holmes (2004; 2005) are that these Chinese international students still had their traditional belief in the lecturer's ultimate authority in terms of transferring knowledge to students, also their deep concern about protecting the 'face' of both themselves

and others, namely the individual dignity in front of the public, from the risk of making any mistake or misbehaving in public.

In another aspect, specifically that of the social life beyond the classroom environment, two major challenges have been frequently associated with Chinese international students. They have included, firstly, the over-intensive contacts with these students' co-cultural friends and classmates, in contrast to the far fewer contacts with the classmates from non-Chinese context during either in-class or out-of-class activities (see, for example, Feng, 1991; Kingston & Forland, 2007; Peacock & Harrison, 2009). Secondly, these students often reported non-linguistic difficulty, and occasionally unwillingness, to obtain the necessary support for their overseas student life from multiple sources in their overseas environment; instead, they tended to merely rely on personal efforts or on obtaining assistance from co-cultural classmates and friends (Kingston & Forland, 2007; Spencer-Oatey & Xiong, 2006; Yan & Berliner, 2009). These two major challenges in social life are understandable for Chinese international students to a certain extent, because they do have different customs, norms, beliefs, and values of living and communication to those in western English-speaking countries. Given the example of the research of Kingston & Forland (2007) in a British university: none of the East Asian international student participants, including those from China, have utilized the university's student support services, since they overemphasized the personal effort required to overcome learning difficulties, and have not seen 'requesting and obtaining additional support from the university' as a potentially better solution. That may further inform a sense of isolation in the overseas learning environment for these international students. Indeed, the participants in the research of Kingston & Forland (2007) have commonly reported that most of their spare time has been committed to individual

learning, which has certainly left them little opportunity to engage with cultural others and university for advice-seeking and problem-solving.

By recognizing these difficulties or problems in Chinese international students' cross-cultural contact with the overseas learning environment, an undesirable impression towards such a group of international students may be given. That is, Chinese international students have been frequently associated with the tendency to be passive, and reluctant to develop relationships with individuals from other cultures and to adapt to the settings and practices in their overseas learning environments. Indeed, in some existing studies (see, for example, God & Zhang, 2019; Jin & Cortazzi, 2011; Peacock & Harrison, 2009), the above impression has been reported by local students in Australian and British universities, since they found difficulty in getting their overseas classmates from China to involve themselves in cross-cultural communication whether in classroom learning or after-class socialization, as well as in obtaining the desired responses from these overseas classmates during any communication. It should be admitted that the English language barrier has been a key context causing some Chinese international students' reluctance to communicate with local students (God & Zhang, 2019) and also some local students' equal reluctance to engage with Chinese international students (Peacock & Harrison, 2009). However, even in the study of God & Zhang (2019) alone, many other Chinese international students did appear to have a high level of oral English language proficiency for conversation. Thus, the non-linguistic problematic behaviours that these international students have demonstrated in their communication with local students, for example lacking an understanding of local culture and persisting with Chinese face-saving values (God & Zhang, 2019), may still facilitate the undesirable impression which has been identified above.

Despite the many existing studies cited above, which have suggested that Chinese international students have been frequently associated with problematic cross-cultural contacts in their overseas learning environments, it is worth remembering that not every academic study has supported such a characterisation. For example, Zhou & Todman (2008) investigated the learning experiences of 257 Chinese international students in British postgraduate courses. The findings revealed that these students were commonly enthusiastic about adapting to the learning environment of British higher education. In particular, they demonstrated their strong individual efforts to become acquainted with the new academic norms or rules by frequently contacting their lecturers; and to develop long-term cross-cultural friendship and communication with their classmates of other cultures by actively participating in both classroom activities and off-class socialization activities. In this case, a rather different picture of Chinese international students' cross-cultural contacts in the British learning environment emerges.

Nevertheless, given that the problematic experiences of Chinese international students in contact with overseas learning environments have been commonly reported by existing studies, it is important to review the causes or contexts that have been explored. According to many existing studies, such as those of Holmes (2004; 2005), Liu & Lin (2006), Smith & Khawaja (2011), Wan (2001), and Wang (2014), the significant cultural gap between Chinese society and western developed society, particularly in terms of etiquettes, social expectations, and educational practices, has been considered as the fundamental cause of the challenges Chinese international students experience in overseas learning environments. As explained by Henze & Zhu (2012): first, some social traditions or educational practices in international students' home society may discourage them from developing effective contacts with other students or local lecturers in an overseas education system; second, certain values

embedded in the socio-cultural norms or educational practices of international students' home society may conflict with those of the host society.

Indeed, a wide range of existing studies (see, for example, Chan, 1999; Cortazzi & Jin, 1997; Holmes, 2004, 2005; Jin & Cortazzi, 2011; Liu, 2002, 2010; Wu, 2009; Yan & Berliner, 2009; Zheng, 2010) have looked into the Chinese sociocultural contexts that may be embedded in Chinese international students' classroom learning behaviours and socialization within the overseas learning environments. Their findings have exemplified the view that the collectivist tradition of requiring young people to respect and comply with the authorities, and the values of face-saving to prevent the damage of self-dignity and others' dignity from misbehaving, are two common Chinese socio-cultural characteristics that may cause some Chinese students' problematic cross-cultural contacts in overseas learning environments. The reason for that is, under the influence of the lengthy obedience to the cultural contexts cited above, students in China have been accustomed to commit themselves to avoiding offending authorities, protecting the harmony within the group, and remaining modest on any public occasion. As a result, despite moving into an overseas environment, it is normal to observe that some Chinese international students persisted with their home learning practices. For example, they have continued to avoid the expression of doubts toward classmates and lecturers' opinions during the class (Chan, 1999; Holmes, 2005); have been reluctant to voice their opinions in classroom group discussions (Holmes, 2004, 2005); and have tended to keep quiet in the course of classroom learning (Holmes, 2005). Also, some of these students still expected lecturers to provide exhaustive lecturing of textbook knowledge and to take notes of everything communicated by lecturers (Jin & Cortazzi, 2011; Wu, 2009; Zheng, 2010; Zhou et.al., 2005). Built upon these understandings, it is thus not a surprise to see that some scholars, such as Tran (2013) and Zhou et.al., (2005), believe that there is a positive

connection between the passiveness demonstrated by some Chinese students in overseas classroom learning and certain Chinese sociocultural contexts.

Meanwhile, it is apparent that many Chinese sociocultural contexts, like the collectivist tradition and face-saving values that have been discussed above, are incompatible with the educational practices and the underlying beliefs in the developed western societies. For instance, as outlined by Turner & Robson (2008), from the early stage of schooling, students in Australia and the United Kingdom are frequently expected to develop their thoughts and present their reasoning during the classroom learning or in the assignments. That has reflected the appreciation of developing students' independent thinking as an important academic ability. However, this is not the case in the Chinese education system, since the lecturer's ultimate authority in teaching and the authoritative learning materials, like textbooks, are always emphasized (Jin & Cortazzi, 2011). Further, Gabb (2006) argued that in Australian higher education, students are encouraged to demonstrate initiatives in exploring beyond the existing knowledge, included those from authoritative sources. As Gabb (2006: 361) explained, the root cause could be attributed to two important western social beliefs, namely that it is important to reward people for 'their individual initiative and the risks they take in confronting authority', and also their 'established scholarship to put forward their own opinions and theories'. In contrast, these social beliefs are much less emphasized in Chinese society. The reason is not only the conventionally unchallengeable power of Chinese lecturers in delivering authoritative knowledge to students (Jin & Cortazzi, 2011) but also the values of collectivism, which required people to act together in a cohort and obey the guidance of group leaders, often the experts and authorities (Gabb, 2006; Hofstede, 2001).

When international students come to an overseas environment which has the sociocultural contexts that are dissimilar or even conflicting with those they have been accustomed to in their home society, it could be imaged that some of them would find a great level of difficulty to adapt, and instead, they rather stay committed to their home culture so that they can return to their comfort zone. According to Ward, Bochner & Furnham (2005), the above circumstance has been considered as ordinary, since migrants, including international students, may choose to avoid further cross-cultural contact and adaptation if they have been shocked or have assumed they would be shocked by an alien socio-cultural environment. The findings of some studies have supported this point. For instance, Spencer-Oatey & Xiong (2006) found some Chinese international students preferred to live and retain friendships with co-cultural peers because they felt that the new lifestyle and social customs exhibited by local peers were too different to be accepted. Interestingly, in another study implemented by Spencer-Oatey (2017) as well, British local students confirmed the above point by stating that most Chinese international students did not socialize with them frequently and preferred to be insular with their co-cultural peers.

In that sense, the above studies have also revealed that retaining a close relationship with co-cultural friends and their original ways of living - just as how they did in the home society - is indeed a common technique for Chinese international students to defend themselves from the cultural shock. Though it could be argued that the above commitment to home cultural practices with co-cultural people in the overseas environment may not always be associated with the perceived cultural shock. For instance, as Holmes (2004) discovered, many Chinese international students in a New Zealand university chose to remain silent and passive in classroom discussions, as they did not want to be labelled as a show-off by co-cultural peers and they felt everyone should remain cohesive as a cultural group. In that case, for these

international students, retaining their commitment to home cultural practices is an unspoken shared belief used to bond everyone together, which it is felt no one should challenge.

From the arguments and evidence cited above, it is apparent that some Chinese international students have been viewed by researchers as a group of overseas students who retained their home cultures in overseas environments and preferred association with their co-cultural peers. That is seen as the consequence of both the uniqueness of certain Chinese sociocultural traditions or values and the conflict between Chinese culture and the typical western culture. In other words, just as Jiang et.al., (2010) concluded, many Chinese international students demonstrated a positive connection between the purposes of certain Chinese cultures and these students' marked tendencies to retain their home culture and bond with their co-cultural peers in overseas environments.

To better define the above picture, it is important to explore the term 'commitment', as has been suggested and utilized by scholars in sociological studies and social-psychological studies. For instance, as Szabo, Ward & Fletcher (2016, p. 485-486) stated, an individual committed to a group will demonstrate adherence to the values and norms embedded in the contexts of the said group. This describes the pattern of behaviour for 'what is an individual's commitment to a group looks like', but it could be argued that the descriptions on further aspects are still needed. Phinney & Ong (2007, p. 272) on the other hand pointed out that an individual's commitment to a group reflects the occurrence of a strong level of both personal affective connection and investment in a group. In that sense, the in-depth attachment to the sociocultural contexts of a group and the intensive bonding to the group members facilitate the commitment to the group. Similarly, the work of Campbell et.al., (1996) and Stephen, Fraser & Marcia (1992) addresses the above point as well, yet with more nuance. According

to their respective studies, an individual's commitment to a group has been considered as essentially a status, which is when an individual developed a very clear sense and a consistent acceptance for the norms and beliefs of a group and actively engages in the activities that can continually support the above self-concept and self-acceptance. Thus, in summary, the nature of the 'commitment' of individuals to a group could generally refer to two key conditions, namely the individuals' strong tendency to maintain the cultural practices or heritages that embedded within the contexts of the group, and their strong attachment with other group members in daily life or group activities. In the light of the above discussions and definitions, this researcher has developed a diagram (see below, Figure 1) to describe the nature of international students' commitment to home society in the overseas environment.

Figure 1. International students' commitment to home society in overseas
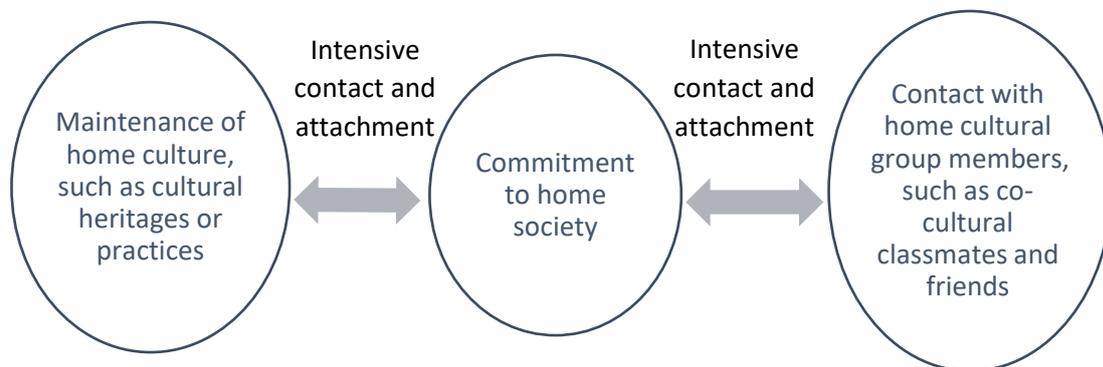
If perceiving Chinese society as not a vague social system but a specific group of individuals with many agreed and shared cultural heritages or practices, just as Campbell et.al., (1996) and Stephen, Fraser & Marcia (1992) have proposed; then it is reasonable to see that Chinese international students, who are still the members of Chinese society, would retain contact with and attachment to both their home culture and co-cultural peers even when they are studying in overseas. For some Chinese international students, this contact and attachment may be particularly intense if they decided to study overseas for only a short period and then

return to home society permanently, as they could still retain a strong level of contact and attachment with home cultures and co-cultural people just as they did in Chinese society previously. It is important to remind ourselves that as over 600,000 Chinese students went overseas for their education in 2017 alone and there is a continued and significant growth of the number of Chinese international students since 1978 (Ministry of Education of China, 2018). They have made students from China as the largest group of international students in the world (Hao et.al., 2016). Thus, Chinese international students will never be short of co-cultural friends in the overseas learning environment, nor of the opportunity to maintain their intensive contact and firm attachment with co-cultural peers. Indeed, in many existing studies (e.g. Holmes, 2004; Jiang et.al., 2010; Spencer-Oatey & Xiong, 2006) discussed above, Chinese international students did report a great yet probably problematic tendency to retain Chinese norms or traditions as well as their close, intensive contacts with co-cultural friends when arrived and studied in overseas higher education. In that sense, the phenomenon above has matched well with the definitions of 'commitment to a group' that developed by scholars such as Campbell et.al., (1996), Phinney & Ong (2007), Stephen et.al., (1992) and Szabo et.al., (2016).

Whilst the studies above have suggested cultural uniqueness or difference as the causes for Chinese international students' challenging cross-cultural contact experiences and their strong commitment to both home cultures and co-cultural people in overseas; other studies that followed alternative perspectives have reached similar findings in exploring Chinese international students' experiences in the overseas environments.

For example, Zhou et al., (2008) have applied the 'cultural shock' perspective to interpreting the discomfort occurring during the cross-cultural contacts of Chinese international students. The results suggested that for many Chinese international students, their anxiety and the

resulting sense of alienation from overseas learning environments are caused by the deficiency of experiences which would allow them to appreciate the new educational practices perceived from their cross-cultural contacts. Moreover, this deficiency of experience may be exacerbated by some home sociocultural characteristics that these Chinese students have been impacted by, such as the expectations of exhaustive knowledge transferred by their lecturers and the lecturer's authoritarian role in lecturing. A similar finding has been suggested by Liberman (1994), McCargar (1993) and Mori (2000), although they have utilized the 'cultural distance' perspective, namely a mode of cultural analysis that defines and measures the gap of quality for the most common cultural characteristics between different societies (Hofstede, 2001; Shenkar, 2001). Liberman (1994), McCargar (1993) and Mori (2000) explored the challenges for Asian international students having to cope with the cultures in the western learning environment respectively with the above perspective; they all suggested that those challenges are largely refer to the level of uniqueness of Asian cultures against the typical western ones. Examples included the Chinese educational traditions which perceive lecturers as the master of knowledge who had absolute power and academic position in teaching and perceive students as a junior group who should take note of and carefully follow what their lecturers have taught. The Chinese cultures cited above have then led some Chinese international students to be passive in the typical western classroom because these students just repeat what they have been accustomed to do previously in their new learning environment: they felt confused about the new educational practices they were confronted with and thus lacked the confidence for further participation.

Interestingly, Liberman (1994), McCargar (1993) and Mori (2000) have also claimed that the large distance between the Chinese educational practices and the typical western educational practices also played a part in the above problematic experiences. As they suggested, in the

typical western classroom, it is ordinary and expected that lecturers facilitate discussions and other forms of activity with students together, and engage students in a humorous or friendly manner. As Chan (1999) further commented, these typical western educational practices reflect the emphasis on a reciprocal and less formal relation between lecturers and students, and its root could be found in the typical western beliefs that people should be treated with respect and reciprocally, and that teachers are responsible for developing students in an individual basis. They are, however, very different from the lecturer-student relationship and the role of lecturers in China that have been discussed above.

With the supplementary findings and discussions from the above studies, it is thus easier to understand the common understandings produced by some studies (e.g. Chan, 1999; Cortazzi & Jin, 1997; Holmes, 2004, 2005, 2008; Smith & Khawaja, 2011; Tran, 2013; Wan, 2001). These are that: Chinese international students have been frequently found to be problematic in terms of their capacity to develop efficient cross-cultural contact with cultural others in overseas learning environments; they also struggle to cope with the embedded rules and norms of the host society, since they continue to be committed to many socio-cultural values or educational practices that they have been cultivated in their home society for years; and they also remain in intensive contact with co-cultural people in overseas learning environments rather than developing meaningful and frequent contact with people from other cultures. The problematic phenomena above were often associated with the cultural differences between Chinese society and typical western society, particularly in terms of educational and socio-cultural aspects, together with the extended influences of the uniqueness of certain Chinese educational and social cultures.

1.3 Criticisms of existing understandings of Chinese international students' cross-cultural contact and commitment to home society in overseas

It is important to state that this researcher does appreciate the findings of the above existing studies as they have explored the cultural factors that may contribute to Chinese international students' experienced challenges in developing the cross-cultural contact with cultural others in an overseas learning environment and the following adaptation to a new environment. However, this researcher also wonders whether the above findings that have been generated through the perspective of cultural difference or cultural uniqueness have limitations. In other words, before he implements any design of theoretical framework and methodology, this researcher would like to explore whether the above perspective and the relevant findings are sufficient to explore Chinese international students' cross-cultural contact experiences comprehensively and interpret them correctly.

Accordingly, a wider range of the existing studies has been reviewed by this researcher to generate a richer picture demonstrating Chinese international students' cross-cultural contact experiences, as well as the criticisms toward the above perspective and understandings. In general, two key points of concern have been suggested. They are not only relevant to the discovery of the limitations of previous understandings, but also the new evidence and issues that are relevant for this researcher in designing and conducting this study in attempting to overcome those limitations.

First, although many existing studies recognized the important influence of certain unique elements of Chinese culture in producing Chinese international students' challenging cross-cultural contact experiences; it appears they fail to consider the limitations of the influence of home culture. Particularly, they tended to suggest that Chinese international students are often unable to cope with some western socio-cultural values and educational practices as

these students often tended to retain their home cultural practices. However, this perspective did not give attention to the efforts of international students' ongoing cross-cultural contacts with their new learning environments, and these ongoing contacts may offset the influence of students' previous socio-cultural and educational experiences to a certain degree. Although it is also important to recognize that the process of these ongoing cross-cultural contacts may not always be comfortable or rewarding for international students.

There is evidence to support the claim above. During the 1990s, Hong Kong higher education experienced a series of changes, which aimed to introduce the communicative and group-based teaching practices from the western classroom learning into local classroom learning rather than relying on the traditional didactic lecturing. After exploring the experiences of students who have undergone the above changes, Kember (2000, 2009) and his colleagues (e.g. Kember & Leung, 2005; Kember & Kwan, 2000; Kember, Hong & Ho, 2012) found that although at the beginning most students were still passive and silent in classroom learning because they continued to exercise traditional Chinese learning practices, that was not the case after a few months. After a period of ongoing contacts with the group classroom activities and new assignment settings, students learned that it was pointless to remain committed to the traditional learning practices but that they should rather adapt to the new practices to meet teachers' new expectation and so attain better academic performance. Thus, the above case has shown that Chinese students are not culturally and inherently problematic in terms of coping with the western educational culture when their learning environment changed and they made contact with the new cultures.

It could be argued, though, that several studies (e.g. Holmes, 2004, 2005, 2008; Zhu et al., 2008) found that even after a period of contacts with their new cultural environment, some

Chinese international students have rather retained the traditional patterns of learning. On the other hand, it is also worth remembering that, not only the studies in Hong Kong discussed above but also other studies (e.g. Heng, 2016; Liu, 2010; Zhou & Todman, 2009) have revealed that many Chinese international students were apt to improve their patterns and perceptions for participating into the classroom activities, especially when they became familiarised with new educational settings and understood that the adaptation to new rules or practices would assist them to achieve promising learning outcomes.

Nevertheless, the conflicting findings shown above have pointed out that international students' educational and socio-cultural experiences in home society may be offset by their ongoing contacts with the new learning environment, and in certain cases, they may not. Thus, for many existing studies based on the perspective of cultural difference or cultural uniqueness, it is still improper to assume the unlimited influence of certain Chinese cultures upon Chinese international students' cross-cultural contacts in their overseas learning environments, as even their possible commitment to home culture may occur during the course of their contacts. Also, without investigating the efforts that Chinese international students have made during their ongoing cross-cultural contacts with the new learning environment and the contexts of their cross-cultural contacts, it would be over-claiming to judge either the Chinese international students' possible preference to retain some home cultural practice or their intensive contacts with co-cultural peers as problematic.

Secondly, it could be argued that some existing studies have commonly studied the cross-cultural contact experiences of international students based on an unspoken attitude. Namely that, it is self-evident that international students arriving into the learning environment of a foreign society should fully cooperate with the new cultural practices and other contexts

(Cadman, 2000), otherwise the quality of their cross-cultural contact experiences, including their possible commitment to their home society, would be doubted. However, this attitude has been criticized by some scholars. For instance, as Henze & Zhu (2012) argued, it is problematic to place the home-related experiences of a certain group of international students under the judgement of another cultural group, typically the host cultural group in overseas society. Worse still, people with the perspective of another culture – typically the host culture – may then assert these international students as being problematic in terms of their ability to cope with the embodied cultures in the host society merely because their unique home-related experiences do not match the expectations or practices of their host society.

Therefore, the key issue here is that some existing studies may have overlooked, whether intentionally or unintentionally, a very common circumstance, which is that a large degree of cultural diversity still exists across the populations in the both developed societies and developing societies, even in an unprecedented era of globalization. Moreover, it is important to remind ourselves that such cultural diversity is particularly apparent between the East and the West in terms of how education, interaction, and social order have been implemented and developed based on disparate philosophical values, ethical norms, and social traditions (Cutri, Rogers & Montero, 2007; Hofstede, 2001). In that sense, for international students who have been cultivated in China which naturally had a great level of difference from the western society where they experience their overseas learning, it would be unfair and impractical to expect they should abandon what has been believed and practiced over their lifetime and then completely adapt to strange educational practices and any accompanying embodied social values or tradition.

Besides, it is worth noting that for local and international students alike, both the process and the relevant pressure to cope with a new learning environment can be equally demanding. As Todd (1997) argued, that is especially true while both local and international students are the freshmen of the university but are expected to get familiar with and then adapt to the unique learning settings in higher education quickly. Hence, it would be improper to over-emphasize the seriousness of international students' challenging contact experiences resulting from their new learning environment, nor the cultural uniqueness or difference that may cause the above challenging experiences, as local students would experience the same challenge. However, this researcher does not suggest that 'international students would experience a similar level of difficulty to that of local students in terms of coping with a new learning environment. Indeed, a major difficulty for international students, as opposed to local students, is that international students' self-adjustment is more challenging since they have been physically separated from other members of their home cultural group, especially their relatives and close friends who can offer them some necessary emotional or social support to go through the difficult period in understanding and adapting to a new environment.

At this point, the findings of some studies (e.g. Brown, 2009; Kim, 1988, 2005; Turner & Robson, 2008) offer meaningful evidence in support of the above point, as they confirmed that international students often establish and retain intensive contacts with co-cultural people in the overseas learning environment so as to facilitate the mutual emotional, informational, educational and entertainment supports and to ameliorate the self-adjustment for better life quality in the foreign society. Meanwhile, this researcher is also aware of a possibility, that is, to a certain degree, the above contacts with co-cultural people for mutual support in the new learning environment are likely to repeatedly reinforce these students' existing attachment with their home cultural heritage and home cultural group, which may then facilitate their

sense of separation from the host society. That would be particularly true if international students do not receive sufficient support from the stakeholders of a new learning environment, such as their local classmates, lecturers, and management of the university, which would then leave these students in confusion, anxiety, and then the feeling of separation and preference to retain strong attachment with home culture and co-cultural people for self-comforting.

In summary, the above academic evidence and the relevant criticisms have addressed the limitations of both the existing understandings and their embedded perspectives regarding how they have problematized Chinese international students' cross-cultural contact and their commitment to home society in the overseas learning environment. The first limitation refers to the failure to identify the limitations of home-cultural experiences on international students' cross-cultural contacts. It means some existing studies may have neglected Chinese students' initiative and efforts in developing ongoing cross-cultural contacts with their overseas learning environment, but have rather overemphasized and problematized these students' possible strong commitment to home cultures or home cultural group. The second limitation refers to a problematic unspoken attitude that appears to be embedded in some existing studies, which is that international students should completely cooperate with the host cultures once they have arrived in the new society for learning. However, that attitude has neglected the natural cultural diversity among the global populations; the feeling of international students about the consequences of abandoning their home cultural practices; the equivalent position between the international students and local students in terms of adapting to a new education system; and the difficulty for international students to adjust themselves to an overseas learning environment.

1.4 Research rationales and purposes

In consideration of these criticisms over the previous perspectives and the academic evidence that suggests the alternative to existing understandings; the rationale and purposes for implementing a new study exploring Chinese international students' commitment to home culture and co-cultural classmates or friends in their overseas learning environment have been suggested as follows.

As stated before, as a natural and understandable corollary of international students' cross-cultural contacts in the overseas learning environment, Chinese students' commitment to their home society has been often regrettably deemed by some existing studies (see, for example, Chan, 1999; Cortazzi & Jin, 1997; Holmes, 2004; Smith & Khawaja, 2011; Tran, 2013; Wan, 2001; Zhu et.al., 2008) as problematic. The reason refers to a series of flawed assumptions, namely that such a commitment, which produced by the strong influence of their home-cultural experiences, would reduce those international students' effort to adapt to their new learning environment, and it is self-evident for international students to completely cooperate with the host culture. It is thus necessary for a new study, which will be implemented by this researcher, to identify and utilize other perspectives that are likely to permit the unbiased interpretations of Chinese international students' cross-cultural contacts in an overseas learning environment, including their possible commitment to the home society, instead of simply problematize these issues.

Meanwhile, Chinese international students' challenging cross-cultural contacts in the overseas learning environment, and more importantly, the nature of their commitment to home society, are much more complex than has been suggested by existing studies. It is worth remembering that the core limitation of many existing studies is that they have

appreciated neither the limitation of influence of these students' home culture nor the individual student's effort of self-adjustment for a new environment. More seriously, they have over-simplified the cause of these international students' challenging cross-cultural contact and their commitment to home society to the cultural difference or the uniqueness of their home culture. It is thus necessary for this new study to go beyond the above superficial conclusion and explore these students' commitments to home society to a wider extent by covering all the issues that have been cited above so as to produce a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon, such as its forms of manifestation, facilitating factors or forces behind the context, and the fundamental rationale to explain its occurrence and continuality.

Before the detailed designing of such a study, this researcher is aware of a series of contextual circumstances regarding Chinese international students studying abroad. At present, as noted in the first and second section of this chapter, 4 out of 5 contemporary Chinese international students have studied abroad for degree courses; and the United Kingdom, as a typical English-speaking and developed western society, is one of the most popular destinations for contemporary Chinese international students. Meanwhile, China is also the top student sending society for British higher education (Hao et.al., 2016; Ministry of Education, 2018; Zhou et.al., 2008). As a result, this researcher feels it is both feasible and meaningful to implement the exploration on Chinese international students who studied degree courses in British higher education sector, in an attempt to reach the most relevant understanding from targeting Chinese international students who have studied in such a typical pathway and such a typical overseas learning environment and to generate the most significant understanding for such a large group of international students in one of the most popular western learning destinations.

After considering the target subject, scope, and target location of such a study, as well as the purpose of using new perspectives and theories to explore Chinese international students' commitment to home society during their overseas learning, this study also aims to explore the current educational and managerial practices in British higher education institutions that are dealing with Chinese international students' cross-cultural contacts, together with their outcomes and influences. That is because this researcher feels it is important to assist the major stakeholders in British higher education, especially the lecturers and management in higher education institutions, to understand the cross-cultural contact experiences and demands of Chinese international students in a more critical and in-depth manner, as which will suggest more reliable strategies or ways of working for helping international students such as those from China to improve their overseas learning experiences. British higher education institutions could also be benefited because a better understanding of the phenomenon cited above and the suggestions of targeted solutions would provide better effectiveness in assisting international students' adaptation to a new learning environment.

Chapter 2 Literature review

2.1 Understandings toward the concept of acculturation

In general, migration could be viewed as an unusual life event or change that brings migrants, including international students, to a foreign, distant environment for a period, and during which they are physically away from the home environment where grew up. Soon after they arrive in the host society, migrants are going to encounter two important issues. They are, firstly, the need to make sense of and then interpret any perceived difference between their home and host society that appears during their contacts with the new environment; and secondly, the challenge of coping with the consequences of their cross-cultural contacts in overseas daily life, for example in terms of behavioural and psychological aspects (Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2005; Ward & Kennedy, 1993).

The occurrence of these issues could be attributed to individuals' development of social cognition. Normally, people are cultivated from a young age constantly in how to behave in the ways that are acceptable in a certain social system and why they should behave in those ways. Such a process of acquiring sociocultural knowledge for home society, often known as socialization, will also bring enriched yet somewhat biased cultural experiences for individuals to rationalize their acquired sociocultural knowledge; for instance, most people believe their home cultural heritage is naturally validated and commonly accepted (Bredella, 2003; Verma, 1997) before the contact with other cultures. As a result, when migrants moved to and lived in a foreign society, especially where is unfamiliar for them or much different from the settings or practices in their home society, they will need to either expand their existing boundaries of acquired sociocultural knowledge or to reconstruct the meanings of sociocultural information, thus to produce more validated social cognition. Then accordingly, migrants will realize and thus interpret any implication that could be brought by the above

changes in their sociocultural knowledge or social cognition from their future foreign daily

life and review the subsequent ways in which to respond to those implications, which would

include the commitment to their home culture and co-cultural peers as one of the options.

Built upon the above understandings, many contemporary studies, such as those of Berry

(1980; 1997; 2006a; 2006b; 2007) himself, Berry and his colleagues (e.g. Dona & Berry,

1994; Sam & Berry, 2010), and other researchers (e.g. Bourhis et.al., 1997; Hutnik, 1991)

have commonly utilized acculturation as terminology to define a circumstance, in which

individuals have changed after they make first-hand contacts with the subjects, contents, or

conditions that represent a new culture and its connecting social system, especially after they

arrived in a foreign society. It is important to remind ourselves though, that there are certain

degrees of variance within different researchers' conceptualizations of measuring such a

circumstance. For instance, Berry (1997) described acculturation as a cultural contact

phenomenon; it includes all major changes in a person's socio-cultural and psychological

aspects, such as his/her conversational customs and attitudes, as the resulting responses after

their first-hand cross-cultural contacts. On the other hand, Hutnik (1991) regarded

acculturation as relating to cultural identification instead; after the ongoing contacts with a

new culture and its connected cultural groups, individuals would ascertain or adjust their

association to different extents in terms of characteristics of both encountered cultural groups:

for example, a migrant may self-report as still being a member of a cultural group based on

personal family context but meanwhile, he/she may also present an extensive adaptation to

the clothing norms of another cultural group in practice. Yet, Bourhis et.al., (1997) argued

that acculturation should concern the circumstance of cultural adoption, namely that after

their first-hand cross-cultural contacts, individuals from one cultural group would adopt

diverse or additional perspectives which value and direct their future contacts with other societies and the members of other cultural groups.

Nevertheless, apart from the above differences in approach to measuring individuals' changes after they arrived in foreign society; the researchers cited above have generally suggested that acculturation occurs after the transformation of sociocultural surroundings and first-hand cross-cultural contact. Also, they commonly agree that acculturation refers to the adjustments in an individual's behaviours, knowledge, cognition, and emotions, which serve as the responses to the change in cultural surroundings brought about by the migration event and as the consequences of the first-hand contact with another cultural group along with its represented cultural characteristics.

It could be argued that at the surface level, the above understandings seem to suggest that migrants, included international students, should adjust themselves to new sociocultural surroundings in their host countries because they are the foreigners who come from diverse cultural contexts and bring their own cultural experiences into an overseas host country as the minority, rather than local people and their mainstream host culture. To a certain extent, that view has both supported and reflected an influential model of acculturation, namely the unidimensional model of acculturation. Two of the best-known explanations for proposing the unidimensional model were given by Gordon (1964) and Wood (1969). They assumed acculturation as a unidimensional process of change in which migrants move from their commitment to home society to the acceptance and adoption of mainstream culture of host society because of both the immersion in the host culture and their need for adaptation, which serves as a means of survival in a new environment. In that sense, either migrants' physical or psychological attachment to the cultural heritage of their home country would be gradually

weakened (Sam, 2006), even though the speed of such a process of adjustment may be different among migrants, often due to the differences in their contexts or characteristics (Van de Vijver & Phalet, 2004).

However, the major limitation of this model of acculturation is its biased supposition regarding the process of adjustment, which is assumed to apply to migrants only and is related to the need for migrants to fully adopt the mainstream local culture of the host society. A key criticism is that if the change of socio-cultural surroundings and resulting need of self-adjustment are valid expectations for migrants, they are also valid for local people who have been cultivated in their sociocultural environment. Indeed, migration will bring not only migrants, as the subjects who come from varied national cultures, into a host society; but different cultural knowledge and relevant sociocultural practices will be also carried and exercised by migrants repeatedly once they arrived. Both Schwartz et.al., (2010) and Van de Vijver & Phalet (2004) thus suggested that when the volume of received migrants increased continually in a society, such a society would become gradually multicultural, and in that case, individuals of all cultural groups in a multicultural society would need to work out strategies to understand and accommodate with each other to allow every group to make effective adjustments to changes in their common sociocultural environment. Otherwise, individuals whether from foreign cultures or the host culture could experience confusion, misunderstanding, and anxiety about living in a society characterised by cultural diversity. This perspective suggests the reduced necessity for migrants to give up their commitment to home cultural heritages or practices and fully adopt the host cultures since the host cultural group would need to learn and accommodate to migrants' own cultures.

Based on the above discussion, it is not difficult to realize why Redfield, Linton & Herskovits (1936), possibly the earliest academics articulating this perspective, defined acculturation as a co-occurring event of changes, caused by '*groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups* (ibid, p. 149)'. However, the directions, degrees, and strategies available for migrants to alter their usual cultural patterns for self-adjustment after the cross-cultural contacts with host society were unclear; let alone the related psychological changes, such as migrant's changes of perception of both home and host culture. To address those remaining question, after almost half a century, Berry (1980), Berry's colleagues (e.g. Berry, Kim, Power, Young & Bujaki, 1989), and researchers in other fields (e.g. Kim, 1988) have not only recalled the notions of Redfield et.al., (1936) again but also included more detailed concepts to support an in-depth interpretation of the nature of acculturation. Together with further studies, a systematic bidirectional model of acculturation has been gradually developed, which has been referred to as Berry's model of acculturation strategies.

The basis of such a bidirectional model of acculturation was founded in Berry's early writing. Berry (1980) argued that acculturation could be viewed as a process of adaptation rather than adoption, because after their first-hand contacts with the host culture, migrants will sense not only the differences between home culture and host culture but also the possible conflicts, and thus they will look for any way to reduce the unease or anxiety that is brought about by above cultural differences or conflicts. In that case, multiple ways of adaptation, or in other words, modes of accommodation, could be identified and utilized by migrants in both behavioural and psychological aspects, which have been often referred to as adjustment, reaction, and withdrawal (Berry, 1980, p. 10-12).

As is further explained by Berry (1980; 1997; 2007), from the psychological perspective, the adjustment, as a mode of accommodation, functions to reduce the perceived differences or conflicts between two contacting cultures, so that it will lead migrants to adjust their values, attitudes, and behaviours to bring harmony with the host society. On the other hand, adaptation or accommodation by reaction means migrants will not change their behavioural and psychological characteristics toward the characteristics of host culture completely; but it rather will remain confrontational against their host society's cultural contexts in certain aspects. In that sense, migrants have chosen to remain committed towards their home heritages and practices so as to retain much of their previous ways of life in the context of the host society. That would then urge some sorts of correspondence in the host society and prevent the possible disconnection or loss of their home culture upon the issues where major differences or even conflicts exist between home and host culture (Berry, 2007). Finally, adaptation by withdrawal refers to a situation of minimal connection with the host society, and in that case, the adaptive stress caused by the differences between home and host culture could be avoided completely by migrants. However, it is worth noting that such a technique of avoidance may not always be realistic for migrants to utilize whilst taking account of the influence or attitude of host society upon other cultures. For instance, a host society with strong adaptive policies for multiculturalism, like Canada, could facilitate mutual understanding and acceptance between migrants and local cultural group, which leaves the mode of withdrawal impractical or difficult for migrants to operate, since the strong socio-political tolerance and expectation in Canada enabled migrants' equivalent contacts and participations with both home and host cultural group (Berry, 1984; 2013).

These understandings have suggested two important ideas that have a significant impact on the understanding of acculturation in this research. First, Berry (2007, p. 698) developed the

concept that acculturation refers to not only a '*dual process of cultural and psychological changes*' that will take place due to the cross-cultural contact between two or more cultural groups; but it is also bidirectional as migrants identify and utilize multiple strategies, which can be either moving toward or against the other cultures, especially host culture. Thus, this researcher assumes that migrants, like international students, could accommodate with local and other non-host cultures harmoniously in the host society, or, choose to live securely alone by themselves with their strong attachments to home culture and home cultural group. In that sense, acculturation for international students is defined as a neutral process, meaning that changes of migrants' behaviours and psychology can take place in either a forward or backward direction in relation to the cross-cultural adaptation. Secondly, this researcher believes that when migrants, specifically international students, make contact and live alongside the beliefs, values, and practices of a host cultural group or host social environment, this will not automatically and necessarily lead to abandonment or decline of the beliefs, values, and/or practices of their home cultural group or environment. The reason is, according to Berry (1980), that migrants could utilize either less adaptive or even non-adaptive modes of acculturation, namely the reaction or withdrawal respectively, to cope with the perceived stress or demand for cross-cultural adaptation suggested by the host society during their first-hand cross-cultural contacts.

2.2 Interpretations of Berry's acculturation strategies and the relevance with migrants' commitment to home society

Built upon the above conceptual foundations, two broad dimensions have been then suggested as the fundamental factors of influence that can decide the strategies for migrants to cope with other cultures in the overseas host society. They are, firstly, that of cultural maintenance (Berry & Sam, 1997), namely retaining migrant's home cultural characteristics and relevant cultural identity; and secondly, the cross-cultural contact or participation (Berry

& Sam, 1997), namely developing connections with other cultural groups, including host cultural groups and other international cultural groups, in the host society.

The conceptualization of the above two influencing dimensions is related to a general circumstance during the migration referred to previously. That is, after arriving at overseas destinations, migrants will notice the differences or even the conflict with their home culture after their first-hand contacts with the host society, and that could post a certain level of confusion, or even threat, to what they have believed or practised in their home society for a long time (Bredella, 2003; Verma, 1997). As migrants will then attempt to make sense of the cross-cultural differences and deal with the relevant psychological unease and knowledge gaps; by researching such a selection or decision-making process of acculturation, Berry (1980; 1997) discovered two major principles that can both reflect migrants' overall attitudes toward acculturation and suggest the resulting attempts to cope with a new cultural environment. The two major principles are the degree to which home cultural heritage is considered to be important by migrants, which is described by Berry & Sam (1997, p. 296) as '*Is it considered to be of value to maintain cultural identity and characteristics*'; and the extent to which migrants should be involved in other cultural groups, or in other words, to develop contact and perhaps remain participation among all sorts of cultural groups, illustrated by the suggestive question of '*Is it considered to be of value to maintain relationships with dominant society*' given by Berry & Sam (1997, p. 296).

Once those two influencing broad dimensions for migrants' decision-making regarding acculturation are defined and their suggested questions are posed to participants; as Dona & Berry (1994) stated, either the continuous scale from negative to positive or the simplified, divided options of both YES and NO will become the indicators which measure migrants'

attitudes on the above two principles, as well as their possible following patterns of action, as the behavioural response, for cultural adaption. Based on the result of using the instrument above, a highly organized model has been designed by Berry (1980; 1997; 2007) to describe the intersection of the dimension of cultural heritage maintenance and the dimension of cross-cultural contact (see below Figure 2). In total, it includes four possible attitudes and relevant coping strategies that migrants use to manage their first-hand contacts with both host society and home culture, namely four acculturation options or strategies (Berry, 1997; 2006b).

Figure 2. Model of acculturation strategies applied to migrants, adapted from Berry (1980; 1997; 2007; Berry & Sam, 1997)
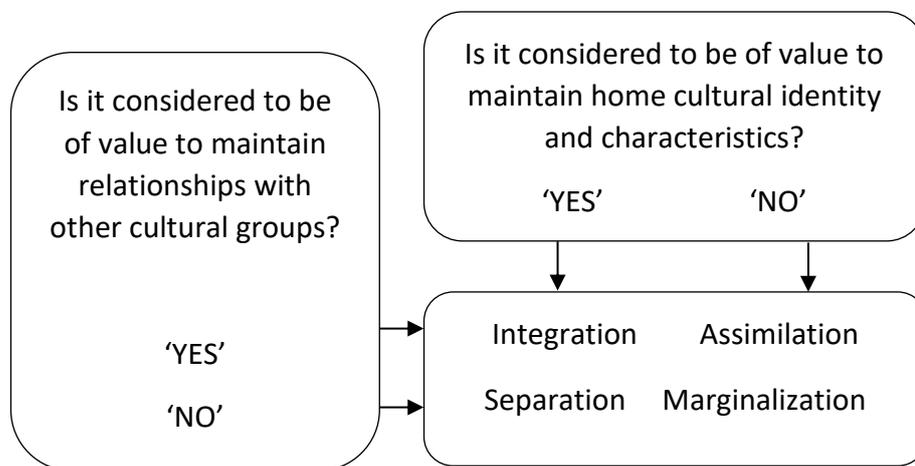
According to Berry (1980; 1997; 2005; 2007) and the collaborative works between Berry and his colleagues (e.g. Berry & Sam, 1997; Dona & Berry, 1994; Sam & Berry, 2010), the first acculturation strategy for migrants is integration. Integration refers to the circumstance when participants of migrant origin selected 'yes' or responded positively on both dimensions. That means, on the one hand, migrants expressed the willingness to preserve the psychological and cultural attachments with home cultural heritages or practices and co-cultural people; and on the other hand, migrants expressed their interests to also develop a wider extent of social contacts with members of both host culture and other cultures in the host society. Berry (1997, p. 9) then argued that such an acculturation strategy appears as the most effective one

because migrants demonstrated the interest to '*participate as an integral part of the larger social network*' in a new cultural environment without compromising the integrity of home cultural heritage and their commitment to home society. In that sense, it could be argued that the use of integration strategy does not suggest a lack of harmony between the above two important acculturative issues of concern within participants' perception of cross-cultural contact and their decision-making process in relation to the cross-cultural adaptation. Thus, when acculturation occurred, the positive balance between migrants' attitudes to participating in the host society and maintaining a close connection with the home cultural environment should be able to observe as the evidence.

However, Berry (1997; 2005; 2007) also warned that the integration strategy is not always an option, since individuals may be unwilling or uninterested in contact with members of other cultural groups, often owing to the prejudice, discrimination or other constraints in host society that can deter cross-cultural communication. Also, as Zhou (2003) outlined, another circumstance may also prevent individuals' communication with other cultural groups in the host society. That refers to the linguistic, sociocultural, and resource difficulties which often prevent migrants, especially those newly arrived, from establishing regular and efficient contacts with cultural others. In that circumstance, meaningful contact between migrants and members of other cultural groups cannot be developed, and an integration strategy is unlikely to be a feasible option for migrants.

To describe the above problematic dimension of cross-cultural contact, the existence of separation as a strategy has been suggested. This refers to a situation where migrants express an evasive or exclusionary attitude towards interacting with other cultural groups in host society, rather preferring to preserve their home cultural characteristics and extensive

interaction with co-cultural people in their daily life (Berry, 1980, 1997; 2007). Based on the above concept, it could be argued that migrants' responses in terms of undervaluing or neglecting the contact with members of other cultural groups, as well as stressing the attachments to home cultural characteristics and co-cultural people, are two important indicators which demonstrate whether such a strategy has occurred. As Berry (2007) further explains, forming as a completed unit, these two indicators reveal migrant's negative perception of the relationship between the expectation of cultural heritage maintenance and the implementation of cross-cultural contact. Therefore, to some extent, separation could be thought of as the strategy that reflects migrants' utmost commitment to their home culture and home cultural group members.

In reality, separation refers to two forms of migrants' contact practices. The first form is commonly known as the avoidance of contact with cultural others. It means migrants tend to avoid unnecessary contact with the communities and members of the host society or prefer to withdraw from participation in social activities with members of other cultures in the host society (Goodnow, 1997). While the first form seems more relevant to individual decisions or choices in terms of contact with cultural others; the second form presents differently, because it refers to various ways of defence that are more implicit than merely willing to avoid the cross-cultural contact. For instance, Goodnow (1997), Hughes & Chen (1999) and Padilla-Walker & Thompson (2005) described pre-arming and cocooning as two separation practices that are used frequently by some ethnic minorities in the United States. Pre-arming means admonishing migrants by depreciating anyone that criticizes migrants' home cultural heritage or threatens the relevant connections. Cocooning, on the other hand, stands for covering migrants through their exclusive participation in the circle of friends, organization, community, and religious groups which share home cultural heritages. It is clear that the

purposes of the above practices are that they educate and remind migrants what kinds of cross-cultural contact could be threatening or contradictory to the connections with home cultural heritage and home cultural members, and shield migrants both physically and conceptually from the risk of losing their home cultural heritage, which may result from substantial contacts with cultural others, though an individual migrant may not always realize or agree with these two modes of 'protection'.

In contrast to the above separation strategy; the third acculturation strategy, namely assimilation, refers to a circumstance where on one hand, participants responded positively to the development of interactions with members of other cultural groups, especially those from the host cultural group, and on the other hand, participants respond negatively to the idea of keeping their home cultural characteristics and relevant psychological attachments with co-cultural people (Berry, 1980; 1997; 2006b; 2007). In that sense, assimilation suggests the circumstance when migrants are not retaining their commitment to their home culture and home cultural group. However, it could be argued though the circumstance above is unlikely to happen for temporary or short-term migrants, such as international students. Temporary or short-term migrants have the certainty that they will return home at a certain time in the future, and thus they have a correspondingly smaller incentive to disconnect from their home culture and co-cultural peers after arriving in the host society.

To further explain the occurrence of assimilation, Berry (1997; 2007) and Henry et.al., (2005) argue that individuals who have lost connection with their home culture and co-cultural peers in the host society and have been pushed by host society towards cultural adoption may be the migrants more likely to adopt assimilation. Such a migrant group has been found by Berry & Feng (2016) as referring to the individuals who arrived in host society from a young age

and who have resided in the host society for a long time so that they have comparatively little contact with home society rather than the host society, let alone the commitment. Besides, assimilation could be utilized by refugees as well, as many refugees are migrants who have been forced to leave a country where they cannot find security and opportunity for development, so they moved into a safer and developed country for a new life, even though the new society may have little or no connection with either their home society or co-cultural peers and they are expected to learn new ways of life accordingly. As Ertorer (2016) suggested, that matches the instance in Canada well, since refugees from Burma to Canada have chosen assimilation as the top strategy to settle down despite the great level of cultural differences between two societies and their language difficulty.

While the above instances suggest the pressure of a new, less home-related socio-cultural environment as playing an important role in shaping migrants' selection of separation strategy; in some other cases, individual's voluntary consent to adopt a separation strategy may be functional to a greater degree. That has been outlined by Handelsman & Gottlieb (2005), as they argue that it is common that when people move to a new socio-cultural environment with a clear, strong intention to obtain the approval from the new environment, assimilation will most likely occur. The reason being, when the knowledge and practices connected with a new socio-cultural environment have been accepted by those individuals, a process of acceptance may also divorce their future understanding and commitment from the approval to their previous socio-cultural knowledge and practices, especially if the new environment and previous environment are significantly different to each other. In that sense, assimilation could indicate a risky circumstance for individuals to face even where voluntary, as there is no guarantee that they will obtain satisfactory approval from full cultural adoption

while the disconnection from previous culture or cultural environment could be substantial and permanent.

The last option of an acculturation strategy for migrants to utilize is marginalization. Such a strategy reflects the circumstance where individuals have little interest in keeping their home cultural characteristics in a new cultural environment, nor in having regular and meaningful engagement with either host cultural group and other cultural groups (Berry, 1997; 2007). In that sense, migrants would be separated from both the mainstream society and the minority community. Based on the above definition, it is not a surprise to see marginalization has been thought of as the least efficient option by Berry (1997; 2007) and Phillimore (2011), simply because it facilitates neither meaningful cross-cultural contact nor the commitment to home cultural heritages and practices and co-cultural peers in a new socio-cultural environment. It could be argued though, that the nature of marginalization above also suggested that there is little likelihood of migrants themselves selecting such a strategy. The reason being, providing people always have a clear purpose in mind, in terms of migrating to an overseas society; migrants should realize that the use of marginalization cannot help them to achieve the purpose of developing understanding or integration to host society, nor that of preserving the psychological and cultural attachments with their co-cultural people and home cultural heritage. To this extent, marginalization could be also considered as the least favoured acculturation strategy for migrants, and indeed until now, only a few studies have suggested the rare existence of marginalization as a strategy that is voluntarily taken by migrants (Schwartz & Zamboanga, 2008; Unger et.al., 2002).

According to the discussion above, the occurrence of marginalization seems less likely to be adopted by migrants. That has then brought attention to the external influences that are

uncontrollable yet powerful in shaping migrants' selection of an acculturation strategy, for example, host society's socio-cultural circumstances. Berry (2007) and Berry et.al., (1989) have agreed with that point; they further outlined the view that the exclusion of, or discrimination towards, a certain culture and its relevant cultural group in host society is the usual cause of marginalization. The key is, under the experience of exclusion or discrimination, migrants may experience not only a lesser opportunity than that given by the members of host cultural group to develop successful and effective contact with the host society; but also experience the pressure of negation from the host society to imply the need to disconnect from the contact with their co-cultural people or to remove their adherence to home cultural characteristics. Thus, in a case where migrants felt isolated or sometimes discriminated against, marginalization will be their only feasible option to escape from the above dilemma physically and emotionally (Phillimore, 2011) by not committing to either host or home society. To that extent, it confirms the suggested reasons for African refugees in Egypt reported as utilizing marginalization, which referred to their perception of the tendency of many Egyptians to depreciate and harass cultural minorities, especially those who came from undeveloped and troublesome countries (Henry, 2012). Besides, Berry et.al., (1989) also warned that host cultural group may not always be the only source of exclusion or discrimination: it may result from other cultural groups in the host society. That could also help to explain why in Vadher's study (2009) some young members of certain cultural minorities in the UK adopted marginalization, such as those who originate from Pakistan, as they often felt cultural discrimination from not only British cultural groups but also other western cultural groups and Indian cultural groups.

The paragraphs above have analysed the nature of multiple strategies for migrants to manage their contact with both their host society and their home society. It is then apparent that an

individual's valuation of their attachment to home culture and home cultural group, as well as an individual's valuation of contact with a different society and cultural others, will be affected by both the circumstance of the external environment and the quality of intrinsic decision-making. In other words, understanding migrant's commitment to their home culture and co-cultural group members, as a part of migrants' selection of acculturation strategy, requires the exploration of migrant's perception towards both of changing socio-cultural surroundings and personal life. That is also the consensus of Berry (1997; 2005; 2007), Ward et.al., (2005) and Ward & Kennedy (1993). Correspondingly, those scholars emphasize the importance of appreciating two broad issues. They are, firstly, the characteristic differences between the home society and host society of migrants from a specific cultural group, and the environmental context, which allows the identification of possible willingness and difficulty for that cultural group in dealing with cross-cultural difference and cross-cultural contact. Secondly, the characteristic differences among individual migrants, as the personal context, for identifying their preferences and variances in deciding how to cope with the cultural knowledge gap and psychological unease in individual level, even if they come from the same cultural group and arrive in the same host society (see, for example, Berry, 1997, p. 15; Berry, 2005, p. 702-704; Ward & Kennedy, 1993, p. 132).

In the light of these two issues of concern, the general factors that would influence migrant's attitude for cross-cultural contact and their resulting attempt to respond, namely the selection of any acculturation strategy, are suggested. For instance, in terms of the environmental context, Berry (1997; 2005; 2007) and Ward & Kennedy (1993) both state that the significant dissimilarity of cultural characteristics between migrant's home society and host society is a key factor that impedes a migrant's understanding, interaction, and then possibly their acceptance of new culture, especially if such a gap is large. Moreover, Berry (2005, p. 702)

further argued that it is also important to look at the combined societal conditions of home society that are perceived by migrants, such as the '*political, economic, and demographic conditions*' because they can motivate or demotivate migrants to migrate to overseas society; as well as '*the historical and attitudinal conditions*' of migration in host society that are perceived by migrants, such as the trends, policies, practices, ideology or prejudice, and social supports for inward migration for a certain group of migrants (Berry, 1997, p. 15; 2005, p. 703), since those conditions can reveal the level of attractiveness and likely affordance for migrants to develop deeper, broader participation in a specific host society.

On the other hand, in terms of personal context, Berry (1997; 2005), Ward et.al., (2005) and Ward & Kennedy (1993) agree that an individual migrant's experiences of life change, perceptions of life event control, and length of time in contacting with other cultures or host society are important factors that can facilitate personal cross-cultural knowledge and a positive attitude towards cross-cultural contact, which will then largely impact on personal decision-making in terms of acculturation strategy. Moreover, Berry (1997) suggested that some personal profiling characteristics, such as the age, gender, and education level, could also have a relevant influence on individual's view towards cultural others and other cultures, although that point is not mentioned by Ward et.al., (2005) or Ward & Kennedy (1993). Berry (1997) also suggests the status of personal migration motivation or expectation as another key factor worthy of concern because that can help to identify individual migrant's preference for any acculturation strategy; and that point of view has been supported by Ward et.al., (2005), who have recognized the above factor as the individual's conceptual orientation towards migration. Furthermore, the amount and frequency of contact with cultural others, such as members of the host society and members of other cultural groups, have been listed by Ward et.al., (2005) and Ward & Kennedy (1993) as another two key factors that can

reflect how likely it is that an individual migrant will develop further understanding and participation into the host culture, though Berry (2007) did not confirm this plainly.

Figure 3. Selection of acculturation strategies and factors of influence

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                    ┌─────────────────────┐
                    │  Migrant's selection │
                    │   of acculturation   │
                    │      strategy        │
                    └──────────┬──────────┘
              ┌────────────────┴────────────────┐
    ┌──────────────────────┐        ┌──────────────────────┐
    │ Perception of changing│        │     Perception of     │
    │     sociocultural     │        │  personal life (personal│
    │     surroundings       │        │        context)       │
    │ (environemtnal context)│        └───────────┬──────────┘
    └──────────┬───────────┘                      │
    ┌──────────────────────┐        ┌──────────────────────┐
    │ Characterstic differences of│   │ Characterstic differences of│
    │        culture         │        │      individual       │
    │ (e.g. cultural gap, perceived│  │ (e.g. experiences of life│
    │ societal conditions of home│   │ change, perceptions of life│
    │ society, perceived historical│  │ event control, lenght of time│
    │ and attitudinal conditons of│  │ in cross-cultural contact,│
    │ migration in host society etc.)│ │ personal migration│
    └──────────────────────┘        │ motivation or expectation etc.)│
                                     └──────────────────────┘
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Drawing on the above theoretical discussions, this researcher has developed a figure in order to demonstrate the two broad factors that may influence migrants' selection of acculturation strategy (see above, Figure 3). Indeed, the rationales embedded in the design of the above figure have been confirmed by Ward et al., (2005) and Ward & Kennedy (1993). As they have argued, Berry's model of acculturation strategies and its followers above have suggested that a migrant's perception, such as his or her valuation and expectation of home culture, and the consequent contact and participation with a different society, could be affected by both socio-cultural conditions and individual conditions. In that sense, migrants including international students would perceive and evaluate the circumstances of the above two broad contexts while they made the first-hand contact with other cultures, and that could then facilitate their perceptions and resulting decision-making in terms of both maintaining their

commitment to co-cultural peers and home cultural heritages or practices and developing

connections to the members of other cultural groups. Though it appears that the sociocultural

conditions which migrants will take into consideration differ between different migrant

communities due to the differences in both destinations and origins, and the fact that

migrants' circumstances, such as their educational experiences would be different as well,

even some studies (e.g. Heng, 2016; Holmes, 2004, 2005; Liu, 2010) suggested that migrants,

such as international students, may share some similarities because they come from the same

society where they have grown up and have been educated in the same pattern. Nonetheless,

it is thus problematic to assume that all migrants are acting as a single group with a shared

attitude and consideration toward acculturation, and the intensity of their selected

acculturation strategies and the in-depth contexts behind their strategy selection need to be

explored later.

Moreover, the above conceptual framework provided by Berry's model of acculturation has

not only suggested four strategies that are available for individual migrants to cope with a

foreign society as well as the general contexts or issues that could impact their decision-

making of acculturation strategies. They also deepen the understanding of individual

acculturation to a nuanced level that could be represented by the suggestion of numerous

further concepts. Those concepts, which will be listed and discussed below, have significant

implications for international students and the studies that attempt to interpret and judge their

acculturation experiences, including their possible commitment to their home societies.

First, Berry's model of acculturation strategies indicates that when two cultures have contact

with each other as the result of migration, individuals are not necessarily involuntary

participants during the process of contact: neither are they passive recipients of the demand

of a new socio-cultural environment for cultural adaptation. Instead, to a certain degree, international students, as a specific subgroup of migrants, would have their attitudes, contexts, and rationality which determines their contact strategy. Although it is true that not every acculturation strategy will well-balanced between the sociocultural reality in a new environment and the personal values or motivation (Berry, 2001, 2007). For instance, some migrants may choose to remain committed to their home society while overseas, in order to retain their existing attachment with co-cultural peers and home cultural heritages or practices, yet that may conflict with the host society's underlying encouragement of cultural assimilation or discrimination toward a certain culture and relevant cultural group. Nonetheless, international students, including Chinese international students, are free to use any acculturation strategy to cope with the changing sociocultural surrounding based on their personal preference. That further indicates that it is problematic to simply categorize international students from whichever cultural group as only a single, monolithic foreigner group or community and then assert that 'the most reasonable destination' for them to achieve during the overseas learning is complete and unconditional cultural assimilation.

Secondly, when an individual selects a personal strategy to develop contact with a new culture in an overseas environment, it is now apparent that such a decision is fundamentally an internal assessment of how much he or she values sustaining his/her home culture identity, as well as how much he or she values contact with cultural others and participating in the daily life of a new society (Berry, 2007; Sam & Berry, 2010). That means, after the arrival in the host society, an individual's decision concerning how to live with such a new society and other cultural groups will consist of the engagement, or even the confrontation in some cases, between the maintenance of attachment with home culture and the embrace towards the new cultural surrounding. As a result, migrants may choose to withdraw from or ignore the

meaningful cross-cultural contact in host society to settle the psychological unease brought by the above confrontation. Indeed, scholars, for instance, Bredella (2003, p. 238), already reminded us that '*Being intercultural means to be aware of the disquieting tension in the intercultural experience*', and such a disquieting tension between home cultural understandings and the new cultural practices would become strong and yet invisible inside migrants' minds especially if two cultures or societies are greatly different from each other. In that sense, it is unreasonable to pretend that migrants' cross-cultural contacts with the host culture and other cultural groups in the host society, whether they are temporarily studying or wishing to be permanently settled in the host society, will be automatically enabled and developed by the presumed cross-cultural tolerance. Neither should we assume that migrants will straightforwardly achieve a satisfactory adaptation to the new socio-cultural environment by emphasizing cross-cultural open-mindedness.

Third, Berry's model of acculturation strategies argues that acculturation could be apparently seen as a phenomenon after the migration, namely migrants' behaviours and psychologies would be changed into different patterns to cope with a new sociocultural environment on an individual basis. The so-called new sociocultural environment, or in other words, the host society, however, does not always contain merely a host culture and host cultural group. As Berry (1997; 2007) suggested, when arriving in the host society, migrants are unavoidably to have contact with the members of all sorts of cultural groups who shared their lives in the host society, along with their represented, diverse cultural characteristics. That is true if migrant's host society is multiracial; and for international students, such a circumstance is even more apparent. Because of the internationalization of higher education in the UK, for instance, the learning environment has already become much multicultural, especially in terms of taking foreign students and bringing in foreign teachers, experiences, and materials

(Bennett & Kane, 2011; Elkin et.al., 2008). In that sense, it is noteworthy that Berry's model of acculturation suggests that the sources which can affect the acculturation strategy decision-making are multiplex and not always associating with the characteristics of host culture or the impacts of host cultural group. Consequently, for any study that aims to comprehend the acculturation options selected by international students from whichever cultural group, (including this study, which aims to focus on international students from Chinese cultural group) an extensive and broader context, such as the characteristics of other cultural groups in the host society and the results of contacts with the members of other cultural groups, are deemed to be evaluated on top of looking at the 'local' or dominant cultural side of the host society (Berry, 1997; 2005; 2007).

Fourthly, the above studies of Berry's model of acculturation strategies have repeatedly outlined the significant relationship between the cross-cultural contacts of migrants and their acculturation process. On the one hand, migrants' contact with the host society and members of other cultural groups have been perceived as one of the two most important issues that could reflect migrants' attitude or preference about whether they expect to adapt into the host society. On the other hand, such contacts would be either enabled or limited by the sociocultural circumstances around migrants, for example, migrants' engagement with the members of other cultural groups and their participation in wider society alongside cultural groups. One critical issue is that any migrant's acculturation process will contain the twofold entanglement: 'should I engage with people from other culture and thus mix myself in a new socio-cultural environment where composed of different cultural groups?' and 'even if I expect to engage with cultural others in such a new sociocultural environment, will that environment permit or deter me from doing so?'. So, to comprehend migrants' acculturation process, we must unavoidably explore and identify their willingness and ability to choose any

acculturation strategy; yet, to achieve such an objective, it is important to examine migrants' personal experiences of cross-cultural contact in host society as the contextual information so that to identify both the willingness and availability for their cross-cultural contact.

Figure 4. Further suggestions of Berry's model of acculturation strategies

Berry's model of acculturation strategies

| 1. Normally, individual has the choice and control to contact with a new cultural environment, though not every selected strategy is the most efficient one | 2. Deciding the use of acculturation strategy refers to people's self-assessment between valuing cross-cultural contact and valuing cultural maintenance, so the conceptual conflict between two above issues of concern would happen | 3. The contacts with other cultural groups in host society need to be explored, so that could complement the understanding of environmental impacts on individual use of acculturation strategy | 4. The experiences of individual cross-cultural contact is the key to reflect not only their willingness and availability to use any acculturation strategy but also the helping or non-helping environmental contexts |

To better present the above four further suggestions of Berry's model of acculturation strategy, this researcher has summarized the key meanings of each suggestion, abstracted them into a short sentence, and transferred into a figure (see above, Figure 4).

In considering of the first two further suggestions cited above, also the composition of Berry's acculturation strategies (see Figure 2) and the influencing factors for acculturation strategy selection (see Figure 3); this researcher has noticed two important suppositions, which have been embedded in those suggestions and interpretations, and demand further exploration in this current research. First, he assumed that international students, including those from Chinese society, are prone to the conceptual conflict between home cultural maintenance and cross-cultural contact. The key reason being that the difference between two

societies could be perceived by migrants, and migrants need to be concerned about how to live with such a new environment and other cultural groups whilst they still bear home cultural characteristics, identity, and practices (Berry, 2007; Sam & Berry, 2010). Second, he also assumed that a strong commitment to home society, represented by a strong level of preference for retaining home cultural heritages or practices and contact with co-cultural peers, and a weak level of preference for developing cross-cultural contact with members of other cultural groups, is partly subject to individual's own choice and control, especially that which closely related to the contexts and/or perceptions of cross-cultural contact and the relevant settings in the host environment. The rationale is also given by Berry and his colleagues (see, for instance, Berry, 1980, 1997, 2006b, 2007; Berry & Sam, 1997; Dona & Berry, 1994; Sam & Berry, 2010) as migrants will constantly contact and perceive the surrounding environment in the context of their home experiences.

In the context of this discussion, this researcher has formulated two research questions to permit this research to explore whether the above suppositions are true in the case of Chinese international students in British higher education, as an important part of the process of penetrating those students' experiences of cross-cultural contacts and commitment to home society. Those research questions are, firstly: to what extent do Chinese international students experience conceptual conflict between home cultural maintenance and cross-cultural contact? Secondly, if Chinese international students have shown a stronger preference for attachment to co-cultural peers and home cultural heritages or practices and yet weaker preference for developing cross-cultural contact, how have their individual cross-cultural contact experiences affected their decision-making?

2.3 Understandings of cross-cultural contact in the host environment and its impacts in further contact and acculturation

Despite further suggestions regarding the nature of cross-cultural contact (see above Figure 4) and the comprehensive explanations regarding the attitudes and relevant coping strategies used by migrants to manage cross-cultural contact, the model of acculturation strategies produced by Berry and his colleagues still has some limitations. First, even though Berry (1997; 2001; 2005; 2007) described the cross-cultural contact as relating to migrants' engagement and participation in a new society along with other cultural groups, the detailed practice of cross-cultural contacts in the host society, such as the ways and means by which migrants could engage with cultural others and the host society, have not yet been clearly identified and thoroughly described. Secondly, a series of factors, for instance, the perceived sociocultural differences between migrants' home society and the host society, have been conceived of as the environmental contexts that could impact migrants' selection of acculturation strategy and thus their subsequent cross-cultural contacts (Berry, 1997, 2005; Ward & Kennedy, 1993). It is also important to recognize that from the moment migrants arrive in a host society, they are making constant contact with cultural others and new cultures. Thus, for both Berry and his colleagues, the issue is that they still lack a description of how the information regarding sociocultural differences between two societies, or in other words, the unique characteristics of the host society, would be delivered to migrants and then be perceived and understood during such a contact, let alone to what extent or via what means migrants might contact host society whether at the initial or later stage.

It is fair to say though that Berry and his colleagues may not be able to fix the limitations above, as the model of acculturation strategies focuses on the psychology of people in terms of emphasizing the changes of both sociocultural surroundings and personal experiences due to migration (Berry, 1980; 2007), rather than the natures and practices of cross-cultural

contact. However, without an exhaustive understanding of cross-cultural contacts, it would be problematic for researchers and their studies, like this study, to pinpoint the extent of actual cross-cultural contacts in the host society that could influence Chinese international students' selection of their acculturation strategy, especially the possible use of the separation strategy, for those students to demonstrate their commitment to home society. Also, it would be difficult for this researcher to identify the issues in Chinese international students' cross-cultural contact experience in the host society, especially those which would reflect their very own attitude, perceptions, and rationale regarding not only the cross-cultural contact but also the host environment, other cultural group members, and even the acculturation process itself. Hence, it is important to review the cross-cultural communication literature (e.g. Kim, 2005; Lamb, 1995; Lee & Chen, 2000), as this has specifically explored the nature of cross-cultural contact to solve the above limitations from a cross-cultural communication perspective.

To explicate the nature of cross-cultural contact, Furnham & Bochner (1986), Gudykunst (2003) and Ward, Bochner & Furnham (2005) suggest a common notion as the basic point of access. That is, for each migrant, performing close, frequent interpersonal communication with the befriended members of another society is an important part of cross-cultural contact since it provides an efficient way to learn the sociocultural knowledge that is different to that which an individual has been familiarized within home society. As Furnham & Bochner (1986, p. 14) argued, the key for migrants to function in a new society is not only adjusting themselves but also learning new cultural practice, even if they do not approve of it, and abandon it after they leave that society. To achieve that, migrants will need to have '*close, perhaps even intimate, links with members of the host society who are able and willing to act as cultural friends and mediators*' (Furnham & Bochner, 1986, p. 15). Or in other words, as Furnham & Alibhai (1985: 710) state, '*…a strong and supportive friendship network*' with at

least one close host society member. The rationale is that the above close and frequent interpersonal contact with friends in host society will offer local guidance and companionship for the individual migrants. These contacts will then assist individual migrants to not only acquire a better knowledge of the host language and mode of performance of recreational activities in the host society (Furnham & Alibhai, 1985), but also to learn appropriate emotional expression, posture adoption, gaze patterns of visual interaction, and ritualized routines of performing daily life (Furnham & Bochner, 1986). This has been recognized by later scholars as well; for example, Brown (2009a; 2009b) and Jones (2010) both described this element of cross-cultural contact as informative support provided to international students, as individual migrants, mostly through their befriended classmates and schoolmates, facilitating the improvement of their host sociocultural knowledge and the modality of performance in a different sociocultural system.

While the above guidance and companionship of befriended host society members, as a part of the cross-cultural contact for individual migrants, have been considered as capable of offering learning opportunities for host sociocultural knowledge; yet, meaningful cultural communication is still required during this guidance and companionship. That is because, without meaningful cultural communication, the requisite sociocultural knowledge will be challenging to transfer from a member of the host society to an individual migrant (Hurn & Tomalin, 2013). The following question is then raised, which is how meaningful cultural communication is enabled between the individuals of both parties, rather than simply formal guidance and companionship.

To respond the above question, Gudykunst (2003) suggested that performing communal conversation is the most important means of cross-cultural communication to transfer both

culturally-specific communicative knowledge and other sociocultural knowledge from host society members to individual migrants. As Gudykunst (2003, p. 37) explained, a communal conversation is '*a historically situated, ongoing communicative process in which participants in the life of a social world construct, express, and negotiate the terms on which they conduct their lives together*'. Such a conversation performs in the host society where both host society members and individual migrants share the host sociocultural context; the traces of distinctive ways and characteristics of communicating in host society must be brought into the conversation that is available for individual migrants to directly experience and thus learn. Relevant examples include the gestures, communicative routines, principles for interpreting, and rules and rituals in communal talks for specific purposes (Gudykunst, 2003). Moreover, Gudykunst (2003) also argued that all those distinctive details of communicating in a society which is borne in communal conversation have culturally related meanings. They are beyond the communicative purpose and could be indirectly perceived and then learned by individual migrants during or after the communal conservation. Those cultural 'meanings' have been referred to as the '*preferred ways of being a person, a model of the ideal society, and a theory of the role of communication in linking persons in social relations*' (Gudykunst, 2003, p. 47). They determine not only the communicative details in host society but also all the patterns of social functioning that have been approved and exercised by host society members. In short, the concepts above imply that the continuing situation-based and negotiable communication between two closely related individuals, namely the communal conversation between a host society member and his/her migrant friend, could develop migrant's knowledge and possibly the resulting self-adjustment in the host society.

However, in reality, this mode of cultural learning or cross-cultural contact happens not simply in established friends' communal conversation in mostly casual occasions, such as

during the recreational or 'off-class' social events, like dining and drinking, shopping, watching films and games, and home visits (Bennett et.al., 2013; Furnham & Alibhai, 1985; Jones, 2010; Pritchard & Skinner, 2002). It could also occur during formal occasions where participants may not have established close social ties with each other beforehand, or during activities that serve formal purposes. Scholars included Brown (2009a; 2009b), Leask (2009), Schartner (2015), Volet & Ang (1998) and Wards et.al., (2005) have revealed that communal conversation between individual host society members and individual international students, as a typical group of migrants, has widely taken place in the formal western classroom, where discussion and teamwork often take place and prior social relations between home students and their international peers do not exist. Besides, they often occur in some non-classroom learning activities where participants are mixed culturally, like during group assignment completion and group presentation preparation. For the above situation where the cross-cultural communal conversation has been enabled and facilitated by formal purposes such as academic or professional demands; Volet & Ang (1998) and Wards et.al., (2005) suggested accordingly that migrants would find not only a practical need to get familiar with the sociocultural context of host society for improving their communicative efficiency in the host society but also the opportunity to develop stronger social ties with individual host society members and pursue the beneficial possibilities of establishing a reliable image and understanding of another society that is different to that in which they have previously lived. Both could then serve as the emotional and informative support to enhance their adjustment toward the new cultural environment.

This understanding of the significance of interpersonal cross-cultural contact for cultural learning and future cultural adaptation has been appreciated by Gallagher (2013) and Ward et.al., (2005) as well; they further suggest that cross-cultural contact can also take place at

group level and that such a contact is highly transactional as well. As Gallagher (2013, p. 55) argued, cross-cultural contact is '*the ongoing exchange between person and environment in which one confronts environmental demands*'. The basis is that during the everyday verbal and non-verbal interactive activities in the host society, international students from one society as a specific cultural group will negotiate not only the socio-cultural differences but also the expectations and experiences of living repeatedly with all the surrounding cultural groups, especially who have formed the immediate social environment of overseas students, such as home students and international students from other societies in their institutions. Ward et.al., (2005) and Jones (2010) supplemented this view by arguing that the immediate social environment in a host society for migrants such as international students, could also be composed of the mainstream, local cultural groups; minority local cultural groups; and non-native cultural groups. That is especially true for a host society which is highly culturally diverse. In that sense, as an example, international students from a certain society could establish contact with various groups of 'home students' who followed different and less popular cultural rules or traditions, along with various groups of 'international students' who share the diverse level of similarity of lifestyle and cultural settings with the home students from the mainstream local cultural group. Thus, international students from one cultural group, as a whole, will be collectively able to access and learn diverse sociocultural knowledge and the demands of understanding and adaptation via their everyday intergroup interactions with all the available cultural groups that carried diverse cultural characteristics in the host society, as another part of cross-cultural contact, in addition to transferring host sociocultural knowledge from a close friend from the host society to an individual migrant.

It could be argued that in comparison to the above concepts, those introduced by other studies, especially that of Kim (1988; 2001; 2005; 2015), contribute additional understanding

of the social surroundings of migrants, as well as the nature of cross-cultural contact. It is worth remembering that Kim (2001; 2005; 2015) also appreciated the interpersonal and intergroup interactions with cultural others, as they are vital aspects of cross-cultural contact for migrants, enabling them to learn diverse socio-cultural characteristics and knowledge in the host society, thereby enabling their adjustment and perhaps later adaptation. Her rationale is that the human mind is an open system and human beings always look for knowledge and self-recognition through their immediate environment; that then makes for each individual attempting to establish a functional, reciprocal, and stable relationship with the environment (Kim, 2001, p. 31) and to take action about the changing or changed environment via all forms of communication (Kim, 2015, p. 4). However, a further argument has been developed by Kim (1988; 2001; 2005; 2015). That is, in a host society, the migrant's surrounding environment, as well as the occurrence of cross-cultural contact, often go beyond the extent of the interpersonal and intergroup context.

Kim (2001, p. 55) initiates this argument with her unique understanding of the nature of migrant's cross-cultural contact, that is, it is a communicative process to help migrants to both perceive and resolve the essential conflict that '*between the existing conditions inside the (minds of) migrants and the demands of the external environment*'. By way of further explanation, Kim (2001) pointed out that after arrival in a new society, migrants will be naturally engaged in an imbalanced transaction between their pre-existing personal resources, such as their current knowledge, experience, and perception regarding both home and host culture, and what the host social environment constantly demands in terms of the growth of those personal resources, like a better understanding and adaptation towards new cultures. Accordingly, Kim (2001) and Mckay-Semmler, Semmler & Kim (2014) argued that migrants' cross-cultural contact in the host society includes not only the interactions with the

individual host society members and informal groups of cultural others but also the interactions with the non-interpersonal and non-intergroup sources which composed a broader extent of the social environment that could both constantly remind and imperceptibly impact on migrants' knowledge of and responses to the new society.

To explicate the above concept, Kim (1988; 2005; 2015), Mckay-Semmler et.al., (2014), as well as other scholars such as Lamb (1995) and Piller (2011) suggest that the mass media, organizations of working or learning, and the government of host society are typical examples of those sources. The reasons being, first, those social institutions are formed by host society members and carry the host cultural characteristics and relevant institutionalized social settings in different aspects. For example, the mass media of the host society exposes migrant groups and individuals to host cultural information, like language characteristics, religious beliefs, and rituals (Gudykunst, 2003; Kim, 1988, 2005; 2015; Mckay-Semmler et.al., 2014). Further, the institutionalized social settings that are fixed and promoted by either the employment organizations or the government in the host society, for example, the policies in relation to local traditions and other cultures, would implicate both the extent and pattern for the host society to retain their home cultural heritages and also obtain access to foreign culture (Kim, 2001, 2005; Piller, 2011). In that case, by obtaining the socio-cultural information borne by the above social institutions, migrants could build up appropriate sociocultural knowledge to function correctly and stably in the host society. Second, those social institutions, their messages and relevant performances, for example, mass media with their publications, and workplaces or government institutions with their policies, surround everyone's ordinary social activities in society. Consequently, they are exceedingly noticeable and remind migrants of the host sociocultural characteristics and relevant institutionalized settings through migrant's daily participation in social activities without

migrant's explicit consent (Lamb, 1995; Piller, 2011). Meanwhile, they are also influential in

a way that could shape the appropriate expectations and norms of living in host society in

migrants' minds through migrants' observation and possibly imitation in daily life, whether

passively or actively. That means such a mode of cultural contact requires neither migrants'

engagement in interpersonal and intergroup cross-cultural interaction nor their subjective

awareness for cultural learning (Kim, 1988; 2001; 2005; Mckay-Semmler et.al., 2014).

To summarize the above theoretical understandings divide migrants' cross-cultural

communication in a host society into three forms, and this researcher has developed a Figure

5 below to present each theory together with their connections to migrant's cross-cultural

contact in their host environment, based on the following reflection upon these theories.
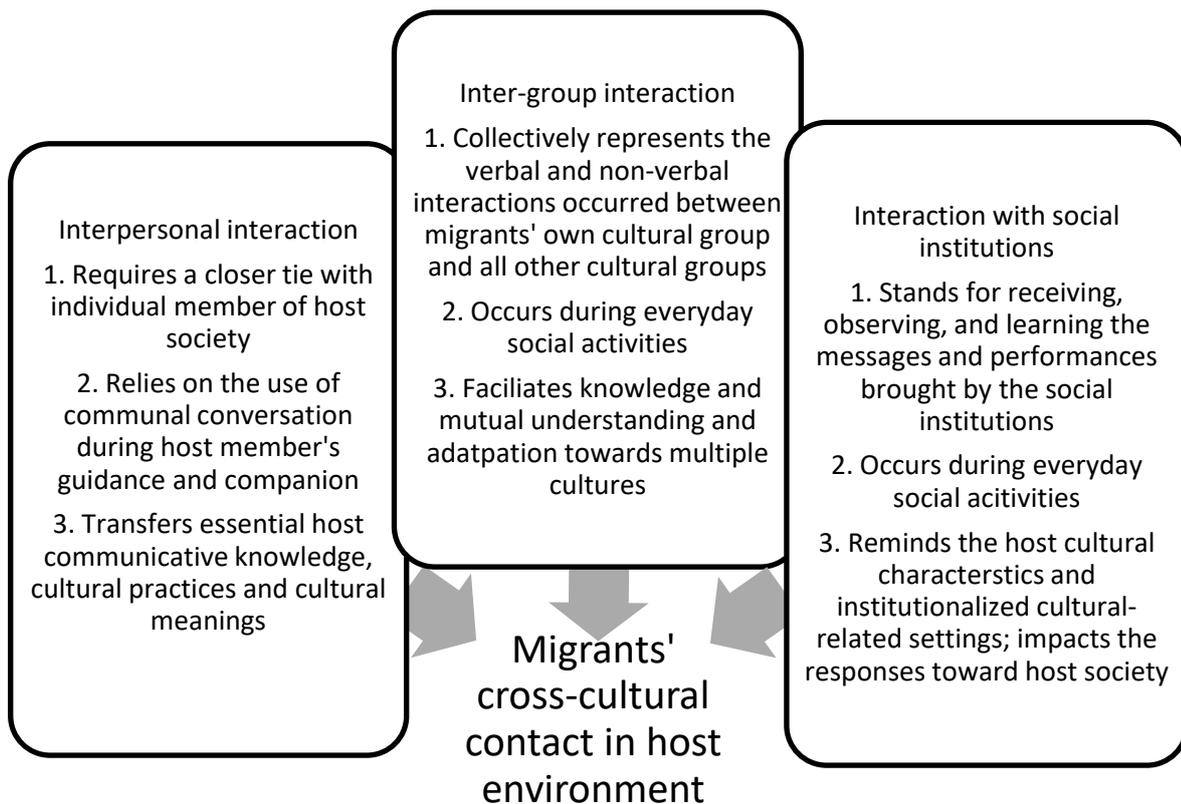
Figure 5. Migrants' cross-cultural contact in the host environment

On the one hand, migrants could perform cross-cultural contact with a broad cross-section of the host social environment through interaction with social institutions such as mass media, their working or learning organizations, and governmental organizations. Such a contact refers to migrants' observational, and imitative learning of the host cultural characteristics and institutionalized cultural-related settings that are brought by the messages and performances of those social institutions during everyday social activities. In this case, migrants' learning and their later adaptation to the host environment would be repeatedly stimulated and developed, even without their subjective awareness, control, or consent for the occurrence of such a process. On the other hand, another two strategies for cross-cultural contact could be also implemented by migrants, namely interpersonal interaction with individual members of the host society and intergroup interaction with all available cultural groups in the host society. Cross-cultural interpersonal interaction stands for receiving essential host communicative knowledge, cultural practices, and cultural meanings behind those practices from either a close friend of host society member in causal occasions or a connected member of the host society in the formal, specific occasions. A closer social tie between individual migrant and individual host society member is thus required to offer guidance and companionship, where a communal conversation may be enabled as the mean to transfer all the above information to migrants to facilitate their adaptation. In contrast, the cross-cultural intergroup interaction represents the collective verbal and non-verbal interactive activities that happen between the migrants from a certain society, as a cultural group, and all other available cultural groups, as cultural others, during their everyday social activities in the host society. In such a process, knowledge of multiple cultures, as well as the demand for mutual understanding and adaptation for different cultures, would be established in migrants' minds.

While the concepts of cross-cultural contact cited above have clearly described both the ways for migrants, including international students, to implement cross-cultural communication in/with the host society, we can say with confidence that the internal environment of higher education institutions plays an important role within such a context. The reason being that international students will not merely observe the messages or performances that are repetitively brought by their universities' teachers and student support in every day, but also will intensively engage with the communal conversations and non-verbal information that are offered by local students and other international students, who share the learning and social life within their institutions' management and control. Thus, the circumstances of the overall learning and social surroundings in a higher education institution is a key that would either enable or prevent international students' cross-cultural contacts and their following acculturation to such a new learning environment efficiently. It is then important to review the academic literature related to the topic above so as to reveal the potential connection between international students' cross-cultural contacts and the impacts from the host environment in higher education institutions, particularly the practices of their peers from other cultural groups, local teachers, and institutional services or supports.

At present, international students' experiences of cross-cultural contact in the universities of some western developed countries, such as Australia, Netherland, United Kingdom and the United States, have been well documented by many academic studies (e.g. Kudo & Simkin, 2003; McKenzie & Baldassar, 2017; Mittelmeier et.al., 2018; Rienties & Nolan, 2014; Woods et.al., 2013). In general, within the universities, three important approaches have been utilized to facilitate the host environment of cross-cultural contact widely; and that also means the social and learning environment in which international students perform cross-cultural contacts in universities, reflecting three corresponding aspects of concern.

The first commonly-utilized approach as well as the first aspect of concern for the cross-cultural contact environment in a university relates to the orientation activities that are offered by the student service or individual schools in the universities. For instance, an Australian university that was studied by Kudo & Simkin (2003) arranged a series of university tours and inductions and formal and informal welcome parties, aimed at allowing local students and international students to group and meet each other and offer preliminary host sociocultural knowledge within such those activities. Also, in some Australian higher education institutions, for instance, in the University of Western Australia, an institutional orientation project named 'Internationalisation at home' has been developed (McKenzie & Baldassar, 2017; Woods et.al., 2013); that mainly refers to a mentoring programme that is particularly designed for international students to develop friendships, and to remove the confusion and misunderstanding toward the host social and learning environment with selected supporting staff and invited local students.

The second approach that is utilized widely in university refers to group activities in either in-class or off-class occasions. They have been widely offered by teachers in some universities in Netherland, United Kingdom and Australia in order to develop the cross-cultural contacts among students via a more 'compulsory' communication environment. Those group activities included classroom group work and off-class group assignment (Rienties & Nolan, 2014; Rienties, Heliot & Jindal-Snape, 2013; Rienties, Nanclares, Jindal-Snape & Alcott, 2013; Volet & Ang, 1998), formal student groups and clubs (McKenzie & Baldassar, 2017), and team building (Mittelmeier et.al., 2018).

Finally, some university staffs' individual efforts to enhance students' cross-cultural contacts in the less formal manner forms the third approach in university to facilitating cross-cultural contact. As Mittelmeier et.al., (2018) noted, for instance, individual teachers in a university in the Netherland have offered a wide range of advice and encouragement for international students to develop culturally mixed group work; and some of those teachers are also keen to generate a positive social atmosphere in the classroom to boost students' cross-cultural contacts, by using some techniques such as asking international students casual topics in public and introducing students to each other, so as to encourage all students, which included international students, to share their experiences and opinions with others and establish initial mutual understanding in a rather casual manner.

While the above learning and social environments in the universities of some western developed countries have been documented; their relevant outcomes or performances have been also explored correspondingly, especially in terms of the resulting impacts on international students' experiences of cross-cultural contact and then acculturation.

On the one hand, university orientation activities, classroom group work, and teachers' efforts seemed to be appreciated by international students since they experience the resulting advantages. Relevant examples could be found in the case of an Australian university, where international students from Japan have all agreed that the increased university orientation activities have offered them greater opportunities to meet new people and develop new friendships, which could, in turn, facilitate further cross-cultural communication and the understandings of new, different cultures (Kudo & Simkin, 2003). Also, as suggested by several studies that explored the given universities in Netherland and United Kingdom (e.g. Mittelmeier et.al., 2018, Rienties & Nolan, 2014; Rienties, Heliot & Jindal-Snape, 2013;

Rienties, Nanclares, Jindal-Snape & Alcott, 2013), for international students (that included those from China), more cross-cultural communication, stronger social ties with individuals from different cultural contexts, and further sociocultural learning will be facilitated over time by both the intensive classroom group work and their teachers' active and regular assistance in developing group work. Therefore, in considering the above-documented evidence, it could be argued that in reality, the enhanced cross-cultural contact opportunities that are facilitated by the higher education institution itself, university staff within the institution, and classroom group work environment, could effectively encourage international students' implementation of interpersonal cross-cultural contact and develop their capacity to understand and accommodate to new cultures at a group level. That could then possibly lead to their better performance in adjusting themselves and adapt in their new environment.

On the other hand, despite the above positive evidence a wide range of academic literature, including both the studies that are referenced above (e.g. Kudo & Simkin, 2003; McKenzie & Baldassar, 2017; Mittelmeier et.al., 2018; Rienties & Nolan, 2014; Volet & Ang, 1998) and some other studies (e.g. Kingston & Forland, 2008; Peacock & Harrison, 2009; Salter-Dvorak, 2004; Seo & Koro-Ljungberg, 2005; Tatar, 2005; Volet, 1997), it has also noted that problems exist within the current learning and social environments in the universities of some western developed countries, particularly concerning the negative influences on international students' cross-cultural contact and following acculturation.

The first problem which has been commonly noticed is located at the institutional level: that is, universities' problematic assistances for international students' difficulty in cross-cultural contact. As noted before, some higher education institutions have provided orientation activities as an approach to facilitating a social environment that builds contact between

students from different cultures and develop their understanding of host society (see, for example, Kudo & Simkin, 2003; McKenzie & Baldassar, 2017; Woods et.al., 2013). However, the above institutional support was missing in other cases. For instance, as Kingston & Forland (2008) outlined, a survey conducted in the University of Portsmouth found that East Asian international students' acculturation to the host learning environment involved serious difficulties in relation to the unfamiliarity with western lifestyles, as well as the underdeveloped understanding of the concepts of autonomous learning and independent research, which are two key characteristics embedded in a western learning culture. However, there was no evidence to show any institutional support given by either their lecturers or university to address the difficulties above. Even though some universities did offer advice, and established student clubs for international students to enhance their cross-cultural contact and host understanding, their performances have often been criticized, since that advice has been considered by international students as nothing more than superficial guidance or encouragement and those student clubs only attracted international students themselves rather than locals (McKenzie & Baldassar, 2017; Mittelmeier et.al., 2018; Woods et.al., 2013).

As a result, it is no wonder Kingston & Forland (2008) and Salter-Dvorak (2004) both argued that when the above difficulties are left unresolved under problematic institutional support regimes, international students are likely to develop negative hypotheses about the host society, which could then impact undesirably on their motivation to be involved in future cross-cultural contact and thus acculturation. In that sense, when contrasted with the underdeveloped attachment to host society; international students' retaining commitment to their home society, namely the strong attachment with home cultural heritages and co-cultural people, would be a reasonable strategy to enable them to seek help and support from co-cultural peers and get away from the sense of being culturally adrift in a new environment.

The above circumstance would be more possible if certain issues or experiences in the host environment have encouraged or stimulated the above comparison and the resulting selection of a separation strategy.

Apart from the above problematic institutional support, isolation from the host environment has been also commonly noticed as the second problem that could prevent international students' development of cross-cultural contact and their resulting acculturation. In reality, isolation has referred to different aspects of practice that are conducted by local students.

On the one hand, isolation could equate with the negligence of members of the host society. In several studies (e.g. Salter-Dvorak, 2004; Tatar, 2005; Volet & Ang, 1998), East Asian international students have experienced very unfamiliar learning and teaching practices, unexpected cues, and even conflicting expectations communicated by their teachers and local peers in universities; yet few of them explained any ambiguity of host cultural information, let alone the conflict with international students' home culture or their relevant home living experiences. A possible cause of the above circumstance is, as Kudo & Simkin (2003) suggested, many local students' lack of cross-cultural contact experiences or their limited experience of knowing other cultures. As a result, those local students seemed to have no interest in explaining any host cultural information to international students as a part of the development of interpersonal cross-cultural contact. For international students, therefore, they have no choice but to reinforce their contacts with co-cultural classmates and friends, since that could '*initially aid students' coping strategies as they are surrounded by people who share common beliefs, values and social norms who can help them cope with their diverse setting. Consequently, we believe that such social ties are attractive to international students as they reduce uncertainty and culture shock.*' (Rienties & Nolan, 2014, p. 170).

On the other hand, isolation is also associated with local students' withdrawal of cross-cultural contact. Indeed, such a circumstance is prevalent in certain cases; as McKenzie & Baldassar (2017) outlined, in the University of Western Australia, no interviewed local students have reported any recent interaction with international students, and certainly not any developing friendship. Moreover, many local students in Australia and the United Kingdom demonstrated reluctance to implement group work and establish working teams with their international colleagues (Peacock & Harrison, 2009; Volet, 1997; Volet & Ang, 1998). Three causes have been suggested for this, namely: the commitment to established groups; avoidance of unnatural occurrence of cross-cultural contact; and prejudice against internationals. The first cause refers to the fact that Australian local students '*…had a lot of commitment to their families and other social activities such as remaining friendship with known co-cultural friends. Therefore, after the university classroom learning, they will return home or leave university environment immediately*' (Kudo & Simkin, 2003, p. 100), while Volet & Ang (1998) also painted the same picture. The second cause relates to local students' disapproval of conducting cross-cultural contact in social occasions that are both overly artificial and inconvenient, such as in an over-crowded classroom (McKenzie & Baldassar, 2017) and in isolated opportunities of meeting with international students (Kudo & Simkin, 2003). Finally, the cause of local students' withdrawal of cross-cultural contact could also be a product of bias against international students. These biases include, such as, the perceptions of some British local students that assumes that international students are lacking in academic ability or the cultural understanding necessary to fit into British higher education and the perception that they would bring down the level of group performance (Peacock & Harrison, 2009); and the chauvinism held by some Australian local students, which has considered

international students, particularly who come from Asian cultural contexts, as not active and willing to participate in and contribute for group work (Volet, 1997; Volet & Ang, 1998).

In summary, those causes apparently could make it difficult for international students, as a group of students, to keep regular, intensive contact and develop in-depth social ties with local students, as another group of students. Besides, they could also cause international students to experience less comfortable contact from some local students at an interpersonal level, which could in turn produce reluctance from international students to establish further interpersonal cross-cultural contact. In that case, it could be argued that the problem of host isolation may well fuel international students' selection of a more separative strategy during their future cross-cultural contact and overseas learning, in order to get away from the above feelings of isolation. They may instead search for both practical and psychological assistance by retaining contact with their co-cultural peers. During such a process, however, the familiar home cultural patterns would be recalled again and again and it could then lead to the awareness of those international students' desire to retain their original cultural patterns and attachment with co-cultural friends rather than to adapt (Lee & Chen, 2000).

After reviewing the literature which has interpreted the natures of cross-cultural contact in overseas environments, as well as the current circumstances in British higher education institutions as the host environment for Chinese international students, one important supposition has been implied accordingly. That is that the circumstance of the host environment in which international students perform academic activities and student life in western developed countries could influence their cross-cultural contact and the following acculturation, especially by facilitating or preventing the interactions with the higher

education institutions, interactions across different cultural groups, and interpersonal level of communication.

Due to the small number of existing academic studies that are particularly targeted at British higher education institutions and the case of Chinese international students in the United Kingdom is still difficult to see the overall picture of those students' cross-cultural contact experiences, let alone the circumstances in their university environment that could either facilitate or prevent their cross-cultural contact. To solve the above gap as well as to explore the supposition that I have just developed, two research question have been formed accordingly for this study. They are, firstly, what cross-cultural contact experiences have Chinese international students acquired through their cross-cultural contacts in British universities? Also, secondly, according to their experiences, what factors in the host environment have either facilitated or prevented them from developing further cross-cultural contact and acculturation?

2.4 Social capitals and social capital perspective in relation to migrant's acculturation and contact in the host environment

In the early section of this chapter, Berry's model of acculturation strategies has been introduced and one crucial point that it suggested concerns the importance of contact with both cultural others and co-cultural people. For migrants, the degree to which they valued the development of cross-cultural contact in host society could suggest how they would cope with both the perceived differences of sociocultural circumstances and new personal experiences, though the degree that they valued the attachment with home culture and co-cultural people is equally important for migrants to consider (see, for example, Berry, 1980; 1997; 2007). For instance, separation, as an acculturation strategy, represents both a migrant's evasive attitude towards interacting with other cultural groups in the host society

and the willingness to preserve home cultural heritages or practices and intensive interaction with co-cultural in daily life. That demonstrates the migrant's strong commitment to home society along with the withdrawal from cross-cultural contact when they are staying in the host society.

On the other hand, both Berry's mode of acculturation strategies and the academic literature introduced in the last section, which emphasized the natures of cross-cultural contact and circumstances in some western universities, have highlighted the importance of environmental impact. That refers to an understanding of the way in which the appreciated sociocultural differences between two societies and the perceived characteristics of sociocultural surroundings in host society have an impact on a migrant's cross-cultural contact experience. That would then, in turn, influence migrant's confidence or willingness to implement further cross-cultural contact and thus their acculturation, since the degree of valuing the development of cross-cultural contact is one of the two most crucial factors in determining how a migrant would accommodate in their host society. Indeed, the missing institutional assistance for international students' cross-cultural contact, as well as the perceived local students' extensive neglect and personal biased attitude to their peers from other cultural contexts, have been found to reduce the willingness and likelihood of international students, as a specific group of migrants, developing further cross-cultural contact in such an environment (see, for example, Kingston & Forland, 2008; McKenzie & Baldassar, 2017; Rienties & Nolan, 2014).

In considering the above two major understandings together, a new point of concern has been suggested. That is, that the considerable need for migrants to determine the degrees of value for both developing cross-cultural contact and retaining attachment with their home culture

and co-cultural people, namely the selection of their strategies to acculturate to their host society, could be related with an underlying measurement of how the new social surroundings regarded migrants and interacted with them during their cross-cultural contacts. In other words, without identifying and measuring the perceived cost and gain that appeared during their contacts with the host sociocultural environment, it would be difficult to imagine that migrants could tell whether maintaining a commitment to home society is more important than developing cross-cultural contact or whether both patterns share equal importance.

In reality, there is no lack of evidence to support the above point of concern, although few existing studies have suggested the above point plainly. For instance, according to reports by Kudo & Simkin (2003) and Volet & Ang (1998), Japanese and Chinese international students in Australian universities have experienced avoidance of cross-cultural contacts from local students, so that they perceived a great level of challenge in forming and retaining the cross-cultural contact with local students. As a result, those international students have developed an inactive and evasive pattern of contact, which refers to the tendency to implement and remain regular interpersonal contacts only on the occasions when little perceived cost, like the investment of time for meeting each other or energy to solve a communication problem, was required; and stable friendship, as the gain, could be developed. It is thus not surprising to see the resulting acculturation picture: that those international students often stayed with co-cultural peers, and only a small number of students from other cultures who are both in proximity and interested to foreign culture have also become their closely tied friends since during the above contacts they were unlikely to encounter conflicts or relationship problems and little effort was needed to maintain such contacts. Interestingly, local students also thought and acted on the same principle. As suggested by Kudo & Simkin (2003), McKenzie & Baldassar (2017) and Peacock & Harrison (2009), local students in Australia and the

United Kingdom have perceived little necessity to develop cross-cultural contacts with their international peers because they already formed the host families, friendship, and leisure activities and they highly valued the resulting long-term, stable host social relation, even though that also consumed their possible time for developing cross-cultural contacts.

The above point of concern regarding the perceived cost and gain that in relation to the interactions with a social environment has suggested a key understanding. That is, it seems there are certain kinds of resources, advantages or benefits which are provided by the above interactions, and the performance of interactions could determine both the cost or gain of those resources, advantages, or benefits for anyone who got involved in the interactions. Provided such an understanding has been supported by further evidence; it also suggests that perhaps losing or gaining some resources, advantages, or benefits in the contacts with host social and learning environment is the core that influences international students, including those of them who come from Chinese society, to retain their close, intensive contacts with their co-cultural peers and home cultural heritages or practices rather than to place more willingness and efforts in developing further cross-cultural contacts, namely they have chosen to be strongly committed to home society. In contemporary educational and social studies, one term has been closely connected with the above understanding and its associated theories have also attempted to interpret the social relations from a similar basis. They are the social capital and the social capital perspective, respectively.

Social capital is probably a concept that has been most applied in the field of research that emphasized the natures, roles, and impacts of social networking since the 1990s (see, for example, Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1991; Dika & Singh, 2002; Lin, 2001; Neri & Ville, 2008; Putnam, 1993a, 1993b; Stanton-Salazar, 1997; Sun, 1999). It has been formally defined

and utilized by French scholar Pierre Bourdieu (1986) in the first instance as the aggregate of obtainable or potential resources that are connected with the possession of a stable, long-term social network. That founding definition has been influential on the later works of other scholars. For instance, Lin (2001: 12) defined social capital as a collection of '*resources embedded in a social structure which are accessed and/or mobilized in purposive action*', and that has appeared to agree with Bourdieu's definition in terms of an understanding: there are somethings accruing to individuals by virtue of their connections with others in a certain social environment.

It is, however, important to remind ourselves that in the last three decades, there is not yet a solid and articulate definition for the term 'social capital'. Contemporary studies that generally concern the socialization of individuals via social networking to obtain different types of outcomes from such a social network or the process of interaction, namely that which takes the social capital perspective (Dika & Singh, 2002; Lin, 2001), have often studied different subjects or cases. As a result, their descriptions, or in other words, the explanations of the question of 'what the social capital is referring to actually', are rather more or less different from each other. For instance, on the one hand, many pioneers in researching social networking, such as Bourdieu (1986), Briggs (1997), Burt (1992; 1997; 2000), Lin (1999, 2001), Lin, Cook & Burt (2001) and Woolcock (1998) are similar in regarding the social capital as some tangible resources or intangible advantage that is available for individuals to obtain through their participation in a social network for future benefits, which include the information, group recognition, reciprocation, and opportunity.

On the other hand, in addition to the above understanding, some scholar, for example, Coleman (1988; 1990), Fukuyama (1995; 1999), Paxton (1999), Putnam (1993a; 1993b;

1995; 2000) and Woolcock (1998), have also pointed out that the social trust, traditions, and norms of behaviour that exist within the social networking of individuals equate to social capital, or at least is a central type of social capital. Their rationale is that without achieving or obtaining trust, and observing traditions and norms, interactions among individuals will become meaningless, especially when they have important roles in ensuring the exchange of any resource among different individuals within a social network or structure, and that is also critical to the generation of bigger benefits for individuals involved in such a social network.

Furthermore, a small number of scholars have defined 'what the social capital is actually' to an even broader extent. For instance, Paxton (1999) and Putnam (1993; 1995) have added an individual's social network itself as a type of social capital. The reason is that a cooperative social network with others is already an important resource, which could enable and improve the opportunity for individuals to either achieve or obtain an extensive range of benefits, such as personal care and information exchange, from the connected others.

Inspired by the lack of a single, commonly-agreed definition toward the term of social capital, after reading; this researcher himself has designed a table (see below, Figure 6). It has summarized and abstracted the most important understandings of the concept of social capital from the literature, in the attempt to present them and the chaos picture of defining social capital in a simplified yet organized manner.

Figure 6. Different understandings toward social capital

Key authors	Understandings toward social capital
Coleman (1988, 1990)	● Entities that consist of some aspects of existing social structure ● Entities that facilitate either individual or collective actions of members within the existing social structure

Putnam (1993a; 1993b; 1995; 2000)	• The elements inside a society that could facilitate collaboration and thus improve social efficiency, such as trust, norm, and networking • Social capital refers to social networking itself and the relevant norms and trust
Briggs (1997)	• All the resources that are stored inside human relationships, whether casual or close • As the resources for action, they used by individuals for both getting social supports and changing their own life circumstances or life opportunities from connected individuals
Paxton (1999)	• Social capital refers to the mutual occurrence of two aspects: high level of objective associations between individuals in a community or a group, and high level of the subjective type of tie, e.g. trust, reciprocity, and positive emotions, within that community or group
Bourdieu (1986)	• The aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition - or in other words, to membership in a group • Social capital requires transforming contingent interpersonal relations into relationships that are at once necessary and elective, implying durable obligations subjectively felt
Fukuyama (1995; 1999)	• An instantiated informal norm that promotes cooperation between two or more individuals • The norms that constitute social capital can range from a norm of reciprocity between two friends, all the way up to complex and elaborately articulated doctrines in a cultural group, if they are related to the virtues that facilitated social networking and safeguarded the intra-group cooperation, like trust, honesty, keeping of commitments, reliable performance of duties, and reciprocity, etc.
Lin (1999, 2001); Lin, Cook & Burt (2001)	• The resources embedded in social networks for either instrumental gains or expressive gains through individuals' continual investment into the belonged social network • In a social network, the supply of information exchange, chance to influence who can offer returns, social credential, and reinforcement of identity and recognition, are essentials to let social capital works
Burt (1992; 1997; 2000)	• The opportunities and other competitive advantages, which have captured through the relationships with other individuals, to leverage their economic and human capitals in pursuing individual needs
Woolcock (1998)	• The information, trust, and norms of reciprocity that stored inside an individual's social network • The extension of the essentials of the relationship between individuals and the social system within a community

Nevertheless, by summarizing the above understandings of the social capital perspective, it is apparent that in total there are three types of social capital: the resources that are embedded within social networking; the social trust, traditions, and norms occur within interactions with others; and the social network or social relation in itself. Such a concept of social capital has thus alerted us to the possibility of answering a long-standing question: that is, what could be the fundamental reason or rationale for international students arriving in a new society to retain a strong commitment to their home society that perhaps exceeds the importance attributed to becoming more adapted to the host society. Based on the understandings in the social capital perspective that were introduced above, there are various types of social capital inherent in either the social network or the process of interactions with others available to be obtained by individuals through their social networking. As a result, international students, including those who come from Chinese society, may voluntarily choose to adopt the above acculturation strategy so as to obtain certain types of social capital that are significant for them to survive in a new environment or to develop themselves further. However, before developing the above-suggested supposition further, there is one remaining broad question. That is, how social capital could be generated within or through social networking and thus obtained by the involved individuals? In other words, it is important to know the conditions, requirements, and processes that could facilitate the production and acquisition of social capital for those individuals within a certain social environment, like international students who study in a higher education institution that belongs to a different, overseas society.

Indeed, the studies that have developed definitions of social capital have always formed comprehensive explanations of the question raised above, yet their explanations, just like their definitions of social capital, are varied. Given the example of the three most referenced contributors to the concepts of social capital, namely Bourdieu, Coleman, and Putnam; they

have some differences when they were used to interpret the relevant rationales for the above question.

In general, Bourdieu (1986) discovered that a long-term interaction and institutional connection among individuals who shared mutual acquaintance and recognition could offer some exclusive resources and advantages among the members within such a social network, for example, the emotional, informational, and instrumental supports, as the social capital for each member. Based on such an understanding, Bourdieu (1986) then argued that to sustain the offering of its relevant social capital, members of such a social network must keep regular, intensive communication and contact among each other so that to not only practice but also confirm the mutual acquaintance and recognition repeatedly, as two important conditions that supported the institutionalization of both such a network of social contact and the above implied transactional relation. As a result, Bourdieu's work has indeed suggested that the meaningful contacts or interactions among different people, as a social concept that '*is not a natural given and must be constructed through investment strategies oriented to the institutionalization of group relation, usable as a reliable source of other benefits*' (Portes, 1998, p. 4). Besides, the above suggestion has been also developed into a claim of Bourdieu, which is, it would be likely for the members of an existing social network, especially that which produced extraordinary quantity and quality of social capital, to sustain and reproduce such a networking system along with the above symbolic requirement, so that their ever-obtained social capital could be reproduced continually (Lareau, 2001; Portes, 1998).

Coleman (1988; 1990), on the one hand, emphasized the importance of ensuring mutual acquaintance and recognition for the generating and obtaining of social capital. He agreed that those two conditions, as the result of frequent contact and interaction, could facilitate the

mutual support and information exchange channels, as two types of social capital for the members in a social network. On the other hand, he repeatedly highlighted a more essential requirement for people who demand the resources and advantages from a social network, which is to uphold the set norms or sanctions in a community, as another type of social capital, that promotes the communal interest over the self-interest (Dika & Singh, 2002). As Coleman (1988; 1990) explains, in the condition that the members of a community, like all residents in a village and merchants in a chamber of commerce, have known each other well and agreed to a set of codes of conduct, then they will not only receive a reliable information exchange channel and mutual trust within such a community as the social capital. Moreover, they both build up and obtain the collective convenience to avoid the consequences of violating public interests, from losing those types of social capitals to encountering possible punishments such as ostracism and legal actions. Thus, social capital has referred to the public resources that are transferable to anyone who shared good interactions within such a community and agreed to the public norms or sanctions that promoted the communal interest (Coleman, 1990). That should then rationalize and motivate community members to take further actions not only for themselves but also any other community member since the more community members are committed and contribute, the better social capital they would obtain later, provided the community has a reliable regulatory mechanism to reward the commitment and contribution and punish the violation (Coleman, 1992; Portes, 1998; 2000).

It could be argued that Bourdieu and Coleman generally look at the social networks that are located within a society, such as schools and a community of a certain social class. Putnam, however, looked at larger communities such as regions and countries. By analysing the natures of social networking in different places, he argued that social capital is a feature of the sociocultural characteristics of a society (Portes & Landolt, 1996). Given the examples of

Italian cities, Putnam (1993a; 1993b) suggested that the individualistic traditions could lead to the occurrence of bonding relationships among the individuals who shared homogeneous social or personal contexts. To sustain that relationship, the involved individuals, namely the insiders, need to continually invest in group commitment, which requires insiders to agree to a collective yet exclusive identity; obey the group norms and sanctions; and remain in intensive interaction with other insiders (Putnam, 1993a, 1993b; Saegart & Winkel, 1998). In return, that will bring the social capital which is exclusive for insiders, such as strong mutual trust; sharing of fine-grained information; the opportunity to network and cooperate with other insiders; and cohesiveness to protect group interests against external force or change (Putnam, 1993a, 1993b, 2000). In contrast, Putnam (1993a; 1993b; 2000) also pointed out that the cooperative traditions could facilitate the bridging social relationship. That kind of relationship, which often exists in the contemporary neighbourhood and associations that across the careers, social class, and races, means individuals develop connections with others in heterogeneous social or personal characteristics to produce and utilize social capital such as the flexibility to network and cooperate with people from different contexts and the broader access to information (Putnam, 2000; Saegart & Winkel, 1998). To achieve that, individuals do not have to look for others in homogeneous contexts neither to develop strong commitment among each other, but only need to develop occasional yet wider contacts with others who shared broad interests or expectations (Saegart & Winkel, 1998).

Nevertheless, apart from the different explanations for how social networking has generated all sorts of social capital; the above key contributors and their represented writing about social capital have suggested some common understanding.

First, the interpretations of Bourdieu (1986), Coleman (1988; 1990; 1992), and Putnam (1993a; 1993b) above have all outlined that people's participation in a community, especially their contacts, interactions, and the following mutual support from other members, are heavily related to the generation and acquisition of social capital that could help people to survive and better develop within that community. Indeed, that point has been also revealed and supported by many studies which emphasized the development of social relations and social capital (Antoci, Sacco & Vanin, 2009; Cheung & Chan, 2010; Riedl & Van Winden, 2004; Saegart & Winkel, 1998; Webber & Mearman, 2009). As they have pointed out, if individuals haven't invested in the quantity or quality of contacts and interactions with other members of a community, they would have no means to develop mutual understanding; and that also certainly applied to the development of mutual trust and reciprocation, because those two common types of social capital required not only both parties' long-term mutual understanding but also the positive consequences of frequent interactions so as to avoid the chance for both parties to encounter misunderstanding, the default of expectation, and even conceptual conflict.

Second, those leading scholars have also implied that the process for individuals to acquire social capital from connected members of a community has been enhanced by positive experiences that could be mutually perceived by both parties after the frequent contacts and interactions, such as acquaintance and recognition (Bourdieu; 1986); trust, commitment, and support (Coleman, 1988; 1990; 1992); and cohesiveness and connectedness (Putnam, 1993a; 1993b; 2000). At this point, the studies that are interested in the psychological connection of social networking (Antoci, Sacco & Vanin, 2009; Astone, Nathanson, Schoen, & Kim, 1999; Cheung & Chan, 2010; Smith, Philipson & Scharf, 2002) have shown agreement with a further explanation. They argue that provided the contacts and interactions have been

successfully implemented, both parties would receive the information, resources, or supports they desired and that would then produce the positive experiences as the rewards. After the frequent, successful implementations, those rewards would be repeatedly confirmed between both parties, and in that sense, they would transform into certain sorts of social capital to inspire the reinforcement of existing contacts and interactions for both psychological and social purposes. For instance, developed mutual intimacy and trust with other community members would help a person to obtain not only the emotional support that accrues but also the social supports that are likely to be given as well, such as the reference to even more other members and opportunities for cooperation.

Third, those scholars' interpretations have all suggested that to acquire social capital, individuals must commit to certain existing community sociocultural settings which have been agreed by all community members, for example, the institutionalization of group relations (Bourdieu, 1986); norms or sanctions for promoting the communal interest over the self-interest (Coleman, 1988; 1990); and traditions that support either a bonding relationship or a bridging relationship (Putnam, 1993a; 1993b; 2000). However the descriptions of the rationale for the above understanding are different between these scholars; as argued by Portes (1998; 2000) and Portes & Landolt (1996), a fundamental insight has been shared by the scholars who followed the social capital perspective. That is since participation in a community has generated social capital that can benefit the participating members, then certain sociocultural settings of the community, particularly those which could encourage individuals' social participation, will become the critical conditions for community members to obey and maintain. In that case, individuals would encounter some essential questions after they arrived in a new social environment, which are, whether they should or whether they can commit to hosting community's settings so that to acquire host social capital.

While the above common understandings have been offered in relation to the question of 'how social capital could be generated within or through social networking and thus obtained by the involved individuals'; they have also provided some innovative yet efficient insights for future academic studies, included this research, to penetrate the in-depth rationales behind the appearing commitment of international students toward their home society during their overseas learning.

In the first instance, for migrants such as international students, the understandings above have highlighted the importance of developing intensive contacts and interactions with people in their surrounding environment, such as their classmates, teachers, and other university staff in the same community of learning, in order to exchange those inputs in social connection with connected people's offering of social capital. In that sense, a key concept stated by the cross-cultural communication theories in the previous section, which is about receiving close local friends' guidance and companionship and other migrants' sharing of their home experiences for cultural learning and following acculturation after the development of regular meaningful contacts and tight social ties with surrounding individuals in host environment (see, for example, Furnham & Alibhai, 1985; Furnham & Bochner, 1986; Gudykunst, 2003; Jones, 2010; Wards et.al., 2005), has not only been confirmed but also explained from the perspective of social capital investment and exchange. Accordingly, a key suggestion has been validated. That is, the extent to which an international student has made efforts to contact and interact with surrounding individuals in the community of learning, especially with those in different cultural contexts, would suggest the degree of acculturative social capital that such a student might receive from those surrounding

individuals, and as a part of their cross-cultural experiences, this could then impact on their subsequent selection of acculturation strategies.

Moreover, the social capital perspective has also suggested that the perceived positive experiences behind the contacts and interactions with social surroundings, in the form of social capital or the bridge to social capital, would encourage migrants to enhance their existing social connections so as to continue the acquisition of social capital. In that case, the emotions and apprehensions of international students who have arrived in, and made contact with, a new learning community as temporary migrants, need to be explored, as that could reveal the development of any positive experience after their contacts and the consequence of those acquired social contact experiences in terms of impacting their future acculturative activities. Yet, it is important to remind ourselves of the fact that Chinese international students have mostly studied in western developed countries such as Australia, New Zealand, United Kingdom and the United States and those countries are culturally diverse (Hao et.al., 2016; Zhou, Jindal-Snape, Topping, & Todman, 2008); and a key concept of Berry's model of acculturation is that for migrants, developing cross-cultural contact and remaining home cultural commitment could be contradictory under certain circumstances (Berry, 1980; 1997; 2007). Thus, a possible relationship could be seen, namely, the gap between the acquired positive experiences from co-cultural people and that from cultural others would determine international students' subsequent selection of acculturation strategy, particularly for Chinese international students.

Furthermore, according to the social capital perspective, as stated earlier, it is arguable that migrants including international students will need to commit to a community's specific socio-cultural settings, especially those which encourage people's social participation, in

order to acquire the related social capital. The related social capital may be referred to close local friends' guidance and companion and other migrants' sharing of their home experiences for cultural learning and following acculturation as suggested by the cross-cultural communication theories in the previous section (see, for example, Furnham & Alibhai, 1985; Furnham & Bochner, 1986; Gudykunst, 2003; Jones, 2010; Wards et.al., 2005). However, as Berry (1980; 1997; 2007) outlined: developing cross-cultural contact and retaining home cultural commitment could be contradictory under certain circumstances for migrants, and to make the decision, migrants would have agency, especially that which closely related with their contexts and/or perceptions of socio-cultural circumstances between two societies. Hence, it seems that whether the international students are willing to commit to the existing sociocultural settings in the environment of their overseas learning institutions, like the norms and practices that motivate or require students' participation into group activities and intensive interpersonal communication, would be possible to suggest whether they perceived host environment as the place where deserving their following acculturation, as well as whether they expect to receive the possible social capital from the host environment.

To present the theoretical understandings discussed above, which outlined how the social capital perspective has interpreted the migrants' selection of acculturation strategy in an organized yet transparent way, this researcher himself has thus developed a figure (see below, Figure 7). It has included two broad factors that may influence migrants' selection of acculturation strategy, namely the acquisition of any social capital that associated with the acculturative decision or behaviours, and migrants' development of positive experiences. Within each factor of influence, the associated conditions that could validate or permit the above factor have been also presented.

Figure 7. Selection of acculturation strategies under the interpretation of the social capital perspective

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┌─────────────────────────────────┐
│     Selection of acculturation  │
│  strategies including separation│
│     that reflected strong       │
│  commitment to home society     │
│    instead of to host society   │
└─────────────────────────────────┘
           │              │
  ┌────────────────┐  ┌──────────────────┐
  │ Acquisition of │  │ Development of any│
  │ any            │  │ positive experience│
  │ acculturative  │  │                  │
  │ social capital │  │                  │
  └────────────────┘  └──────────────────┘
    │         │              │
┌──────────┐ ┌──────────┐ ┌──────────────┐
│ Efforts  │ │Commitment│ │ Feelings and │
│ made to  │ │to certain│ │understanding │
│ contact  │ │existing  │ │of contacting │
│and interact│sociocultural│and interacting│
│with      │ │settings of│ │with both     │
│surrouding│ │the community,│co-cultural  │
│people in │ │especiall the│people and   │
│the same  │ │settings that│cultural others│
│community,│ │promoted  │ │in the same   │
│especially│ │commmunity│ │community     │
│who from  │ │participation│            │
│other     │ │          │ │              │
│cultural  │ │          │ │              │
│contexts  │ │          │ │              │
└──────────┘ └──────────┘ └──────────────┘
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As the above literature suggested, the social capital perspective has given a new theoretical basis and conceptual inspiration to assist the interpretation of international students' decision-making in relation to acculturation strategies. Meanwhile, international students' commitment to home society, which probably connects with the use of a 'separative' strategy and negative, passive attitude for acculturation, may also receive an in-depth explanation from the above perspective. That is referring to the likelihood that international students' cross-cultural contacts and interactions in host learning community may not offer the social capital that has been desired, or they may not help to develop positive experiences with the host cultural group and members of other cultures, especially when compared with the case of retaining contacts and home cultural practices along with co-cultural people.

It could be argued that a social capital perspective has been widely utilized in the academic studies across the recent three decades; yet its relevant application to the exploration of international students' social contacts is rare (Rienties et.al., 2015), and much less for

Chinese international students. Nevertheless, migrant studies lend supports to the indicated insights and suppositions outlined above, though they were not always referenced to a social capital perspective and international students.

On the one hand, studies that focused on migrant groups in different countries have evidently described a picture, which is, that migrants will need to establish certain levels of connection and relevant commitment to host society to acquire the relevant benefits and resources as the social capital for them to better develop in the host society. For instance, after studying Asian American students in an American college, Samura (2016) found that by committing efforts to actively and continually participating in the institutions and activities that consist of host culture and peers of the host society, such as the student debating society and public debates on current affairs, some students from an Asian cultural context have improved their host language capability and acquired recognition and admiration from the host cultural group. As Samura (2016) argued, that offered a better opportunity for personal and career development in host society in comparison with other Asian American peers who still adhered to the traditional values or expectations of their home cultural group, especially those of migrant parents. Also, in a study of migrant women from mainland China in Hong Kong, Hung & Fung (2016) discovered that the regular commitment to local voluntary or charitable work, as well as the intensive interaction with the neighbours and colleagues from host cultural group, assisted those migrant women to not only receive trust from host society members but also develop a mutually supportive relationship with them. This translated into host financial, material, and emotional supports for migrant women when they were in need. Furthermore, interestingly, Agyeman (2015) found that even in Japan, which is much more traditional than the United States or Hong Kong in terms of having little contact with Africa and a prevalent bias against Africans; some African black migrants still have acquired the social capital such

as social acceptance and host social networking. Their successful approaches result from extensive engagements with young Japanese in business, educational, and music aspects to facilitate intensive cross-cultural contact and interaction and early social trust. Through the following commitments of marrying Japanese females and establishing the family business, those African black migrants could obtain better local social acceptance and social network.

While the above studies confirmed the positive connection between developing contact with and thus commitment to the host society and obtaining relevant social capital, the commitment towards host society that those migrants have made is sometimes doubtful. Take the example of China mainland migrant women in Hong Kong; those migrants reported little interest in participating in local activities or institutions that required more commitment, such as getting involved in political events or committee roles or being volunteers for charitable events (Hung & Fung, 2016). Also, in the case of African black migrants in Japan, Agyeman (2015) and Richard (2011) warned that the suspicion towards the authenticity of their marriages with local females is increasing, since many appeared as serving for convenience only. In contrast, those migrants still demonstrated a strong commitment to their home society. They maintained close contacts with co-cultural friends and relatives in both home society and the host society and provided free pickup, accommodations, and meals to newly-arrived co-cultural people who had been referred by their known co-cultural friends or relatives (Agyeman, 2015). Thus, it is difficult to say how 'in-depth' or 'reliable' those migrants' commitment to host society was, especially in comparing with their connection with co-cultural people.

On the other hand, some studies suggested that even though migrants realized that there would be potential social capital for them to obtain after successful cross-cultural contact and

interaction in the host society, they still opted for the commitment to home society. In general, two broad reasons have been found for this. They referred to migrants' perception of the cost of cross-cultural contact and commitment, and the perception of gain from committing to home society. For instance, in two studies of Mexican migrants in the United States, Massey and colleagues (Massey & Espinosa, 1997; Massey, Goldring & Durand, 1994) found that Mexican migrants are closely bonded together based on their home community to offer mutual financial, housing, informational, and transport supports. Such a bonding relation and relevant support are especially important for new Mexican migrants, as it is much more convenient for them to retain strong connections with co-cultural people and obtain their support immediately to survive in host society than bearing the indeterminate cost to develop in-depth cross-cultural contact in host society for the same purpose. Indeed, that is also true for migrant seasonal farmworkers in the United States. As Chavez, Wampler & Burkhart (2006) explored, those farmworkers who mostly arrived from Mexico have given strong trust and mutual supports toward each other. The reasons are not only they often come from the same home community, but also they realized that as the short-term, temporary and low skilled migrants, it is meaningless and challenging for them to build a host social network or to obtain host social capital.

Moreover, the above studies also implied that while migrants have been connected through the original community or they will return home society soon, the necessity to remain committed to home society would be overwhelming. By studying migrants from Zimbabwe in Botswana, Mutsindikwa & Gelderblom (2014) confirmed the above implication. They discovered that the understanding of the future intention of returning to home society; the obligation to support family and community back home; and the close friendship or kinship network in home society, have formed a strong pulling force for those migrants to retain

frequent contacts and strong emotional attachments with members of home society and to both devote and expect the mutual support in such a migrant community in financial, housing, informational, and transport aspects. Also, such a strong home connection is similarly applicable for Chinese international students to a certain degree. Biao & Shen (2009) pointed out that as Chinese government and society often honoured or gave some exclusive convenience to returned Chinese international students and Chinese international students knew they were supposed to return home after their overseas studies according to foreign law requirement; it is common for those students to form a small group by themselves so they can share not only similar overseas experiences but also the exclusive information and opportunities for acquiring government support or privilege, and expand their social network with other returned Chinese international students. Interestingly, that seems to echo with the contexts of Chinese society and Chinese students studying abroad that introduced in the first chapter of this study already, which referred to a positive connection between the rapid Chinese social and economic development and its rewards and resulting opportunities for students learning abroad and return home (see, for example, Hao et.al., 2016; Huang, 2002; Thogersen, 2016). Nevertheless, it would be difficult to see the necessity for these temporary migrants to perform frequent cross-cultural contacts or commit to the host sociocultural settings if the connection with home society still strongly exists, providing them easier access to some benefits or resources that could not be offered by the host society.

In conclusion, after reviewing those migrant studies which focused on migrants' social networking in host society from a social capital perspective, in-depth interpretations of migrants' acculturation, especially their commitments to home society, have been suggested. They referred to the possible circumstances in which migrants would choose to retain a strong commitment to their home society instead of being efficiently adapted into the host

society. These circumstances include situations when migrants' cross-cultural contacts and interactions in host society may not offer the social capital that has been desired, namely, the perceived cost not equating with the desired outcome; or the perceived benefits given by retaining close contacts and home cultural practices along with co-cultural people may be greater than those given by implementing cross-cultural contacts and further commitment to the host society, namely the one perceived outcome overwhelmed another.

Due to the limited amount of literature that explored Chinese international students' acculturation in host society especially through a social capital perspective, it is challenging to examine whether the above interpretations of migrants' acculturation are applicable for the case of those students. In that sense, two research questions have been generated for this study to fulfil such a gap. They are, firstly, what social capital have Chinese international students acquired through their co-cultural contacts, social ties, and possibly the commitment to home society? and secondly, how have Chinese international students valued the social capital that could be acquired by both developing intensive cross-cultural contacts and bonding to home cultural practices or co-cultural people?

Chapter 3 Methodology

3.1 Research paradigm and approach

The first chapter of this thesis identified the research topic as exploring Chinese international students' commitment to their home society while they are studying in British higher education, and in broad terms, that included the exploration of two important issues: these students' maintenance of home cultural characteristics or practice, and their preferred social contacts with their home cultural group, such as Chinese classmates and friends. The above context has then provided this study with a distinct and proper conceptual basis to guide the design of the methodological approach to collecting data. However, prior to the design of data collection, the above context has also guided the selection of a research paradigm.

A research paradigm has been referred to a set of different philosophical assumptions that help to interpret the nature of social reality (Chilisa, 2011), as well as different beliefs and values in a discipline that help to guide how a problem could be solved (Schwandt, 2011). For this reason, the research paradigm has been considered as representing the fundamental choices in research design for generating a road map for following methodological actions (Blaikie & Priest, 2017). Through the subsequent discussion upon how different research paradigms apprehended social culture, maintenance of a certain culture, and social contact, this chapter will demonstrate the rationale that informed the selection of an appropriate set of road maps for the overall primary research.

For present purposes, culture has been commonly defined as a complex of values, beliefs and traditions that is shared by a given population group; and the existence of the above cultural characteristics or practices for a population group is subject to the long-term influences of the economic, political and social movements within the given society which has carried such a

population group (see, for example, Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Hofstede, 1980). Given this definition, inheriting and reproducing the cultural characteristics or practices as the members of the same population group, such as retaining the traditions along with co-cultural people and expecting co-cultural people to act the same, seems a self-evident consequence. Further, since cultural characteristics or practices would be inherited and reproduced within a certain population group, it also seems self-evident that the sense of group cohesion among co-cultural people would be established, particularly in terms of having similar expectations toward social life and understanding of social reality (Gaztambide-Fernández, 2013).

In that case, it is not surprising to see that the above understandings and assumptions have led to a position. That is, many social studies that involved the investigation of a certain culture, or the social contacts in connecting with culture, have adopted the positivistic perspective (Schwartz, 1997; Smelser, 2003; Yeganeh et.al., 2004). The positivistic perspective tends to view the social reality as consisting of '*facts*' that are self-evidently and commonly existing in the world and having the '*objective manifestations*' as the evidence for observation (Blaikie & Priest, 2017, p. 58; Smelser, 2003, p. 646). So, studies that adopted the positivistic perspective presume that the cultural characteristics or practices of a group of people and the social contacts among those co-cultural people are something that those people 'have' in common naturally (Fogel, 1993; Yeganeh, Su & Chrysostome, 2004). As a result, in these positivism-led studies, using quantitative research approaches has become a common methodological practice (Yeganeh et.al., 2004). The quantitative approach is referring to a pattern of research that emphasizes the structured data collection with a large number of cases and following statistical data analysis so as to produce countable and generalizable results that can be objectively observed and measured (Creswell, 2003; Flick, 2015).

However, it is important to note that the positivistic perspective is merely one of the research paradigms. Contemporary scholars have also developed the interpretivist perspective to help to understand the culture, cultural maintenance and social contact. In contrast to the above positivistic perspective, the interpretivist perspective views culture not as an objective truth that is fixed and self-evidently generalized, but rather as a collection of differentiated, even conflicting thoughts and lived experiences that are constructed inter-subjectively within a population group (Boromisza-Habashi, 2012). That means, the cultural characteristics or practices that have been shared and maintained by a certain population group, as well as their social cohesion among the co-cultural people, are something that these people 'are' having now and for a period (Boromisza-Habashi, 2012). However, it is also worth noticing that if we follow the above logic, either the shared cultural practices or social cohesion among the co-cultural people may not remain constant, since people's thoughts and living experiences are moving constantly. Indeed, the philosophical basis for the above understandings could be related to the interpretivist tradition which is shared by many social researchers, namely that social reality is formed by the knowledge, values, experiences and decisions of different individuals across time (Wills et.al., 2007). Thus, it is pointless to leave the individuality and subjectivity behind when studying at a group of population's maintenance and social contacts in relation to their home culture.

Under the influence of the above understandings; it is common that studies adopting the interpretivist perspective focus on the exploration of individuals' subjective experiences to produce less representative, yet more in-depth knowledge of the contexts and meanings behind the appearing phenomenon, and as has just indicated, generally involve the adoption of a qualitative research approach (Creswell, 2003). The qualitative approach is a pattern of data collection and analysis in contrast to the quantitative approach; it focuses on using less

structured data collection techniques to collect descriptive data from a relatively smaller amount of cases and using interpretive techniques to analyse data, producing knowledge that is less generalizable but rather exploratory and informative to comprehend a complex research subject, for instance, a social phenomenon and the practices of a group of people (Creswell, 2003; Flick, 2015).

Although both the positivistic perspective and interpretivist perspective above, as two typical paradigms for the social research and cultural studies, have shown their philosophical positions and potentials that could benefit to this study's primary research design; neither of them, in itself, could satisfy all the demands of this research. The reasons are, on the one hand, while the positivistic perspective implies that the commitment to home society, which included the maintenance of home culture and close social connection with the home cultural group, self-evidently exist and could be observed through the quantitative approach; the problem is that this study has never assumed that such a phenomenon is the absolute case for all migrants including Chinese international students, and neither is Berry's model of acculturation strategies. On the other hand, the interpretivist perspective agrees with the significance of people's very own thoughts and lived experiences and the fact that they may change across time. They may allow this study to produce a less prejudiced understanding based on such an interpretive position and enable the in-depth exploration of the contexts and reasons behind the seeming commitment to the home society of some Chinese international students, which may in turn permit this study to penetrate the complexity of such a phenomenon. However, the interpretivist perspective also has a key disadvantage. Due to the concern with individual thoughts and experiences, it is less capable of describing the wider picture for a large group of participants, nor can it reveal the degree or extent of any suggested characteristics.

To solve the above dilemma, Creswell (2003) has suggested another paradigm, which is that of pragmatism. This paradigm points out that the researcher could choose to not commit to any of the existing paradigms and their corresponding schools of philosophy. Indeed, the above assumption has deeply bonded with a pragmatic position. That is, in the field of social science, social researchers find themselves studying the phenomena, problems and subjects which are always in constant change, are often complicated, and cannot fully depend on the application of the theories, rules and practices that have been previously suggested based on previous contexts or experiences (Biesta, 2010). Consequently, it could be challenging, and even pointless, to commit to any single school or approach of methodology in researching social phenomena, problems and subjects that have been known for their complexity. As Gorard & Taylor (2004) and Johnson & Onwuegbuzie (2004) further argue, social researchers should shift their focus away from the laws of nature and stop worrying about how to interpret social reality when they are facing difficult exploratory topics. Instead, they should apply all reasonable methods to investigate the studying topic and utilize more than one single approach to derive relevant and plausible meanings, so as to develop a more complete and less biased understanding.

It is important to remind ourselves that, as previously noted, the quantitative approach has been often related to positivism and the qualitative approach associated with interpretivism (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006). Therefore, if social researchers have chosen not to commit to any of the two above 'classic' research paradigms, neither the quantitative approach nor the qualitative approach alone will be appropriate to achieve satisfactory outcomes. Then the mixed methods approach that is associated with the use of both quantitative settings and qualitative settings could enable social researchers to avoid the disadvantages of using either

exclusively quantitative approach or qualitative approach and to generate a more complete understanding for the complex issues of concern (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). From this point, a consensus is achieved between the use of mixed methods research and the use of pragmatic paradigm because the rationale for using the mixed method approach in a study must relate to the pragmatic demand or nature of that study (Biesta, 2010; Morgan, 2007).

Indeed, the above understandings have significance for the studies related to sociocultural and social contact topics. As Gorard & Taylor (2004), Johnson & Onwuegbuzie (2004) and Morgan (2007) point out, to explore either the complex circumstances in people's social contacts with others or people's connections with a broad culture, namely a complex combination of people's shared norms, practices and thoughts, social researchers now have increasingly utilized the pragmatist paradigm and mixed methods approach. The reasons are, first, they allow researchers to gain descriptive data from a small scale of participants, especially their individual stories, thoughts and considerations which are less visible and interpret the contexts and rationales behind the studied phenomenon. Second, they also allow the recording of quantitative data from a relatively larger scale of participants, and indicate the trends, strengths, and extents of certain behaviours or attitudes, and to reveal the profile and effective influencing factors for the subject of study in a relatively objective manner.

A successful example of utilizing the pragmatist paradigm and mixed methods approach is Gu and Schweisfurth's study (2006) which aimed to explore Chinese teachers' cross-cultural learning experiences in both Chinese and British educational contexts. In the study, Gu & Schweisfurth (2006) have adopted the mixed methods approach to obtain quantitative data by questionnaire survey and qualitative data by interview. As a result, the attitudes of Chinese teachers' cultural contacts as well as the factors of influence behind the cultural contacts have

been statistically confirmed by the quantitative data. Also, the responses in interviews provided a reliable dataset to further explore the contexts for those teachers' experiences of cultural adaptation and their subjective rationales for the choice of cultural adaptation. Though that was a small case study, the mixed methods approach and its pragmatist paradigm have helped Gu & Schweisfurth (2006) to develop an exploratory but internally consistent understanding of those Chinese teachers' cross-cultural learning experiences.

This study, as stated above, explores the Chinese international students' commitment to home society, especially in their acculturative experiences of studying in British universities. Therefore, this study bears considerable similarity to the above study of Gu & Schweisfurth (2006), since both studies intended to comprehend the living experiences of a specific group of Chinese population in a cross-cultural environment. This is a naturally complex phenomenon that involves both the different students' stories, thoughts, and considerations and their connections with Chinese cultural characteristics or practices. Furthermore, this study intends to not only reveal the extent to which Chinese international students experienced the struggle between home cultural maintenance and cross-cultural contact and the external factors that either prevented or enabled these students' commitment to home society in the British learning environment, but also to explore the contexts, underlying rationales, and meanings behind the development of these students' acculturation experiences and strategies. In considering all three points above as well as the features of the pragmatic paradigm and its associated mixed-methods approach, this researcher became convinced that the selection of the pragmatic paradigm along with the mixed methods approach would match the nature of this research, and previous successful examples do exist. Also, these approaches could also help this researcher to avoid the biases intrinsic to a single method approach or any other paradigm, and to generate contrasting sorts of data for better knowledge generation.

3.2 Design of methods and questions for data collection

In the case of this research, the qualitative data was obtained and analysed to support an explanation in more depth of the issues underlying the quantitative results. That is to say, the quantitative method was intended for use in this research to collect the descriptive statistical data from the participants, and then the quantitative results have been explained further by collecting qualitative follow-up data, in attempt to contextualise these quantitative results from the descriptive and more in-depth responses. Therefore, this research represents an explanatory sequential design. The reasons for the above design in the manner of data collection are based on the following pragmatic considerations.

First, according to the below figure (Figure 8) which listed the research questions that have been outlined in the course of literature review, it is apparent that some questions, such as RQ1, RQ4, and RQ5, are about assessing the extent and revealing the contributing factors and acquired benefits of Chinese international students' commitment to home culture when studying in UK universities. Consequently, the use of quantitative methods for those research questions helped this researcher to gain access to a wider range of participants and then pinpoint and measure the relevant characteristics that closely connected to the natures of above concerns: typically the ways, issues of concern, strengths, and frequencies for these students to express their commitment to home culture and home cultural group members.

Figure 8. Overall summary of research questions

RQ1.	To what extent have Chinese international students experienced the conceptual conflict between home cultural maintenance and cross-cultural contact?
RQ2.	How have Chinese international students' cross-cultural contact experiences played a part in their decision-making, and have Chinese international students shown stronger preference in terms of attachment to co-cultural peers and home culture than developing cross-cultural contact?

RQ3.	What cross-cultural contact experiences have Chinese international students acquired through their cross-cultural contacts in British universities?
RQ4.	What factors in the host environment have either facilitated or prevented Chinese international students in developing further cross-cultural contact or interaction, according to their experiences?
RQ5.	What social capital have Chinese international students acquired through their co-cultural contacts, interactions, and possible commitment to home society?
RQ6.	How have Chinese international students valued the social capital that could be acquired by both developing intensive cross-cultural contacts and bonding to home cultural practices or co-cultural people?

Secondly, after analysing the quantitative data and comparing the results, especially the specific responses to relevant questions, the significant issues of concern could be revealed, although as this researcher will note below, sampling issues tended to render the use of statistical tests of significance inappropriate. Then, the research moved onto the qualitative investigation. That is, by enhancing the qualitative inquiry protocol in relation to the above-suggested issues of concern, the qualitative method was adopted to collect in-depth and descriptive responses from a smaller group of participants, in a bid to explore their contexts, rationales and further connections behind the quantitative results and relevant findings. With this data, this researcher was able to analyse how the contributing or inhibiting factors could function in relation to participants' perceived experiences or reasons; investigate how the above sense of commitment could influence participants' overseas learning life; and explore any underlying rationales for the phenomena behind the quantitative dataset, which matched the demands of the rest of research questions, namely RQ2, RQ3, and RQ6, respectively.

For the quantitative part of data collection, a questionnaire survey (see Appendix 1) was designed and used with close-ended questions to gather quantitative data from participants. For the qualitative part of data collection, a semi-structured interview has been designed and

used along with an interview protocol (see Appendix 2). The reasons for these two decisions, however, bear little relation to the stereotyped advantages of using a close-ended method of data collection, which often have been referred to helping researchers to reach as many people as possible in a short time and to generate statistical figures for researchers to categorize the results and suggest the relevant statistical significance (Creswell, 2003), and nor to the stereotyped advantages of using the semi-structured interview, namely the balanced emphasis of both the flexibility for researchers to collect further responses and the control to regulate the direction of inquiry (Creswell, 2003; Flick, 2015; Willis, Jost & Nilakanta, 2007). Instead, two reasons are developed based on the pragmatic utilization of the previous studies in similar topics, especially their theories and methodological implications.

First, some studies (e.g. Kim, 1997; Kvam, 2017a) have already analysed the importance of communication in terms of influencing the performance and option of cultural adaptation for migrants. Other studies (e.g. Lee & Chen, 2000; Kvam, 2017b) explored the contact with migrants' original society or cultural group and found its positive connection with migrants' maintenance of commitment to the home society. In that case, a clear theoretical framework to assess how the contact with Chinese international students' original cultural groups might help in reinforcing these students' commitment to their home society, together with relevant theoretical assumptions, has been suggested. That proved adequate for this researcher to develop both the close-ended questions design to assess whether the previous knowledge is applicable in any extent, how strong it would be, and whether any unexpected finding may occur, and the protocol for the semi-structured interview designed to explore whether those theories' assumptions and underlying implications are applicable and any new thought or explanation may occur.

Secondly, although few examples in the literature directly investigated the commitment of Chinese international students to their mother cultures in British universities, some studies (e.g. Demes & Geeraert, 2014) have already studied similar issues, such as the acculturation orientation and psychological adaptation, for other groups of Chinese migrants. They have developed their original close-ended questions and broad themes for investigation based on a similar theoretical grounding to this research: namely, that migrants might choose to avoid cultural adaptation but remain committed to their home cultures because of the invisible social benefits which are brought by or associated with the intensive contact with original cultural groups. Thus, they have offered this researcher a set of closely-related and previously-validated survey questions as well as the underlying topics of concern to assist in the design of both the close-ended questionnaire and interview protocol, respectively. For example, adopting from the existing enquiry regarding individuals' attitudes for the home cultural practices and the staying with home cultural group members, this study then designed the questionnaire questions such as '*When studying abroad, do you still celebrate Chinese festivals with your co-cultural friends in the UK*' (Q. 36), and the guiding questions in interview protocol such as: '*Do you consider it important to stay close to your Chinese peers in your class or course, while you are a student in the UK?*'.

As introduced briefly in above, the design of the close-ended questionnaire survey and the semi-structured interview for this research has built upon the pragmatic utilization of the previous studies that explored the impact of communication on migrants' cultural adaptation and the connection between migrants' contact with their original cultural groups and their living experiences in the host environment. However, that has brought a question into consideration, which is, when there are many previous studies and the suggested understandings, themes, and utilized items of investigations are available, then based on what

rationale and model could this researcher adopt or design the appropriate options to fulfil the demands of this research? To solve this question and design the reliable questions for data collection, this researcher has returned to those previous studies and analysed their rationales as well as the designs of primary research, which will be presented in following paragraphs.

Commonly, the acculturative experience of migrants in a host culture, included international students, has been demonstrated by four stages, which are, the enculturation, deculturation, acculturation, and assimilation (Kim, 1997; Lee & Chen, 2000). This procedure has assumed that the route of acculturation is toward assimilation, whereby, it is suggested, migrants will gradually interact with the elements of a new cultural environment, learn new rules, customs and concepts, and abandon the old cultural patterns. However, as Lee & Chen (2000) also pointed out, conflict often occurs in the process between the individual's desire to adapt to the new culture and his or her desire to remain the previous, familiar one.

It is worth noting that, whether migrants, such as international students, like or dislike the cultural contact and cultural adaptation in a new environment, it is inevitable that they will engage with cultural elements of the host society sooner or later. As Lee & Chen (2000) explained, migrants will set up interpersonal communication with all kinds of people who are living in the new environment; and non-interpersonal communication with all kinds of mass media, especially the host mass media. Interpersonal communication has been thought of as critical to enabling cultural contact and subsequent adaptation. According to Chen (1994), regular contacts with host-culture members in daily life can trigger the initial consciousness of the inadequacy of migrants' understandings in the unfamiliar host society and the need to adapt, which will then lead to them learn or develop new cultural concepts and identities. Meanwhile, the non-interpersonal communication represents an indirect but more 'private'

way for migrants to become acquainted with new cultural patterns, as there is no embarrassing risk in responding, but they can gradually learn the underlying, unspoken cultural meanings from the images and words that are expressed in the host society's mass media. In that case, migrants, like international students, will receive the images, concepts, and knowledge of the new worldviews, beliefs, norms and rules by communicating with the natives in the host society (Fogel, 1993). Kim (1997) also supported this concept as he argued the communication worked as a crucial means to connect migrants from other cultures with the host society (Kim, 1997).

However, it is also important to see that the cultural groups and people from any non-host context could largely affect migrants' cultural contact and thus the acculturation as well. Based on the principle of communication that was introduced in the previous chapter, in the situation that migrants retained intensive communication with their cultural groups or communities, the traditional and familiar cultural patterns will be recalled again and again (Lee & Chen, 2000). Then that could lead to awareness or recall of migrant's desire to retain their original cultural patterns and their identities rather than to acculturate. Indeed, Lee & Chen (2000) has found evidence to claim such a rationale. In their primary research, migrant parents did manifest an important impact on their children's cultural adaptation, but some external forces, such as migrant children's peers, have also generated the conformity and receptivity pressures. Although these two findings still await further investigation in order to specify the extent of the influence, they suggested that the contacts with the significant others from migrant's home cultural group or the co-cultural people who have great potential to influence migrants themselves, typically peers, might have a considerable effect on migrants' acculturation. Similarly, when migrants have been surrounded by the information from their original society or home cultural groups, their old cultural patterns and previous

experiences will be recalled on each occasion, and in that case, host society's mass media communication might lose some of their impacts. Migrants will have less chance to achieve contact with and get used to the host culture, which then leaves the performance of acculturation in doubt.

Based on the above analysis, it has become apparent that to understand the acculturative experiences and relevant performances of a certain migrant group, previous studies have already developed a reasonable and previously exercised rationale for primary research. That is referring to the need to investigate, first, the connection between migrants' contact with their home cultural groups or co-cultural people and their conformity to the culture of origin, and second, the connection between migrants' communication with the host society and their conformity to host culture. The findings above have significance for this research, since this research also intends to explore the acculturative experiences of a specific migrant group, namely the Chinese international students, and their relevant performances, namely the possible selection of home cultural maintenance as a less possible yet working strategy to accommodate with the social environment in British universities. In that sense, any model of enquiry that has been developed in the previous studies to explore the above two interrelated connections, especially in which have shared similar topics or concerns with this study, could be learned from and adopted by this research.

In practice, to investigate the above two interrelated connections, Lee & Chen (2000) developed the Host and Native Communication Competence Scale. The original Host and Native Communication Competence Scale were composed of 30 multiple-choice questions, and generally, these questions were addressing three aspects of acculturation, which are, language proficiency (e.g. how proficiently the participant can read in English or Chinese);

the interpersonal interactions with the members of host and origin cultures (e.g. how many local friends participants have, or Chinese friends); and the mass communication activities in the host and origin cultures (e.g. how often do participants watch English or Chinese TV). In that sense, with this scale, participants could self-report their participation in the communication with both the elements of the host society and origin society and therefore offer valuable data to help researchers to understand both their home cultural contact experiences and cross-cultural contact experiences. Since such a feature matched well with the primary research requirement of this study that has been just stated, Lee & Chen's Host and Native Communication Competence Scale have been principally adopted.

Despite the adoption of Lee & Chen's existing model of enquiry, this researcher would like to remind the reader, that he has no intention of assessing Chinese international students' English language proficiency. On the other hand, this researcher does recognize the bridging function of host language proficiency in facilitating or preventing cultural contact and resulting acculturation, whilst such an understanding has been confirmed by the primary research of Li et.al., (2016) and Tong (2014), respectively. Thus, instead, this researcher intends to examine how Chinese international students view the connection between the use of a certain language and their attitudes toward British society, or, their home cultural group. To reflect such an intention, some original questions from Lee & Chen's Host and Native Communication Competence Scale have been modified and placed in the questionnaire survey (e.g. Q. 43 '*If the communication between two Chinese students is not in Chinese, you will feel that is strange*').

Further, this researcher has no intention of revealing the exact amount or frequency of migrants' contact with either the host or home cultural group but their experiences of

participation, especially the feelings, attitudes, and thoughts toward a specific acculturation event happened in their overseas student life. Hence, instead of asking '*how often*' or '*how many*' as was the case in the original Host and Native Communication Competence Scale; in the questionnaire survey, all questions have been modified to ask whether participants agree to the statement of a certain acculturation event (e.g. Q. 40 '*In your off-class leisure in the UK, you watched or listened to Chinese entertainment programmes more often than the English ones*'). The five-point Likert style has been utilized as well for all questions with five degrees of response, namely: '*strongly agree*', '*agree*', '*neutral*', '*disagree*' and '*strongly disagree*', to enable participants to express not just their agreement or disagreement to the specified event and also the relevant degree. In that sense, this researcher will be able to discriminate which items in the questionnaire and their represented themes are the most supported issues that merit further exploration, and which are significant to either fit into or deviate from the given knowledge of previous studies.

Though, besides, he would like to reiterate that for Likert scale items, the key criterion for effectiveness is not only the available number of response categories and the associated descriptions for these response categories, but also the items themselves because they should provoke responses which discriminate between participants (Cohen et.al., 2018). That has suggested the use of clear and strong statements to construct the items that with stronger discriminatory power, and this researcher has been then motivated to design survey questions in the above way, whilst he is fully aware of the possibility that the clear and strong statement in survey question might be seen as somewhat overconfident and 'leading' participants.

For the interview research, the above considerations and similar modifications have been also implemented. For instance, some guiding questions in the interview protocol have been

designed to motivate participants to share their attitudes, thoughts, and explanations by asking them '*do you think…*' and '*how do you consider…*' on a certain issue of concern in relation to their contact with co-cultural peers. Meanwhile, some other guiding questions have been designed to encourage participants to further describe the contact with co-cultural peers in a bid to gather more in-depth information, such as their stories of participation and reflection, rather than their attitudes or feelings (e.g. *Could you please tell me that have you get along with Chinese peers in your class or course well*? AND *In general, how you have managed to get along with Chinese peers in your class or course, e.g. by what mean, in what place or occasion, and with what frequency, attitude, manner or topic to interact*?).

Apart from Lee & Chen's Host and Native Communication Competence Scale, this research has also principally adopted the question theme and item set which were developed and utilized by Demes & Geeraert (2014). In this study, the matters that may affect the performance of acculturation for individuals have been investigated and then measured to discover their levels of impact, and thus a full set of questionnaire themes with items of questions have been formed. In general, they contained three broad themes: the acculturation orientation, emotional adaptation, and perceived cultural gap. The theme of acculturation orientation and relevant items (e.g. possessing home country/host country friends and performing socially the way home country/host country people do while abroad) focus on investigating whether migrants insist on retaining their home cultural contact and whether they make an effort to connect with the host society. The next theme of cultural distance and the following items (e.g. how to behave in public; how to spend time with family together; and what to do to have fun or relax in the home/host country) attempts to assess the extent of the perceived difference between home society and host society. That may contribute to the difficulty for migrants to adapt to the host society if the perceived difference is big. The last

theme of psychological adaptation and the following items (e.g. homesickness when thinking of home country; feeling for the absence of home country's friends or family members) examines the emotional change and perception of migrants while they are away from the home society and stay in the host society.

The above themes and item 'bank' developed by Demes & Geeraert (2014) have a good connection with this research's topic. These themes and items have been designed to measure the extent and/or levels of individuals' physical, cultural and emotional connections with their home society and co-cultural peers while they are in the host society, as well as their feelings, perceptions and behaviours while they are in the host society due to the existence of matters such as cultural distance and home connection. These two features fitted with the nature of this study because the key concerns of this research are to understand whether and how Chinese international students have sustained a strong connection with home cultural characteristics or practices and cultural group, and how they felt, perceived, and thought about the contact with both home cultural group and host society in their overseas student life. Hence, little change has been made toward the question themes and the item set that has been developed by Demes & Geeraert (2014).

3.3 The pilot study and further measures to enhance research design quality

As noted ed above, this researcher has utilized the sets of themes of investigation and their indicated questions for questionnaire and/or interview which have been established and executed by the existing studies particularly of Lee & Chen (2000) and Demes & Geeraert (2014). The reasoning has been that the rationale, fields and directions of investigation in the above two studies shared many characteristics with this research, and thus may answer the methodological demand of this research. This researcher has also taken this research's key

concerns into account and thus made some modifications upon the original sets of themes and questions for data collection to remove any irrelevance with this research. However, he also reflected that the credibility of the outcome of such 'transmission' of methodological design still needed to be checked, and if necessary, to be strengthened, because regardless of how similar two studies are in their approach to investigating, they are not studying at the exact same people, and the contexts and thoughts of the targeted population may change as the time of investigation varied.

Following the above reflection, this researcher has implemented several strategies before the formal data collection. One of the most important is, that he has set up two focus groups with a total of four invited Chinese international students in each focus group as the pilot study during the design of questionnaire and interview protocol. A key purpose for running a pilot study with the method of the focus group is that such a group in-depth interview permits researchers to establish the issues which have not been concerned beforehand and to utilize these established issues for later exploration (Van Teijlingen & Hundley, 2002). In the pilot study, this researcher has asked these students to not only respond to the themes and questions that adopted from the studies of Lee & Chen (2000) and Demes & Geeraert (2014) but also to offer their insights upon the process of enquiry as well as the design of the adopted themes and questions above. To maximize the diversity of response, these invited students for focus groups were sharing the differences in age, gender, studying courses and universities.

After implementing the pilot study, most of the adopted themes and questions gained reasonable responses from students. However, this researcher has also found that some interesting circumstances occurred during the pilot study, which none of the adopted themes nor questions was capable of investigating or explaining further. For example, although

students in two focus groups have rated differently regarding how intensively they have implemented the cross-cultural contacts in the British university environment; they have commonly expressed the desire to know other cultures and to get along with classmates and teachers from other cultural contexts. Also, all students in focus groups have reported that they understood some benefits may be available if they develop intensive contact with classmates from other cultural contexts and follow the local ways of study; yet, they still preferred to stay with Chinese classmates and retain some traditional Chinese learning styles. In that sense, although the adopted themes and questions have assisted in revealing the above conflicts or inconsistency inside students' responses; the matters behind the conflicts or inconsistency, such as their extents, contexts and causes, were not being concerned nor explored, which is a deficiency for the above 'transmission designs'.

As a result, this researcher has designed a series of additional themes and questions for his questionnaire survey and interview, as another important approach, to enhance the credibility of research design and the consequent data collection. For instance, to explore the reason or cause for the possible inconsistency between student's problematic effort in developing cross-cultural contact and their recognition of the advantages for having successful cross-cultural contacts, in the interview protocol he added two new open-ended guiding questions after the existing guiding question of '*Could you please tell me the difficulties, problems or challenges that prevented you to get used to the British educational environment?*'. The new guiding questions are, '*What reasons do you think are causing the above difficulties, problems or challenges of adaptation*?', and '*Have you considered whether those difficulties or challenges could be solved or needed to be solved, and why*?'. They allow student participants in the interview to not only describe their problematic cross-cultural contact experiences, but also to explain whether any of the contexts, matters of concern, or perceived

causes in these experiences may overwhelm their desires for having successful cross-cultural contact and their recognition for the benefits that could be brought by successful cross-cultural contact.

Moreover, through the pilot study, two issues regarding the design and presentation of the questionnaire questions have been revealed. They refer to the risk of implying a non-existed assumption of investigation toward participants and the risk of preventing participants from responding reliably.

The first risk has been found whilst some students were guessing whether there was an underlying assumption of the research. In a focus group, after asking the questions regarding the feelings for living and studying in the UK and the questions regarding the relationship with co-cultural classmates, one student raised an issue for the attention of this researcher and asked if the ultimate objective of this study was to prove the connection between Chinese students' intensive contact with co-cultural classmates and their improved feelings after such contacts. Immediately after, another two students have supported that student. As they commented, they have seen many existing studies equipped with these types of questions, whether they have been implemented by university research students or research staffs, seemingly to confirm that Chinese students' intensive contact with co-cultural classmates is the approach or solution to ease their cultural shock after arriving in an overseas environment. Certainly, this researcher has reminded them again the exploratory purpose of this research, the openness and non-preconceived position of this research topic, and thus his willingness to see their authentic responses.

The second risk has been found differently. During the pilot study with both focus groups, this researcher realized that some students tended to answer 'positive' to a certain type of the questions that were developed by and adopted from the previous studies, namely those which ask whether they have positive attitudes toward the development of cross-cultural contact, for instance, the preferences to learn from, make friend with, and socialize with their classmates from other cultural contexts. However, he was alerted in the following discussion, as some students admitted that their positive attitudes reported for the above questions were indeed relatively weak and thus, they reversed those 'positive' responses. When he asked for the reason, students have commonly reported that they felt some degrees of shame or anxiety if the answers are negative. Particularly, they may need to constantly give 'negative' response to a queue of questions that all ask about whether they prefer, expect, or be active to develop cross-cultural contact in different events. These students then thought that might highlight their underperformance and even incapability in managing their living and studying in the UK. Even though beforehand, this researcher has already explained that neither he nor this study will judge the responses, and their information will not be shared; these students still commented that sometimes they just can't put away the sensitivity and desire to protect their dignity from any mistake or underperformance that may expose them in public.

As this researcher reflected, both the above two exposed issues are relevant to the problem of demand characteristics. This concept refers to the problematic circumstances in which research participants responded to the researcher according to the perceptions of the situation rather than the researcher's explicit instruction (McCambridge et.al., 2012). One of the most common cases is that participants assume there is a certain implicit preference or supposition of a researcher, and then attempt to satisfy them (Berkowitz & Troccoli, 1986). That conforms with the circumstance of how the first risk has been identified in the pilot study, as

one student in the pilot study enquired whether there was an ultimate assumption and two students assumed the research finding regardless of this researcher's introduction. Though the above participant assumptions or speculations could be viewed as the result of these students' earnest desire to help this pilot study, since they understood the purpose of trailing of the pilot study and were honest in voicing their concerns to this researcher; they still reveal the potential for the adopted questions to cause participants' unnecessary assumption or problematic speculation, which may damage the credibility of data.

Besides, demand characteristics may also reflect the extent to which participants may behave in a socially desirable way or avoid behaving in a socially unacceptable way, rather than responding naturally (Given, 2008). That relates to the second risk that has been found, as some students in the pilot study were tending to give positive responses to avoid being labelled as underachieving in acculturation and losing personal dignity accordingly, especially whilst they have been asked continually the questions about their cross-cultural contact with people from other cultures. Indeed, for Chinese student participants, their concern with personal performance and one's dignity has reflected the norm of face-saving in their home society. As God & Zhang (2019) argued, people in China are often being told to prevent the damage toward both their dignity and that of others in public, and thus they are cultivated to meet social expectations wherever possible. Thus, in Chinese students' minds, exposing personal weakness, difficulties and problems in adapting to a new learning environment, especially in a continual manner, may equate to posting a sign of failure to meet the social expectation and thus cause the threat to personal 'face'. This has motivated them to offer unreliable responses instead. Indeed, findings regarding the Chinese participants' concern with 'face' are not unusual in academic studies. For example, Cortazzi et.al., (2011) have performed research upon Chinese participants' responses in the interview. An important

finding is that Chinese participants are hesitated to give authentic responses if they doubt

about anyone's face would be damaged. Regardless of how such a concern takes place; the

credibility of research finding may be influenced if the authenticity of data from participants

is compromised.

To prevent the occurrence of the above risks in the future data collection via the

questionnaire survey, this researcher has taken two approaches to enhance the presenting

sequence and wording of the adopted questions.

First, the original sequence of the questions and the underlying themes have been completely

upset by this researcher. For instance, in question Q. 2, he now asks the students if their

contact with families and friends in China has been reduced; but in question Q. 3, he switches

the concern to enquire whether students prefer to introduce Chinese name to people from

other cultures than English name. In that case, whilst participants read through the

questionnaire, they could perceive little solid thematic interconnection between the questions,

which could then restrict the ability for them to assume or speculate upon the non-existent

preference of this researcher. This enhanced design has learned from the principle advised by

Given (2008) and McCambridge et.al., (2012), namely to control the contextual elements that

may mislead participants into producing unnecessary thinking upon the contexts rather than

the contents of primary research.

Second, in addition to the change in the order of presenting questions, this researcher has

redesigned the wording for many questions as well. In general, the redesign referred to the

replacement of one matter or subject with another in the statement of questions. For instance,

rather than asking if a student prefers to consider classmates from other cultures as the

examples in learning, has more friends from other cultures than co-cultural people, or usually socializes with the classmates from other cultures for leisure and entertainment purpose; the new questions now ask whether he or she prefers to consider Chinese classmates as the examples in learning, has more Chinese friends, or usually socializes with Chinese classmates (Q. 5, 6 & 7).

This researcher has noticed that many of the above changes to the questionnaire items may imply a vague impression, which is, he is certain of the intensive co-cultural contact among Chinese international students rather than the cross-cultural contact between Chinese international students and people from other cultural contexts, and that may then lead Chinese participants to approve such an underlying statement. However, this impression is incorrect. It is worth remembering that as discussed in before, the notion of face-saving has already led some Chinese students in both the pilot study and the study of Cortazzi et.al., (2011) to offer unreliable data because they assumed reporting negative attitude and performance for cross-cultural contact as suggesting their failure in managing overseas life and causing the loss of personal dignity. Particularly, the continual enquiries about how they performed or valued their cross-cultural contact in various aspects against which their co-cultural contact has been proven in the pilot study as awakening their sensitivity to protect the personal face and given overstatement. Consequently, this researcher considered it would be more appropriate to occasionally replace the subjects and their relevant wording, namely to enquire how their contact with co-cultural people compared to their contact with people from other cultural contexts instead.

Besides the questionnaire survey, this researcher also noticed that for the interview protocol that has been eventually designed, the frequent straightforward enquiries to Chinese

international students' difficulties or problems in their acculturative experiences and their contact with co-cultural people may suggest a similar impression for leading participants to approve an underlying statement. That is, that he is certain of the problematic acculturation and home cultural maintenance of Chinese international students. Again, such an impression is also incorrect.

First, it is important to remember that, as stated in before, the interview in this research has been designed as subsequent data collection procedure to contextualize the overall picture that discovered or highlighted in the questionnaire survey and to explore further explanations to any significant findings in the questionnaire survey. Particularly, the results of questionnaire survey have eventually suggested that Chinese international students did suffer conceptual conflicts between 'home cultural maintenance' and 'adaptation to new culture' in some respects and expressed the preference to retain intensive contact with co-cultural people. Thus, in the final edition of the interview protocol, it will be reasonable to observe that frequent attention has been placed by this researcher to enquiring about participants' stories and thoughts about the difficult experiences and co-cultural contact that they have commonly reported in the preceding questionnaire survey.

Second, this researcher would like to reiterate that the design of interview protocol was informed by the review of the pilot study as well since the pilot study examines the validity and operationality of the themes and questions that were adopted from the previous studies. As stated before, the results have indicated that some participants have given overstatement due to the face concern, though afterwards they have admitted it and altered their responses. In fact, as Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018, p. 484) argued, under the influences of certain cultural norms, like, the '*Doctrine of the mean*' that aims to protect people's face from being

extreme; offering less reliable responses instead of accurate opinions in the primary study is notable for participants from East Asian cultural contexts. To confront the above risk, restricting the opportunity for these participants to '*sit on the fence*' or offer unreliable responses is a critical principle (Cohen et.al., 2018: 484). Based on the above understanding, this researcher has improved the statement of some guiding questions, especially by making the expression of concerns more specific and straightforward, so as to provoke participants' immediate, authentic responses and give little occasion for their unnecessary concern of home traditions, namely being 'moderate' in human relationship and save face, to take place.

Second, this researcher would like to outline that not all the guiding questions in the interview protocol have been designed to ask participants in the suspected 'leading' way. For instance, guiding question Q. 1 asks '*As a student come from China, could you please describe the feelings or thoughts you have had when you first contacted the British education environment for your course*'; Q. 4 asks '*Are there some strategies, arrangements or behaviours that you have used, or planned to use, to help you to better adapt to the different educational environment in the UK*', and Q. 5 asks '*Could you please tell me that have you get along with Chinese peers in your class or course well*'. By their nature, these questions are open-ended and exploratory and do not indicate leading participants to approve or disapprove any topic. Further, they also served as the 'triggers' to the subsequent questions. For example, in the case where a participant has stated the problematic experiences of getting used to a new learning environment in guiding question Q. 1, then the use of Q. 2 and Q. 3, namely to enquire what problems or difficulties they have encountered and whether they could be solved, will be certain. Yet, where participants responded with nothing relevant to any problematic acculturation experiences or seemingly overstated the 'positive' in the above exploratory guiding questions, then the wording in subsequent questions would be

manipulated to ask '*have you experienced any...*' or '*how you consider the statement of ...*' instead, so as to remind participants to think and explain further. In that case, the suspected 'leading' way of asking and relevant guiding questions would not be applied, and in practice, this researcher has often changed the wording and sequence of guiding questions to cope with the responses given by the participants to extract further information. That fits in with the selection of perspective of pragmatism that mentioned in before.

3.4 Sampling, data collection and relevant concerns of feasibility and ethics

Normally, when researchers decided to use a quantitative approach in order to reach a wide range of participants and generate generalizable conclusions, a probability sampling strategy will be regarded as the most suitable sampling approach. The reasons for this are that by using this strategy, all samples will be sourced equally and indiscriminatingly, and that will lead to a better level of statistical representativeness for the samples compared to the overall studied population (Flick, 2015); and more importantly, in that sense, the reliability of research results will be also improved since the results are portraying the typical characteristics of the overall studied population.

However, in this study, the use of probability sampling has been abandoned, even though the quantitative questionnaire survey was deployed in the first stage. The key is that to perform probability sampling, a pool of studied population is required so that to allow each population has a known chance to be chosen for the sample (Sampath, 2001). For this study, building up a pool of all the names of Chinese international students who studied in British universities, which were estimated at over 90,000 students (HESA, 2017), has been reflected as unrealistic, because of not only the logistical feasibility of gathering personal information for

such a huge amount of population in a limited budget and time but also the ethical problem of requesting universities to share students' personal information with this researcher.

As a result, for the quantitative questionnaire survey, the sampling strategy adopted was that of non-probability sampling. This researcher is aware of the relevant limitation of such a sampling strategy, namely, the absence of the guarantee of the representativeness of samples against the overall studied population and thus implicitly a lower level of research reliability (Sampath, 2001). However, this researcher would like to point out that this study had no intention of being either a demographic census or an opinion poll, enumerating as much as possible Chinese international students who are studying in the UK and recording their certain characteristics. Indeed, as noted in the chapter of introduction, this study is aiming to explore the nature of a certain phenomenon, namely the commitment to home culture and home cultural group, among the members of Chinese international students. That indicates the strong attempt of this study to comprehend participants' experiences and investigate not only the process of occurrence itself but also the relevant contexts and underlying rationales and reasons to explain. In that case, this researcher has reflected that the limitation of non-probability strategy is less relevant with the exploratory purpose of this study. He will now move onto the introduction of sampling implementation and relevant concerns.

In the sampling implementation for the quantitative questionnaire survey, this researcher has used purposive sampling and then convenience sampling in sequence, which has made this study's sampling operation appeared unusual in comparison to other similar studies. The reason for doing so is that this researcher has continually perceived a series of unique sampling difficulties in relation to gaining the reliable access to the targeted population, namely Chinese international students so that a compromise in sampling had to be made.

Initially, this researcher had intended to use a purposive sampling approach by contacting the international offices in several British universities in order to ask for permission to deliver the electronic questionnaires to Chinese international students only, since the international office is supposedly the department that deals with international student affairs particularly and holds their contact information. The benefits of this approach were, that it could reach the target sample populations precisely, quickly, and might get a wide range of samples with a good response rate along with the promotion of university officers. Provided the extent of sample and response rate were good, the limitation of choosing the non-probability sampling strategy in terms of a lower level of sample representativeness would be mitigated. Yet, the drawbacks are also significant, as with this approach it would be difficult to either expect the cooperation from university or even to draw it to their attention at all. Indeed, after this researcher had made formal contacts, few international offices in British universities responded, and even those which had responded, asked for an extensive range of documentation for reference and evaluation and outlined that the process for approval would be lengthy. Thus, this purposive sampling approach had to be abandoned.

Alternatively, this researcher implemented another purposive sampling approach which proceeded through an institutional intermediary that was familiar with Chinese international students and had held a wide range of contact information for Chinese international students, just like university international office but more convenient to gain assistance in contacting and sampling Chinese international students. This institutional intermediary refers to the Chinese Students and Scholars Association (CSSA), a 'Chinese Student Union' constituted by Chinese international students and scholars who studied in the UK and supported by the Chinese Embassy to organize and perform social and cultural activities among themselves, so

it was not a formal university department that is tough to approach. Moreover, this researcher is also Chinese and was studying in a British university for a long time, thus this researcher taken advantage of such an 'identity advantage' so that he was able to meet a top leader of CSSA in a British university, established trust after a series of personal meeting, and thus gained the leader's consent and assistance, on behalf of CSSA, to reach Chinese international students. In fact, this researcher has reflected that the use of a sampling approach above is not unusual. Pechurina (2014) and Mason-Bish (2018) have reported that in a few studies, utilizing researchers' identity advantage and personal contact advantage to establish contact and trust with an informal intermediary that included the potential samples, whether it is a friend circle or a workgroup, and then requesting its assistance in promoting the sampling need, have enabled smoother access to participants because the difficulty for a researcher to personally and directly contact a large number of potential samples have been overcome.

The above approach of purposive sampling was working well at the beginning of the process. In general, with permission of that familiarized CSSA leader, the CSSA of one British university has utilized its public account in WeChat, a popular online social networking application for mobile users in China just like Facebook, to broadcast this researcher's need of survey participants and electronic questionnaire to all subscribed users through the 'page of friend group'. Since CSSA contained Chinese international students only and Chinese international students have extensively subscribed to the public account of local CSSA in WeChat for information; this researcher was able to reach many Chinese international students easily, call their attention immediately, and distribute the questionnaire survey to interested Chinese students directly. Also, through the personal contacts of that familiarized CSSA leader, CSSAs in other universities have been also noticed and thus this researcher's

call for participants and electronic questionnaire survey was shared. As a result, in the first few days, over 80 questionnaires have been completed and returned.

However, a problem occurred soon afterwards and that regretfully led to the cessation of the implementation of the above purposive sampling approach. This researcher was asked by that familiarized CSSA leader for a favour, a favour that this researcher had agreed to help and fulfilled it and yet the consequence of such action appeared unexpectedly unfavourable to the interest of this researcher. When he has brought that familiarized leader for attention, the dispute happened, and eventually, this leader has withdrawn all the assistance that had been promised. It astonished this researcher since he never expected the sampling would be ended in that way and no methodological guidebooks and early studies gave a clue as to how to avoid or solve such a problem. On the other hand, this researcher has also reflected that the occurrence of the above problem is understandable. It is true that for the cultural groups which have emphasized the friendship and the reciprocity among trusted people in a high degree, such as Chinese people and Russian people (Flynn, 2007; Qi, 2013; Song, et.al., 2012), the trust between two parties could bring any involved party with additional advantages offered by another party. However, when there is no trust or trust has been broken, it would be more than challenging for one party requesting another party to do something helpful, let alone to keep the previous promise.

In that case, this researcher had no choice, but to immediately search an alternative approach. That refers to the utilization of convenience sampling. This researcher noticed that Chinese supermarkets, restaurants and takeaways in city centres always attracted Chinese international students as they satisfied students' 'home taste' and the need for convenience. Thus, this researcher has personally visited the major Chinese supermarkets, restaurants and

takeaways in several cities in Northern England, where this researcher is based and has

successfully convinced the owners or managers to advertise this study's introduction for

potential survey participants. Such an introduction of the survey has been printed onto a large

poster and has written in the Chinese language so that to rule out the non-Chinese participants

and attract more attention from Chinese students. Also, for the convenience of any potential

participant who was willing to participate, this researcher has requested the site managers and

owners to keep the questionnaires, so participants could obtain the questionnaire directly

from them, complete it whilst visiting the site, and return it safely to those managers or

owners. This researcher has come back to each site of delivery regularly for questionnaire

collection and checking whether the poster of introduction was missing or the remains of the

questionnaire were inadequate.

During the implementation of the research programme, this researcher has reflected that

conducting such a sampling approach to reach Chinese international students, introduce the

questionnaire survey to them and questionnaire data collection is quick and straightforward.

Meanwhile, he also reflected two issues related to the research ethics and the outcome of

sampling, respectively.

First, due to the convenience mechanism that this researcher has used to reach potential

participants and collect responses, this researcher lacked the means to meet participants in

person, neither to discuss with nor explain to potential participants for important issues of

concern in advance. In that case, achieving voluntary informed consents from participants

may in doubt. However, he would like to point out that achieving such consents from the

people from Chinese cultural context has different implications to the case of achieving the

which from the people from the West. As Liu and Hu (2012) outlined, voluntary informed

consents have been little regarded and signed in China, not only because this is the western practice that has been slowly introduced into Chinese society; but also, traditionally, Chinese people would rather opt-out of a proposal or arrangement to demonstrate their concern and refusal, and opt-in, by default, to demonstrate their understandings and agreement. Further, based on the experiences of two academic studies, Katyal and King (2014) found Chinese participants were reluctant to sign voluntary informed consents, although they agreed to participate. The causes are relevant with both the Chinese culture of harmony, namely people should trust a person and opt into his or her proposal (e.g. request to participate in a study) if that person is worthy to be trusted; and the Chinese collectivist practice that when encountering an unfamiliar requirement (e.g. sign voluntary informed consent), people will rather not to follow but expect the approval from higher authorities (e.g. parents and institutions). Therefore, achieving formal voluntary informed consents from Chinese participants will be problematic whilst such an ethical procedure is unfamiliar to Chinese people and unfit to the Chinese traditions and practices for people to deal with a researcher, a data collection request, and an ethical requirement.

To address this issue, this researcher has carefully considered both the Chinese cultural contexts in above and the principles of research ethics before the implementation and flexible approaches have been operated to ensure participants' voluntary participation, inform associated rights, and obtain voluntary informed consent in an informal way. In introduction poster, this researcher has highlighted that this survey requests their voluntary participation; participants can quit at any point as there is no obligation to return questionnaire; they can even withdraw the submission by emailing this researcher; and, there will be no penalty to anyone who not likes to join or withdraws the submission. Also, he has reminded at the top of the questionnaire that all personal information and responses given will be strictly protected

and remain anonymous in reporting, and they could email him if anything remained in doubt. These measures aim to remind the importance of voluntary participation to participants, along with the rights and consequences associated with voluntary participation. Also, as stated in before, this poster has been printed onto a large paper and all information has been written in Chinese, and questionnaires have been kept by site managers or owners and will be only handed out to anyone who has visited the site and spoken to them in person. They ensure potential participants to read and consider the above ethical information first whilst they visit a site of survey distribution and before they pick up a questionnaire from the managers or owners of the site. Consequently, all these settings serve as the gatekeepers to progressively identify and guarantee the participants who have both read all ethical information and are still voluntarily agree to participate in the survey, and participants' acquisition, completion and submission of questionnaire serve as a continual procedure to offer informal consents for being well informed the ethical concerns and voluntary to join.

Second, this researcher has eventually found that the above way of sampling and data collection was highly time consuming because this researcher must visit and convince any relevant site for cooperation, and collect returned responses across many sites and several cities. More importantly, since this researcher had no reliable connection with potential participants and no reliable institutional intermediary has taken part in, such an approach of sampling could not ensure a good response rate, as chance played a greater role than trust. As a result, this researcher has seen a very unstable trend of the questionnaire return, from a maximum 12 questionnaires per week to a minimum 0 questionnaire per week, but in general, the response rate was decreasing quickly. In that case, this researcher is aware of the resulting limitation that such an amount of survey participants is relatively small, and he is also ready

to accept the fact that the findings generated from such a survey could suffer from a lack of strong statistical significance and generalisability.

In the end, the sampling measures for questionnaire survey have given this researcher 155 participants with their returned survey, while 141 of them have given fully valid responses. It is true that this outcome of sampling, by no mean, can represent the whole population group of Chinese international students who are studying in British universities. Yet, it is also worth reiterating that, as stated in before, this research had no intention of being either a census or an opinion poll to enumerate as much as possible Chinese international students who are studying in the UK and their certain characteristics. Instead, this study aims to explore the phenomenon of commitment to home culture and home cultural group among the Chinese international students, especially through the investigation of their personal experiences, rationales, and contexts. In that case, the outcome of sampling for questionnaire survey does not compromise the performance of overall data collection, nor the generation of findings.

For the interview study that was performed after the questionnaire survey, in total, four student participants and one staff participant have been selected, and all of them have contributed detailed responses in interviews. The demographic information for all interview participants has been shown below.

Figure 9. Overall summary of personal information for interview participants

Participant code	Gender	Status in university	Additional contexts
H	Female	Master student for Science course	Have been for 3 years; attended the British foundation course in the UK
S	Female	Master student for Humanity course	Have been for 2 years
W	Female	Master student for Humanity course	Have been for 1 year; attended Sino-British undergraduate top-up course in China

X	Male	Master student for Humanity course	Have been for 4 years; attended the British foundation course in the UK
T	Male	University senior officer for international development	Have taken the current role for 5 years

The staff participant has been purposively reached because of his or her senior roles in dealing with international students. Originally, three staff participants have been reached, and one staff participant finally agreed to participate in interview research. In considering their important positions in university, this researcher was unsurprised with this result and felt grateful for any staff participation. Before the interview officially begins, this researcher has read through the research ethics to staff participant, and a formal, written voluntary informed consent has been achieved.

In contrast, sampling student participants was much more difficult. Originally, this researcher intended to reach and sample student participants for the interview through the formal invitations that have been emailed to all Chinese students in certain schools of the university. However, that has been proven to be inefficient, as interpersonal trust played no role in this procedure, and that is critical for Chinese people to pay attention to a person and accept the invitation. That motivated him to implement a new sampling approach, which is, enhancing the socialization and communication with his familiarized Chinese international students and delivering a research introduction and invitation to these potential samples, in attempt to develop trust, attract their attention, and gain their willingness to participate in an interview or refer their friends to participate. As a result, four participants have been selected after this researcher's long effort, though a series of potential problems in relation to positionality and research ethics have been also noticed and this researcher has implemented numerous measures to protect the validity and ethical trustworthiness of data. The relevant details and considerations will be offered in the section below.

3.5 Positionality and further relevant concerns in data collection and analysis

This researcher identified himself as a researcher who attempts to hold an independent and neutral position in contacting and interviewing participants as well as recording and interpreting data. The reasons for having the above sense of positionality are two-fold. First, this researcher attempts to report the valid acculturative experiences of Chinese international students without his possible interference of personal experience or perspective, particularly given that he is also Chinese and has been a Chinese international student as well. Second, this researcher would like to gather authentic responses from Chinese international students instead of the responses that could be made up by participants to please this researcher due to social desirability bias, especially when this researcher shared the same nationality, race group, and cultural background with all participants.

Despite having the above original positionality intention and rationale in beforehand, in practice, this researcher has encountered several issues, and they all have significant implications for this researcher's identified positionality position, ethical trustworthiness of research implementation, and the validity of data and following findings. That has then raised this researcher's further reflection on the sometimes 'changeable' positionality in this study. Also, he reflected on and designed the research techniques or operations that attempt to balance different pragmatic demands in research implementation and safeguard the original expectation of positionality, research ethics, and research data validity.

An important issue in relation to the positionality is about the contacts and sampling with Chinese international students. Originally, for both pilot study and interview, this researcher intended to make initial contact with as many as possible potential student participants and conduct sampling among any potential participants who were enthusiastic and available to

join after initial contact. However, this has been proven to be problematic. Although a formal research invitation was emailed to Chinese international students purposively in certain schools through university officials, a disappointing response was achieved. Only one student who knew this researcher well already (known as Participant W) and another student who did not know this researcher before have answered the invitations to join the interview programme (known as Participant X). Later, in the initial contacts with these two potential participants, the researcher has caught the comments that according to their experiences, Chinese international students, including themselves, often paid no attention to the messages that sent by their host educational institution and university personnel. The reason being that they perceived those messages as either being delivered by the institution that they only have limited, temporary connection with, or being from someone or a department that they did not know. Thus, they had no interest in even reading about this researcher's invitation which has been emailed through the university's formal e-mail system and under the institution's title.

Indeed, such a circumstance and the comments above reminded this researcher of a similar case. As outlined by Pechurina (2014), in a research that aims to explore Russian migrants' identity and the material culture of migrants' homes, potential participants viewed her as the 'outsider' when she contacted them through formal, distant approaches that lack any personal contact and trustful reference, and hence they ignored her invitation. By recognizing the above case of being labelled as an outsider, this researcher reflected that the formal contact with Chinese international students for purposive sampling was a dead-end.

To extend the size of samples for both pilot study and interview and to efficiently reach and communicate with potential student participants, this researcher then emphasized socializing with Chinese international students who knew this researcher already and those two students

who already answered the research invitation in informal approach, with two coherent expectations. The first expectation was to establish this researcher's position as a trustworthy 'insider' of the group of Chinese international students, by patiently hearing their experiences and giving informal emotional support and personal experiences and advice to help them to solve the encountered difficulties. The second expectation was, to either establish a better opportunity to advertise this research to his familiarized Chinese international students and then recruit them as the student interview participants, or grant their reference to informally contact, communicate with, and then recruit their Chinese friends who are studying in British higher education for this study, though that is following the snowball sampling technique indeed. A key rationale behind the above emphasis and expectations is that for Chinese people, trust is a very demanding type of social resource that could be only characterized and provided by the close tie and good level of reciprocity among connected people, which has been commonly known as 'guanxi' (Qi, 2013; Song, et.al., 2012). Also, based on the same reason, a good 'guanxi' is critical to the supply of personal reference and the quality of response in China, since only a trusted person could receive a person's reference so that to gain access to that person's known friends or members of a certain group.

The results of this researcher's effort of enhanced contacts with potential student participants were satisfactory: three participants from this researcher's familiarized Chinese international students agreed to join pilot study after some casual contacts. Moreover, with these existing participants' references and following informal communication and invitations, one more participant for the pilot study and two more student participants (other than W and X) for semi-structured interview have been recruited as well.

Undoubtedly, in achieving the above informal socialization and contacts, this researcher has spent a considerable amount of time and effort. However, more importantly, the above performance of increased socialization with Chinese international students did associate with the development of better mutual understanding, trust, and personal reference. As a result, after establishing himself in a trustworthy position through long-term informal socialization with participants, the participants would not only see this researcher as an 'insider' of Chinese international students, but also a friend that could be talked with and sought help from. Further, before the start of pilot study or interview, the type of relationship between two parties may appear like 'elder friend-and-younger friend' rather than the supposed 'researcher-and-participants'. That has unexpectedly yet unavoidably brought this researcher a challenging methodological task to look at a new issue is not only positionality but also research ethics, namely negotiating the relationship between researcher and participants in both of data collection and analysis.

In practice, this researcher has noticed the problematic instances in relation to the above issue whilst the pre-inquiry contact with student participants were implemented. For example, two participants were very keen to contribute to the pilot study after they have several casual contacts with this researcher and learned the context of this research; yet, this researcher has found in the pre-enquiry contact that each of them still had inadequate or even incorrect understandings of the research topic and ethics, since they were keen to assist this researcher as 'friends' and considered neither the introduction of research topic nor ethics as needless. Similarly, another two participants who agreed to participate in the interviews have also commented in the pre-enquiry contact that they would like to view their participation as a favour, which was something that they are willing to do for this researcher as a trusted friend or friend of their best friend, rather than a researcher. Nevertheless, these instances may pose

doubts regarding the ethical principle of completely voluntary participation, as it could be argued that their participation is merely executing an obligatory reciprocation to the friendship, instead of based on their free will and thoughtful decision-making. Meanwhile, this researcher was also concerned about whether the problem of demand characteristics may occur. As discussed before, it refers to the problematic circumstance that participants may please the researchers by giving the responses that they assumed this researcher desires, or some quick and short answers without careful consideration to solely satisfy the researchers' demand (Berkowitz & Troccoli, 1986; McCambridge et.al., 2012). Considering the enhanced relationship between interview participants and this researcher along with some participants' wish to reciprocate this researcher with their research participation, it is reasonable for him to worry about the biased responses offered by interview participants, which will then affect the validity of finding in data analysis.

It is important to argue though that this researcher has viewed the occurrence of demand characteristics as natural and expected at a certain extent because human being always looks for the purposes and suppositions within daily life. Orne (2002, p. 6) also supported this point by furthering that '*where he knows some purpose exists, it is inconceivable for him not to form some hypothesis as to the purpose, based on some cues, no matter how meagre*'. In that case, this researcher reflected that there is no point in attempting to eliminate the occurrence of demand characteristics, especially the causes could be referred to not only human's natural curiosity but also the negotiable relationship between this researcher and participants before the data collection. Instead, what matters for this study is to manipulate the above two causes so that to minimize the opportunity for demand characteristics to occur.

Following the reflection in above, this researcher has then implemented a series of methods to readjust the researcher-participant relationship for the implementation of enquiry and to reduce participants' space to develop unnecessarily, or even incorrect speculation upon both the ethical conditions of enquiry and the situation whilst they will engage with this researcher during the actual enquiry.

First, in the final contact with each interview participant prior to both the pilot study and interview, this researcher has expressed appreciation to each participant about their participation in this research as a favour to himself, or as a symbolic expression of friendship. However, afterwards, this researcher has formally reminded participants that during the enquiry, this researcher will expect a truthful and in-depth response as a top priority above all research purposes, also he will implement further inquiry to anything that he felt unclear or strange, though participants have the right to refuse to answer. Then, this researcher has asked participants to either 'do him a favour' to remain natural during the pilot study or interview, or to reconsider the option of withdrawal with no punishment and the constant appreciation from this researcher.

Second, at the beginning of either the pilot study or interview, this researcher has sincerely yet seriously reminded all participants about not only the research purposes, but also this research's openness to different experiences and perceptions, and how important their honest and in-depth responses, regardless of relating with positive or negative perceptions, would be in contributing to further research potential and institutional development. Moreover, a clear list that composed of 'what this researcher would do', 'what this researcher will not do', and 'what you (participant) are entitled to do' had been designed by this researcher in Chinese and passed to student participants to read, to enhance the development of a proper researcher-

participant relationship with the conceptual implication to student participants that during the data collection both researcher and themselves will need to play in a dedicated role. Further, this researcher has made the effort to appear smart and well-presented during the enquiry, yet without either the casual clothing or formal suit. That was a delicate balance to be struck between appearing organized, confident and accessible so that to demonstrate a proper researcher-participant relationship and being overly formal so that the student participants might shut down instead.

While this researcher has made a strong effort to remove the occurrence of bias during the data collection as introduced above, the same effort has been also put into the process of data analysis. One central approach is about the utilization of Chinese language for participants, which means, the questionnaire questions have been offered in both Chinese and English, and student participants can choose to implement the interview in either Chinese or English. Such a design intends to increase the validity of collected data when participants can understand the question and respond in the language that they have been perfectly practised, and thus to minimize the unreliable response that may be caused by their misunderstanding of questions or inappropriate grammatic or lexical presentation when using a second language. Indeed, replacing the elements of enquiry with what participants are more familiar with is an effective practice in academic studies to allow participants to offer more reliable information. For example, in the study of Cortazzi et.al., (2011), Chinese participants tended to give more complete and accurate responses while they have been interviewed in the Chinese language, as they felt it is more convenient to speak out what they concerned in their first language, and more natural to speak with someone who could speak in Chinese language and understand the contexts behind. Therefore, for this study, it is unsurprising to discover that eventually, all four student participants have chosen to implement the interview in Chinese.

As a result, translating and transcribing interview participants' responses into English has also become a necessary procedure in data analysis; yet, this researcher noticed that during such a process, bias or misunderstanding may occur. That is because, despite this researcher himself being a native Chinese and speaking fluent Chinese, he has resided in the UK for over 15 years and may have lost some capacity to understand or capture the meaning of the latest folk or vernacular language in Chinese society. Also, perhaps, more importantly, his personal experience and existing knowledge may limit the direction and extent of interpretation, so that a more reliable meaning may not be extracted. For instance, a participant mentioned that he often '*eat chicken*' with Chinese friends after class. This researcher could sense that this participant may refer to something rather than literally '*eat chicken*', but he has no clue. Also, a participant stated that university staffs often 'left them alone' when asked for help if translated and interpreted according to the 'face meaning', and that seems nothing wrong for either original Chinese statement or the above superficial English interpretation. Yet, this researcher himself is unable to detect that this participant may refer to something else until he read back the translated transcript carefully afterwards.

After a few similar instances, he decided to invite another Chinese researcher, who is a friend of this researcher who has also lived in the UK for a few years and is fluent in both English and Chinese language but had retained a stronger connection with Chinese society than this researcher, to assist in the translation and transcription. By utilizing this researcher's more updated understanding of Chinese language and relevant cultural contexts, this researcher could obtain a better translation toward the latest folk language. Also, he has invited a befriended British university staff member, whose position is to handle students' enquiries, and a befriended researcher from an East Asian context who also spent a time in the UK as an

international student, as the 'sources' of information and the critical comment providers to assist in the interpretation of students' translated responses, owing to either the invitee's working experience or sensitiveness to student experience. Indeed, such an action is known as peer review or auditing, which enables the researcher to improve the research outcomes by engaging independent assistants, often the experts in a certain topic, with research data and process, and acquiring relevant feedback to overcome errors and omissions (Given, 2008).

This researcher is aware of some potential ethical and positionality concerns that may relevant to this action, namely the accidental disclosure of participant personal information and loss of original positionality or autonomy in exploring data. However, this researcher would like to point out that a series of following actions were implemented to prevent the actualization of the concerns above.

First, all interview participants' names have been anonymized and code names have been applied instead; and for the sake of caution, any response that may indicate a participant's identity, even which course they are taking, where they are living, and which cities they have come from, have been also removed from the materials that given to those invited peer assistants. Second, only the Chinese phrases, sentences, or short paragraphs of what this researcher was confused about have been sent to the invited Chinese researcher for translation assistance. Similarly, only a specific case or a short description of the problematic phenomenon that extracted from the translated responses of participants will be offered to the two invited university staff and researcher for interpretation assistance. Accordingly, peer assistants cannot review and comment upon the whole transcripts, but only could comment on some selected, specific, and usually short statements or cases, so that this researcher's general positionality and autonomy in either translating or interpreting research data will not

be compromised. Third, this researcher has participated in the discussions with all these peer assistants. The discussions were made in a friendly and open manner, whilst not only their feedback has been heard but also the supporting contexts or rationales have been brought to discuss. Through such action, this researcher has recorded the suggestions of translation or interpretation which appeared as more reasonable and abandoned the less reliable ones, but the validation of these suggestions will be subsequently undertaken by himself through repetitive contextual reading, additional internet resource search, or further contact with participants, depending on the nature of the original texts or cases. In that sense, this researcher has retained the full decision rights over examining and using any assisted translation or interpretation.

The results were satisfactory: new Chinese folk language has obtained an accurate understanding and interpretation. For example, the said '*eat chicken*' indeed refers to playing a mobile or PC shooting game with other players together, which the winner of this game will be congratulated as '*winner, winner, (shall eat) chicken dinner*'. Also, many ambiguities or unclear statement across the texts or cases offered by participants have received important implications for further validation and interpretation. For example, the said text regarding university staffs 'left Chinese students alone' when students need help, have been commented by peer assistants as probably indicating staff's avoidance and passing of responsibility to help international students, and that has been then confirmed by original participant whilst this researcher has performed further contact and enquire whether the possible interpretation in above was the actual case that happened to the participant and other co-cultural peers.

Chapter 4 Data analysis and discussion

4.1 Introduction

After the data collection, this researcher obtained 141 valid questionnaires from 155 returned questionnaires and the interview responses from four student participants and one university senior officer. All the above valid responses were subsequently placed in the analysis, though the qualitative data from the interviews were translated and transcribed before the analysis and this researcher made further contacts to interview participants to request clarification for some parts of their responses. The data analysis was guided by two criteria. The first criterion is rather fundamental. It refers to the surface quality of the collected responses, particularly the frequency and frequency distribution for the quantitative data, as well as the stories, evidence, and explanations which were stated by interview participants directly. The second criterion is more substantial. It refers to the collected response's indicative connections with any of the six research questions that were identified in the course of the literature review. After all, an important purpose of academic research is filling the respective gaps that existing literature has not fully understood or interpreted. For this study, these gaps are concerned with the influencing contexts and key rationales of acculturation strategy selection by Chinese international students in British universities. In that case, thematic analysis for all the qualitative data collected from interviews and the surface quality of all quantitative data collected from the questionnaire survey was implemented.

To demonstrate how the identified research questions and their respective academic gaps could be filled, this researcher is not going to present the results of data analysis and relevant discussion according to the sequence of questions in the questionnaire survey nor the sequence of the themes used in the interviews, but their indicating thematic relevance to any of the six research questions. Meanwhile, it is important to remind ourselves that these six

research questions have shared some strong contextual and thematic connections among themselves. For instance, whilst Research Question 5 (RQ5) attempts to reveal what social capital the samples have acquired through Chinse international students' co-cultural contacts and possible commitment to home society; RQ6 aims to explore how these students valued the acquired social capital in the above case, as well as the which that could be acquired in the case of developing the intensive cross-cultural contact. Consequently, three broad themes were designed to bond the thematic-related research questions together and demonstrate the data and discussion of the findings that could be cross-relevant in multiple research questions. These broad themes are, first, 'the acculturative perception and decision-making in a new cultural environment', which covered the data, findings and discussions that responded to RQ1 and RQ2; second, 'the experience and context in contacting new cultures and other cultural groups', for RQ3 and RQ4; and third, 'the acquisition and valuation of social capitals whilst making contact in a foreign society', for RQ5 and RQ6. Moreover, to remind ourselves what academic gaps existed and unfold what new findings this study revealed, the findings from the literature that were discussed before and those from further literature will be also reviewed.

4.2. The acculturative perceptions and decision-making in a new cultural environment

As discussed above, a series of contemporary literature, especially those of Berry (1980; 1997), Berry and his colleagues (e.g. Dona & Berry, 1994; Sam & Berry, 2010), and other researchers (e.g. Bourhis et.al., 1997; Hutnik, 1991), considered acculturation as a circumstance, in which migrants actively adjust themselves in response to both new cultural surroundings and first-hand contacts with new cultural groups, even though the direction of adjustment may not always indicate better integration into their new environments. There are two important bases to the decision-making involved in this process of self-adjustment. The

first one is the individual perceptions of the differences and even the conflicts between home culture and host culture after the arrival in a new society. The reason is that perceiving a large level of difference or a threat to home culture may then suggest a conceptual conflict, which can motivate migrants to abandon further adaptation to host culture and retain their home culture instead (Berry, 2007; Bredella, 2003; Verma, 1997; Ward & Kennedy, 1993). The second basis refers to migrants' evaluations of their contact experiences with the new environment, particularly between their willingness to retain the home cultural identity or characteristics and their interests in developing connections with other cultural groups, which included the host cultural group (Berry, 1980, 2007; Berry & Sam, 1997; Dona & Berry, 1994). That is because migrants' cross-cultural contact experiences are generated after their contacts with other cultural groups; though these experiences are varied at the individual level, their perceptions and attitudes are reflected, which are also reflecting their decision-making concerning home cultural maintenance and developing cross-cultural contact.

To summarize the general findings emerged from the collected data in this study that related with the above previous understandings: first, both the survey data and interview responses confirmed the existence of the said conceptual conflict between retaining the home culture and adopting the host culture in the case of Chinese international students. Second, the survey data determined the extents of these conceptual conflicts and the relevant cultural conflicts that the student participants were perceived, and the interview responses revealed the key principles and relevant issues that some Chinese international students evaluated before making their decision to remain bonded with their home cultural group and practices. These findings indeed specify the operational context for these temporary student migrants' acculturation strategy selection, especially whilst the existing theories of migrant's

acculturation strategy selection, especially those of Berry and his colleagues, did not particularly explore nor establish a connection with Chinese international students.

However, it is also worth remembering that a small element of inconsistency was found between the survey findings and interview responses since some interview participants demonstrated specific perspectives and contexts to justify the attitudes or preferences that did not fit into the overall trend suggested by the questionnaire survey. This researcher viewed such a phenomenon as positive and contributory, as it just confirms that the previously discussed understandings from previous literature regarding migrants having their control on acculturation and their acculturative experiences may be varied, in the same way as their perceptions and their relevant decision-making to use a specific acculturation strategy.

During the data analysis for the questionnaire survey that implemented before the semi-structured interview, this researcher quickly noticed a phenomenon that occurred from the survey responses even at the early stage. That is, at a series of questionnaire items, Chinese student participants expressed a strong attitude in favour of retaining some of their home cultural characteristics or practices in contrast to the assumption of adopting the host cultures in their British learning environment.

The first and one of the most apparent items that fall into the category of the above phenomenon is regarding whether Chinese international students would rather use Chinese names than English names whilst they establish contact with the people from the non-Chinese cultural context in their new learning environment. It is known as Q3, and the result of the responses is shown in the table below.

Survey Result Table 1: (Q3) Whenever possible in the UK, you would rather introduce your Chinese name than your English name to friends or classmates from other cultural groups.

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	1 Strongly agree	54	38.3%
	2 Agree	54	38.3%
	3 Neutral	12	8.5%
	4 Disagree	12	8.5%
	5 Strongly disagree	9	6.4%
	Total	141	100.0%
Total		141	100.0%

As shown in the above Survey Result Table 1, in total, 76.6% of Chinese student participants in Q3 demonstrated the disagreement with the statement of an assumption that they would adopt a host cultural practice, namely adopting an English name for their cross-cultural contact. In contrast, only 14.9% of the participants indicated their preference to rather use English names than their Chinese names. They indicate when facing the circumstance that they need to introduce themselves in the British social environment to people from other cultures, most participants would prefer to retain the use of Chinese names. Certainly, using Chinese names is a natural cultural practice for Chinese people living in their home society. However, the questionnaire result of Q3 suggests that retaining this home cultural practice is indeed a widely-preferred practice among Chinese international students, even these students arrived in an overseas environment and need to stay there for months or even years.

After recognizing the above phenomenon, this researcher subsequently noticed that it has not been discussed in the previous literature concerning the acculturation of Chinese international students in overseas society. Following further reading, he understood that there are two different streams of opinions regarding the purpose of name and name selection. On the one hand, scholars such as Lie and Bailey (2017: 80) mentioned a commonsense notion, which is, names are some arbitrary labels to be used to reference different individuals. On the other

hand, Diao (2014), Edward (2006) and Lie and Bailey (2017) pointed out that the above common sense is not appliable for the people from the Chinese cultural context, as their names often contained powerful meanings which accord with their home culture. For instance, as Edward (2006: 92) pointed out, a Chinese people's name is often designed by their parents or grandparents with '*a great deal of care and attention*' because it '*viewed as governing the child's fate in some ways*'; should be '*auspicious*'; '*should harmonize with the time, and often the place, of the child's birth*'; and may reflect the trends in political and intellectual aspects. In that sense, adopting an English name rather than a Chinese name may mean that there is a crisis of identity as to which society a person is belonging to. Indeed, in the following interviews, this opinion has been supported by all participants. They generally commented that they prefer to retain Chinese names in British classroom when circumstance permits since these names comprised their families' wishes or blessing and embodied unique personal identity in connection to the Chinese culture. In contract, selecting and using an English name cannot serve the above purpose. Therefore, that explains the result of Q3, as it suggests that adopting English names instead of Chinese names, also the potential risk of losing the home cultural identity, are generally not what Chinese students intend to achieve.

However, it is also important to note that during the interviews, three out of four student participants reported their frequent use of English names in the daily contacts with their peers from other cultural contexts. While the above phenomenon contrasts with both the result of Q3 and interview participants' general preference to retain Chinese names in the overseas classroom, those three participants gave a common causative experience, namely the great difficulty to use their Chinese names among the cultural others. Participant W offered a typical instance: '*My Chinese name is difficult (for classmates from other cultural contexts) to pronounce, so it is more convenient to use English names for others to call me. I also don't*

want my (Chinese) name to be called in the wrong way'. Even worse, participant X stated that students from other cultures cannot pronounce his name properly but pronounced it similar to an impolite word in English, though he believed most cases were unintended. To avoid the misrepresentation of their Chinese names and the possible misunderstanding during the cross-cultural contacts, it is hence understandable that those three participants made the pragmatic decision in this acculturative matter, which is, to compromise their preference of retaining Chinese names in the British classroom and adopt English names instead. Since the Chinese language developed its unique phonetic system across thousands of years and it shared little connection to the English phonology, it would be expected to see some extents of occurrence for the above pragmatic decision-making. That would also assist to explain how 8.5% of survey participants in Q3 responded 'neutral' because such a minority of students may still genuinely desire to introduce their Chinese names to cultural others in the overseas learning environment but they may also expect the phonetic difficulty to use their Chinese names among cultural others instead of the English names.

Interestingly, while this researcher continued to ask those three participants whether they would rather retain Chinese names in cross-cultural contact if their peers from other cultures could speak Chinese names properly, they all gave a positive response. Hence, this researcher concludes that even though in some cases, Chinese international students experienced the phonetic difficulty to use Chinese names in cross-cultural contact and it led to their following pragmatic compromise in the selection of the acculturative strategy at this aspect; that does not compromise either the extensiveness or the authenticity of Chinese international students' preference to retain Chinese names in the overseas classroom whenever possible.

Similar to the result of Q3 that was discussed above, this researcher also found a strong level of agreement for Chinese international students to retain their home cultural characteristics or practices in the result of Q4.

Survey Result Table 2: (Q4) In a British classroom, you feel uncomfortable if you have been asked to speak out in front of the class.

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	1 Strongly disagree	9	6.4%
	2 Disagree	18	12.8%
	3 Neutral	24	17.0%
	4 Agree	63	44.7%
	5 Strongly agree	27	19.1%
	Total	141	100.0%
Total		141	100.0%

According to the result shown in the Survey Result Table 2 above, approximately two-thirds of questionnaire participants acknowledged the statement of an assumption, which is they would not be comfortable if they have been asked to speak out before their classmates and lecturers in the course of classroom learning. Meanwhile, merely one-fifth of participants in the survey disagreed with the above statement of assumption. In that sense, it indicates that a substantial proportion of Chinese international students prefer a rather less-engaging manner of daily classroom learning, namely students remain silent during the class, to another manner that students would be expected and required by their British lecturers to voice their opinions in public.

Certainly, the above phenomenon is against the common British education practice. As discussed before, since an early stage of schooling, students in the UK are often expected to present their opinions and relevant reasoning to teachers and their peers in classroom learning (Turner & Robson, 2008). However, this researcher would like to point out that the basis for this phenomenon is not the incompetence of international students, but the great difference

between the educational culture in China and the United Kingdom. As all student participants in the following interview enquiry stated, as soon as they arrived in the British classroom, they could feel local lecturers were habituated to expect students to contribute in different classroom interaction, yet this is opposed to how these students were often educated in the Chinese classroom. As participant X typically stated, '*In senior high school (of China) we only need to sit tight and take lecture note for a whole class.*' As a result, they were all confused or anxious to cope with such a significant change, especially at the early stage of their overseas learning, and preferred to continue a passive manner of classroom learning that they were familiarized with for both the sense of comfort and the avoidance of making any mistake in public and losing personal face if the circumstance permits.

At this point, the results above reveal the conflict between adopting a new educational culture and maintain a home educational culture inside these students' mind while they made initial contact with British classroom learning practice. Also, they suggest that when this conceptual conflict and the initial contact experience brought Chinese students acculturative stress, they made the pragmatic and rational decision to remain committed to home cultural practice so as to avoid further acculturative stress and regain psychological comfort. These findings, as well as the result of Q4, are not surprised though, as they correspond with the viewpoint of Chan (1999), Cortazzi and Jin (1997) and Wan (2001) which introduced before. That is, Chinese international students may often feel challenged to cope with the western classroom learning practices but rather prefer to retain home educational practices since the new educational culture is inconsistent with their usual cultural expectation and understanding in the Chinese classroom. Moreover, it could be also argued that these students' preference to remain home classroom learning practice is genuine and significantly strong, because they still brought the home notion of face-saving in the host environment and expected home educational practice

to function instead of leaving the zone of comfort and previous understanding. Indeed, this is consistent with the finding of Holmes (2004, 2005, 2008) which discussed before, namely that many Chinese international students may find it difficult to participate in the classroom interaction because they still attach with the common practice in the Chinese classroom in terms of student learning passively and quietly from lecturers.

While the above result of Q4 suggests that a large share of Chinese international students in this survey still prefer to remain a certain home educational practice even they are expected to adapt to the new practice in the host society; this researcher found more similar cases from the other survey results. The results of Q17 and Q23 which shown in the Survey Result Table 3 and 4 below are two typical instances.

Survey Result Table 3: (Q17) You are hesitant to discuss opinions with your classmates during the British classroom learning.

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	2 Disagree	33	23.4%
	3 Neutral	27	19.1%
	4 Agree	51	36.2%
	5 Strongly agree	30	21.3%
	Total	141	100.0%
Total		141	100.0%

Survey Result Table 4: (Q23) You think it is important to take note of everything that lectured by your lecturer/tutor in the British classroom.

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	1 Strongly agree	21	14.9%
	2 Agree	57	40.4%
	3 Neutral	30	21.3%
	4 Disagree	30	21.3%
	5 Strongly disagree	3	2.1%
	Total	141	100.0%
Total		141	100.0%

For Q17, 57.5% of the questionnaire participants agreed that they are hesitant to discuss opinions with their classmates while they are studying in the British classroom. It is worth remembering that as many scholars (e.g. Liberman, 1994; McCargar, 1993; Mori, 2000) outlined, group discussion is a common learning activity in the western classroom, which allows students and teachers to establish better mutual understanding and actively engage in knowledge sharing instead of participating in the class passively and quietly. In that sense, the result of Q17 suggests that although in the British university students are commonly expected to participate in classroom interaction activity with their peers, a large share of Chinese international students still are unwilling or uncertain to follow such a host classroom learning practice.

For this researcher, the above result is expected. First, this corresponds to the result of Q4 that discussed before, which means, while a large proportion of Chinese international students felt uncomfortable to be asked to speak out in public during classroom learning, it is hence not a surprise to see a similar extent of these students in feeling hesitant to participate in the classroom discussion with classmates. Second, as discussed before, participants in interviews commonly reported that before they came to the British university, they were often required to merely listen to and take note of what lecturers taught in the Chinese classroom, and thus they felt uncomfortable to adapt to a new classroom environment which expected them to speak out in public. In that sense, these students' hesitancy in performing opinion discussion with their peers would be likely to happen.

Indeed, while student participants in the interview outlined listening and note-taking as the most critical activities of learning in their Chinese classroom, the result of Q23 that shown before is also understandable. That is, 55.3% of the questionnaire participants agreed that

they attach great importance to taking note of everything that lectured by their lecturers during the class. It is worth reminding that as introduced before, scholars such as Cortazzi and Jin (1997) and Jin and Cortazzi (2011) suggested that note-taking is a universal learning practice in the Chinese classroom because of the norm of respecting the authority of teachers in knowledge transfer and the tradition of emphasizing rote learning of the knowledge from teachers and textbooks. Also, according to the sampling requirement, all participants must be students who have been in British universities for over two months. Thus, arguably, even the participants should have established some knowledge about how British universities implement classroom teaching and learning after a few months; the above result of Q23, as well as the result of Q17 that discussed before, reflects that over half of the participants in this survey still suffer the heavy impact of their home educational culture in classroom learning, especially in terms of silent listening and note-taking.

Indeed, either silent listening or passive note-taking is not in line with the expectation of British education; as discussed before, students in the UK are often expected to actively voice their opinions and reasoning to others in classroom learning (Turner & Robson, 2008), and in the typical western classroom, interactive activities are common for students to participate in so as to share knowledge and develop mutual understandings (Liberman, 1994; McCargar, 1993; Mori, 2000). In that sense, the results of Q4, Q17 and Q23 above also suggest that the conceptual conflict between complying with host classroom learning practices and remaining attachment with home classroom learning practices is inevitable for Chinese international students, and a substantial size of them would rather choose the latter. At this point, the result of Q33 added additional evidence, yet with a much stronger level of approval.

As shown in the Survey Result Table 5 below for Q33, over one-third of participants strongly agreed with the statement that assuming the educational practice of performing group work in

the British learning environment is not consistent with their previous learning experiences in China. Moreover, in total, nearly 90% of participants agreed with such a statement of assumption. This result just indicates how disadvantageous that the expectation of a certain host educational practice could be understood and accepted by Chinese international students in comparing with their attachment to the relevant home educational practice.

Survey Result Table 5: (Q33) To work with your classmates as a group for assignment or task in the British classroom is unfamiliar given your own previous learning experience.

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	1 Strongly agree	48	34.0%
	2 Agree	75	53.2%
	3 Neutral	12	8.5%
	4 Disagree	3	2.1%
	5 Strongly disagree	3	2.1%
	Total	141	100.0%
Total		141	100.0%

Though no previous study utilized by this research in literature review has mentioned the above group-working issue directly; it is worth remembering that some previous studies, for example, Holmes (2005); Tran (2013) and Zhou et al, (2005), outlined that it is common to observe a group of silent, passive Chinese international students in overseas classrooms who lack engagement in group classroom activities at all. Since an extremely extensive range of participants in this research felt rather unfamiliar with the requirement of working with peers for group assignment or task in their British classroom; thus, arguably, they may also already lost the interest or confidence to adopt this British classroom learning practice but preferred to remain silent and passive during the class, just like how they did in the Chinese classroom. At this point, the survey result of Q33 corresponds to the above finding of Holmes (2005); Tran (2013) and Zhou et al, (2005). Also, such an extreme result signifies that apparently, the expectation for students to perform group work with their peers as a way to learn in a British

classroom poses the conflict to almost every Chinese international students' attaching

experience of home classroom learning practice.

In the following data analysis of the interview responses, this researcher found more evidence

for the above conflict to international students' home educational practices. Meanwhile, the

relevant contexts embedded in the participants' experiences of contacting British learning

environment were also explored, which revealed the issues of concern that took part in these

students' decision-making for remaining strong attachment with Chinese cultural practices in

classroom learning even they were expected to adapt to the new environment.

In general, all four students in their interviews outlined their experience of challenges when

they were attempting to adapt to the British education culture, in understanding the

underlying expectations of students, though their levels of experience are different. As a

typical example, participant X reported that he was extremely unfamiliar with the new

practice whereby British teachers in his classes tended to encourage students to form groups

or participate in the classroom discussion with classmates. He felt that was not only the

opposite of what he experienced in China but also in contradiction with how he perceived

classroom learning. Indeed, he ever felt the above new practice might reduce the overall

amount of time that lecturers could spend on lecturing, as what he learned from his previous

education in China was to mainly listen to lecturers passively and silently in the course of

classroom learning. Also, for the same reason, he was not ready to voice his understanding

and discuss opinions with classmates, especially those from other cultural backgrounds. So,

in a period, X genuinely preferred to remain silent in the classroom unless being asked by

lecturers to speak out or join the group activity. At this point, W shared a very similar

experience with X, since she also felt very struggled to either understand or accept the above

classroom learning practice and she rather preferred to bring back her passive manner of classroom learning that had been implemented in the Chinese classroom.

On the other hand, the experiences of participant H and S are different. Even though they also felt unfamiliar with the new practices and had rare previous experience of performing the interactive activities in the Chinese classroom just like X and W; at the beginning, both H and S were keen to participate in the classroom discussion with peers from different cultural contexts. They found classroom discussion was exciting and brightened up the classroom learning atmosphere. However, both students subsequently realized that their academic achievements, namely the grades of writing assignment, were not improving along with their participation in classroom discussion, and hence they quickly returned to the 'old' Chinese way of working afterwards: preferring to sit silently in the British classroom, take note of what lecturers spoke or wrote, and go home to revise recommended coursebooks, learning materials, and in-class notes to prepare for future assessment. The explanation of H, which appeared as highly pragmatic, may help to place a typical conclusion on the above experience. As she said,

'I come here to get a satisfactory grade (for my study)…I love to try different ways (of learning), but clearly, the previous ways (that I practised in China) are more familiar (for me). I know how to use them well in terms of helping to write assignments, and (they are) not wasting my time (to participate in the interactive activities) in classroom learning.'

After examining the above interview responses from all participants, this researcher has learned that although some Chinese international students did attempt to adapt to British classroom learning practices at the beginning, following the continual engagement with British educational culture and environment, they are very likely to experience the conflict with their familiarized Chinese educational culture due to a large degree of difference, either in terms of the underlying expectation on students or manner of practice. This supports the

works of Berry (1997; 2005; 2007), Bredella (2003), Verma, (1997) and Ward and Kennedy (1993) that discussed above. They suggested that migrants' perceived dissimilarity of culture between their home society and host society could cause conflict with migrants' belief in home culture and experience of relevant practices, and hence impede their engagement with and acceptance of the new culture and provoke their return to home cultural practice. Besides, the above finding also corresponds to the argument of Holmes (2004), Liu and Lin (2006), Smith and Khawaja (2011) and Wan (2001). As previously introduced, these studies claimed that the significant cultural differences between Chinese society and western society in their educational and social aspects did trigger many Chinese international students' problematic cross-cultural contacts in the western learning environment.

Further, whilst the above analysis explored the contexts behind participants' retaining attachment with Chinese classroom learning practices, it is also apparent that their superior familiarity to a certain home educational culture other than their understanding of the relevant host educational culture is a key issue that motivated them to make the less-acculturative-decision. This could be reflected in the above figures of Q33 since 90% of participants confirmed their unfamiliarity with the expectation and practice of performing group work or group tasks with peers in the British university classroom in comparison with their previous learning experiences. Indeed, this finding is in line with the argument of Henze and Zhu (2012) discussed earlier. That is, for international students, the prolonged influence of home cultures and underlying expectations on their life experiences could prevent them from understanding or accepting host cultural norms and expectations, and that may also drive them to evade the integration or assimilation in the host cultural environment subsequently.

However, this researcher must point out that the above theory could not fully explain how some participants, such as H and S, chose to 'experiment' with host learning practices at the beginning but decided to switch back to home learning practices later. The reason is that if the superior familiarity with the home educational culture, rather than host educational culture, is the only decisive contextual factor to influence participants to retain their home learning practices, then arguably no participant would have the motivation to try host learning practices. As cited before, H and S did admit their better familiarity with home learning practice as a key concern behind their regression in learning practice. However, it could be argued that their problematic perception of the purpose of learning, and their pragmatic expectation of adopting any effective classroom learning activity, are also the contexts to cause their regression. It is worth reminding ourselves that as they stated, they came to study at the British university to obtain '*a satisfactory mark*'. This is a highly pragmatic purpose for learning, yet it also indicates an over-simplified expectation of learning, namely to achieve academic success by receiving good marks in assessments only. In that sense, it's logical to see they pragmatically assessed adopting whether the host or home learning practice could most effectively meet the purpose and expectation above and soon arrived at a conclusion, that the interactive learning in the host classroom environment may waste their expected learning time, yet the previous passive manner of learning in their home society is not only more familiar but also offers them strong confidence in the process of preparing assignments. Thus the above personal consideration provoked the conflict between the further attempt of adaptation and insisting on former learning practices, and these students chose to stand by the side of the latter for their imaginary and over-simplified academic success, just as they studied in their Chinese classroom before.

The above interpretation signifies some implications concerning previous studies. First, this just confirms the understanding of Berry (1997) and Ward et.al., (2005) discussed earlier, namely, that individual purposes, motivations, and expectations of migrants are often the critical personal characteristics that can affect their preferences of acculturation and their subsequent decisions. Second, whilst some previous studies (e.g. Heng, 2016; Liu, 2010; Zhou & Todman, 2009) have argued that Chinese students could adjust their attitudes and behaviours to adapt to a new culture after some intensive contacts with the host environment; such an understanding is not supported by the aforementioned experiences of participants H and S and the survey result of a series of questions (Q4, Q17, Q23, Q33) displayed earlier. Indeed, a large proportion of Chinese international students in this study preferred to retain their home learning practices, even when they had been learning in British universities for at least two months. Third, the contexts behind the above-chosen acculturation strategy not only refer to these students' superior familiarity in terms of home educational culture than the host one; but also their very pragmatic learning purpose and over-simplified expectation of reaching academic success through securing good marks from assignments only, even though this conflicts with the host learning environment's expectations of students. In other words, some Chinese international students would assess and perceive the learning practices in host environment as both less familiar and not making a visible return on their assignment preparation, and that would then provoke their conflicting attitude towards host cultural adaptation and the following decision to retain their home learning practices instead.

In the further data analysis, this researcher also found that the survey result of Q13, as shown in the Survey Result Table 6 below, is another example that suggested both the difficulty and the conceptual conflict for a large level of participants in terms of their ability to adapt to British learning practices. In general, the result indicates that over two-thirds of participants

considered that making critical thinking about their body of learning materials was a demanding task for them.

Survey Result Table 6: (Q13) Criticizing the contents of learning materials that you have read is challenging for you in your British learning experience.

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	2 Disagree	24	17.0%
	3 Neutral	21	14.9%
	4 Agree	66	46.8%
	5 Strongly agree	30	21.3%
	Total	141	100.0%
Total		141	100.0%

As discussed before, studies such as Lee et al., (2000), Liu (2002), and Volet and Renshaw (1996) considered critical thinking as an important element in western education, because it requires students to broaden their perspectives, enables cautious assessment of any existing knowledge or information, and thus produces independent and deep thoughts. However, the result of the Q13 demonstrates that a wide range of international students from China indeed found it difficult to cope with these expectations. It is worth reminding ourselves that all participants in this study have been to the British universities for at least two months, and they should have had an adequate chance to develop both a good level of familiarity towards the educational practice of criticizing the contents of learning materials and a good level of comprehension of the underlying educational expectations that have been stated above. In that sense, the above result of Q13 also indicates that even after a period of learning in the British university, a substantial share of Chinese international students still have difficult experiences in understanding and following the host educational culture of critical thinking.

This researcher understood that ostensibly, criticizing learning material contents appears to have a strong connection with individual student's capability in reading and comprehension.

On the other hand, this researcher also would like to point out that the interactive classroom activities among students from different cultural contexts indeed reflect the said expectations of critical thinking, as they all permit students to exchange and learn different perspectives, debate or discuss given information, and produce more reliable understandings afterwards. In that sense, it could be argued that without the proper understanding of the expectations of critical thinking, international students may lack the motivation or conceptual preparation to engage in the relevant cross-cultural classroom interactions, and that may eventually motivate these students to revert to their home learning practice instead.

Indeed, the data offered by the interview participants confirmed the above point. A case in point is the example of participant W: when this researcher asked whether she understood what 'critical thinking' means before she arrived in the British university, she said she didn't as she did not see this term in her Chinese education experience at all. This researcher then continued to enquire whether she had made some contact with this term in the British university and how she understood it, she admitted that she still had not understood it, even though she always heard of it from the course setting, coursework requirements, lecturers, and some learning materials. W made an interesting explanation at this point, namely, that she could see British university's requirement for students to cope with the above educational values, but in reality, some Chinese international students, like herself, lacked the foundation to understand this expectation. That seems to correspond to the work of Lee et al., (2000), Liu (2002) and Volet and Renshaw (1996) discussed above, namely that Chinese international students were found as often lacking in understanding of British educational culture since they have no similar learning expectation nor experience of such teaching practice before. Afterwards, during the ongoing study, and especially from some experiences of failure, W realized finally that making critical commentary seems to be a key part of the requirement of

critical thinking, and classroom interactive activities may help participated students to develop criticism. However, her lack of conceptual preparation to engage in classroom interaction always existed. That affected her motivation to engage further and caused her continual utilization of Chinese learning practices as the problematic alternative, and all of these issues were responsible for her later failure in group discussion and group assignment writing. As she explained the relevant personal experiences in details,

'I did not understand most of the contents and topics that they (of my international classmates) have discussed (in the classes)… I often read, take note of, and accept what the coursebook said and I think that will be just enough… I listen to group discussions and take note…(However) I can't voice my own opinion at all (during the group discussion) because I don't know how to criticize a theory or a study at all. I then failed the following group assignment. It required me to contribute my thoughts and analysis to a topic with other group members and I have none'.

Apart from W, participants H and S also reported problematic experiences similar to W. As cited before, both participants went through a period where they did try to adapt to the host expectation of implementing classroom discussion at the beginning. However, since they had an incorrect perception of both the purpose of learning and the expectation of adopting host classroom learning practice, they soon felt participating in classroom discussion to be a waste of classroom learning time which made no immediate improvement on their grade, and they decided to give up further engagement and reversed to the passive manner of learning that was practised in their home society. Thus, in other words, despite H and S had better willingness than W in adapting to host educational practice initially; their inadequate understanding of the relevant British educational culture beforehand, plus their better familiarity and a solid belief in certain home educational practices, did subsequently deviate their course from 'developing more adaptation to host classroom discussion activities', and evoke their commitment to the home learning practice. That also corresponds to the finding of Henze and Zhu (2012) discussed before, which outlined that the prolonged influence of home cultural norms and expectations on migrants' life experiences could prevent them from

understanding and adapting to new cultural norms and expectations, and this phenomenon may then lead migrants to withdraw or evade.

Apart from the above matters of learning, in this research, Chinese international students' commitment to the home culture could be also found in the matter of celebrating Chinese festivals, and their strong attachment with the home cultural group in the above matter was also revealed.

Above all, according to the survey results of Q12 shown in Table 7 below, about 46% of participants considered that they would feel disappointed if they could hardly celebrate Chinese festivals in the UK. It suggests that nearly half of the Chinese students in this study tended to retain a strong attachment to their traditional cultural customs, despite the fact that they were living and studying in the UK, which has a very different host culture in many aspects than their home culture, and despite the fact that international students should have experienced British festivals more directly and frequently during their stay, in contrast to their contacts with home festivals.

Survey Result Table 7: (Q12) You will not feel disappointed if there is little chance for you to celebrate Chinese festivals in the UK.

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	1 Strongly agree	9	6.4%
	2 Agree	45	31.9%
	3 Neutral	21	14.9%
	4 Disagree	48	34.0%
	5 Strongly disagree	18	12.8%
	Total	141	100.0%
Total		141	100.0%

Moreover, the result of Q26, shown in the Survey Result Table 9 below, revealed that about 42% of participants disagreed with the statement of an assumption, which is about whether

they would tend to not always celebrate Chinese festivals with Chinese peers when they were studying abroad, against 34.1% of participants who agreed with this statement. In other words, still, a large proportion of the Chinese international students in this study preferred to retain a strong social connection with their co-cultural peers whilst they celebrated home cultural events in the UK.

Survey Result Table 8: (Q26) When studying abroad, you tend to not always celebrate Chinese festivals with your Chinese classmates or friends.

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	1 Strongly agree	18	12.8%
	2 Agree	30	21.3%
	3 Neutral	33	23.4%
	4 Disagree	45	31.9%
	5 Strongly disagree	15	10.6%
	Total	141	100.0%
Total		141	100.0%

Looking into the above results of Q12 and Q26 together, for slightly less than half of the Chinese international student participants, retaining either the ritual of celebrating home festivals or the social attachment with co-cultural peers whilst celebrating home festivals is important for them. In that case, it could be also argued that abandoning the home culture and close social attachment with the home cultural group, especially in terms of celebrating home festivals, are not 'options' for many Chinese international students to act in the UK, even though they have resided in the British cultural environment for months and even years and had good opportunities to engage with and understand the host festivals in the host society.

In the following interviews, the experiences of most participants not only correspond to the above survey findings but also suggest some useful insights regarding how the contexts, namely their thoughts and perceptions in the host society influenced their decision of

committing to the home festival celebration with co-cultural people. For instance, Participant S gave a typical statement as follow:

'Home is where your heart is. (Even in the UK) You can (still) make yourself to feel like still staying at your home (society) by celebrating Chinese festivals, and preferably to stay with Chinese peers, of course…After all, no one except your fellow countryman knows how important these festivals are (for Chinese) and what do these festivals mean in the reality...'

Whilst participant H and W shared similar experiences and rationales with S, it is apparent that these Chinese international students perceived retaining and enjoying Chinese festivals as an important way for them to retain a home cultural atmosphere in the British society and cater for their home feeling. That signifies their genuine willingness to remain committed to the home culture in an overseas environment. Moreover, interestingly, most participants in the interview regarded people from other cultural contexts as not capable of understanding the significance and meaning of Chinese festivals, especially in comparison with their co-cultural people. Irrespective of the possible controversy about whether their above statement is fair or not; these participants expressed their rather strong preference to celebrate home cultural events with their home cultural group always.

Taken the above findings and the survey results of Q12 and Q26 together, they suggest that the case of whether students 'could not celebrate Chinese festivals nor celebrate them with Chinese peers in the UK' is likely in conflict with many Chinese international students' commitment to home culture and the home cultural group in this specific regard. That reminds this researcher of an existing understanding which has been mentioned before, namely, that the perceived threat to migrants' home cultural characteristics or identity in host society would provoke the conflict in migrant's minds for home cultural maintenance and thus motivate them to remain home culture instead of adapting to host culture (Berry, 2007; Bredella, 2003; Verma, 1997; Ward & Kennedy, 1993). It may be said that the understanding

above is partially confirmed. The reason is, the shortage of either the chance to celebrate home festivals or the facilities to celebrate with co-cultural peers together would be perceived by many Chinese international students as threatening to their genuine and strong attachment with home society. Particularly, they showed the tendency that regardless of where they are, they still preferred to retain their rituals of Chinese festivals and continuously celebrate Chinese festivals with Chinese peers together, just as they did in the home society before. However, the results of Q12 and Q26 did not suggest these 'committed' Chinese international students would also abandon the contact and further adaptation with the host festivals in the meantime.

Also, the above interview findings and the survey results of Q12 and Q26 correspond to the existing knowledge of Henze and Zhu (2012). As introduced before, Henze and Zhu (2012) argued that the prolonged impact of certain norms and expectations derived from the home society on international students' life experiences may cause their problematic apprehension to the new environment and thus motivate them to evade participating in the new culture. On the one hand, the above understanding is partly validated, at the extent that most interview participants and nearly half of the survey participants in Q12 and Q26 reported the unspoken willingness to retain the Chinese festival tradition in a foreign society and the outspoken preference for celebrating Chinese festivals with Chinese peers rather than the cultural others, which could be seen as the result of being profoundly influenced by their home culture and previous life experiences. Also, it is partly validated at the extent that most interview participants assumed the people from other cultures as 'they can't understand Chinese festivals and celebration well' and 'they are not as suitable as co-cultural peers in celebrating Chinese festivals together', which is certainly a problematic apprehension of the overseas

environment and reflects these participants' excessive dependence of their former festival ritual experiences in the home society with the home cultural group.

On the other hand, what Henze and Zhu (2012) thought about international students' subsequent evasion of full participation in host cultural environment is not supported in this study. This is because even though interview participants problematically assumed the cultural others as incapable of understanding Chinese festival celebrations, and many survey participants reported strong willingness to retain their home festival rituals in the UK, no evidence was found for their reluctance to understand or fit in with British festivals. Hence, the prolonged impacts of home culture on overseas students' life experiences and these students' problematic apprehension to the host environment may not necessarily lead to their problematic participation in host festival customs and practices.

It is worth mentioning that for Q12, this researcher observed that a total of 53% of participants showed either the neutral response or the disagreement with the assumption statement. This suggests that some Chinese international students may overcome their preference or bypass the custom to retain home festivals in the UK through some ways that cannot be explored in the survey. Also, for Q26, 34% of participants said that they did not always celebrate Chinese festivals with Chinese peers, and over 23% of participants answered 'neutral'. This implies that celebrating Chinese festivals with co-cultural people is not a consistent preference for a relatively smaller group of Chinese international students. The two cases of minority above inspired this researcher to explore further in the interview.

Participant X is the only interview participant denied the maintenance of home festival rituals with co-cultural peers together while he studied in the UK, and his statement offered some

interesting insights into the above cases of the minority. As he stated, unlike his other

Chinese friends in other places who often decorate their accommodation with Chinese

festival gadgets and visit Chinese restaurants and China town together for festival

celebration, X only participated in the internet video chat with his family and friends in China

and posted some updates on Chinese social media during the Chinese festivals. He clarified

that he did want to celebrate Chinese festivals in his first few months of overseas study, but

the place he lived was far away from any China town and authentic Chinese restaurant, and

the institution he studied was small and had only very few Chinese students. In that sense, X

considered celebrating Chinese festivals in the UK is both infeasible and pointless for

himself. As he further explained,

'*If you cannot celebrate Chinese festivals (in the British learning environment) and cannot celebrate them with your co-cultural people, then these festivals are having no meaning at all for you (in that while) and (thus) you don't need to celebrate it…just imagine you are not a Chinese people but you are a foreigner in China, alone, and far away from your home…then it would make sense and you would be fine…*'

Though the above X's personal experience in the UK and his statement may be deemed as

somewhat less common and aggressive, respectively, they still offer a chance to understand

the contexts for many Chinese international students to choose the neutral or 'not-so-home-

bonding' option in Q12 and Q26. In the case of X, since his living and studying environment

in the UK did not facilitate the celebration of home festivals with co-cultural friends, it would

be reasonable to observe his following adjustment to bypass many practices of home festival

celebration which would be implemented by other co-cultural people in the UK, as well as his

self-soothing to such a disappointment by assuming foreigners in his home society with a

similar circumstance would experience the same. Thus, for X and potentially other Chinese

students in the UK, the difficulty of celebrating home festivals with co-cultural people

together does exist, and thus certainly, celebrating home festivals with co-cultural people in

the host society is not a consistent choice for them. Also, to overcome the disappointment and

cope with the above difficulty, bypassing or abandoning the home festival ritual maintenance in the UK forms a rather pragmatic way of self-adjustment for X, even though that also frees X from the strong attachment with Chinese festival rituals and co-cultural people temporarily. However, this researcher acknowledges that due to the limited amount of interview participants and the extent of the survey questions, it is difficult to assess the extent of Chinese international students who experienced the above circumstance.

Nevertheless, the above experiences reported by X and many survey participants' votes for neutral or 'less home bonding' option in Q12 and Q26 indicate that for international students' overseas student life, the influence of their home culture is not unlimited, and their attachment to home cultural practices is changeable. A rationale behind this evidence is that these students would experience different surrounding environments in an overseas society and thus develop different perceptions upon the life event and individual control on acculturation. Such an interpretation is exactly corresponding to the argument that made by Berry (1997; 2001; 2005; 2007) to explain that migrants do have individual consideration of life experience and individual choice to select a suitable acculturation strategy to a certain extent, except where the possibility of choosing a certain strategy is prohibited.

Besides the celebration of Chinese festivals, in the matter of enjoying off-class entertainment, Chinese international students in this research also shown their preference for consuming the entertainment programmes from their home society. As the result of Q40 shown in the below Survey Result Table 9, in total, 55.3% of survey participants agreed with the statement that they watched or listen to Chinese entertainment programmes more often than the English ones, whilst over 20% of the participants reported their strong agreement with it.

Survey Result Table 9: (Q40) In your off-class leisure in the UK, you watch or listen to Chinese entertainment programmes more often than the English ones.

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	1 Strongly disagree	6	4.3%
	2 Disagree	18	12.8%
	3 Neutral	39	27.7%
	4 Agree	48	34.0%
	5 Strongly agree	30	21.3%
	Total	141	100.0%
Total		141	100.0%

It is worth remembering that, as discussed before, entertainment activities and contents are regarded by Kim (1997; 2005) as the typical carriers for a society's cultural heritage and practices. In that sense, the above survey result could be regarded as an indicator, which describes over half of the survey participants' bonding with the carriers of home cultures and indicates their preference to retain an attachment to the relevant home cultural contents or practices. Meanwhile, this researcher would also point out that as Chinese international students lived in the UK, they should be surrounded by British entertainment programmes which have very different contents and language in comparison with the Chinese ones, and it is expected that to either develop or participate into the off-class informal contact with the host students, the topic of conversation would be more likely to regard the contents shown in English entertainment programmes. At this point, the above survey result may have also revealed the intensive conceptual conflict between 'stick with the home cultural carrier and cultural contents' and 'unloosening the bonding with home cultural contents but develop more contact with the host cultural carrier and relevant cultural contents' for a substantial proportion of Chinese international students. However, it is worth noting that 27.7% of survey participants have chosen the option of 'neutral'. That means this relatively smaller extent of students might enjoy both Chinese and English entertainment programmes equally often and regard both entertainment programmes equally important.

In the following interviews with participants, Chinese international students reported mixed experiences since some of them agreed that they preferred to watch and listen to home entertainment programme more often and others rather reported a 'sit on the fence' attitude. These mixed experiences helped this researcher to explore why so many participants chosen 'agreed' and 'neutral' options to the statement that assuming Chinese international students enjoying Chinese entertainment programmes more often than English ones, respectively.

On one hand, participant X stated that he watched English entertainment programmes equally often as the Chinese ones since he found that was interesting to do and might offer him certain benefits. He explained that:

'I have been to the UK for over five years, so watching local (entertainment) programmes is not a new thing for me and I got used to it, just like how I watched Chinese programmes. In fact, don't you think watching local (entertainment) programmes are often more interesting and funny…(because) they are produced in a very different way of working and using some very different stories and ideas that you may never see in China…(watching local programmes is) good for me to release my daily learning burden!'

Meanwhile, participant H stated the same opinion, yet with a slightly different perspective on what sorts of benefits she can obtain and personal considerations behind the perspective:

'…enjoying English local programmes is not that difficult, the key point is about the context (of what is showing or broadcasting). For example, where happens? Who is involved? Why they do that? What consequences connect with it in most case? etc. So, watching English local programmes is quite helpful for me to understand the local contexts behind the communication, and also the socio-cultural information in all aspects of local society…If I got time I will enjoy them (of English local programmes), not necessarily the Chinese ones, though I like to do both.'

Therefore, it seems that participants like X and H who got used to the English programmes in the host society did some pragmatic analysis of the nature of enjoying English programmes. Eventually, they did appreciate the perceived benefits associated with such cross-cultural contact exclusively, which are satisfying personal interest and improving the grasp of language and sociocultural knowledge in the host society. In that sense, these two participants

perceived both Chinese entertainment programmes and English ones equally important and watched them equally often, and that may well suggest the contextual experience and reason for 27.7% of participants chosen 'neutral' in the survey question Q40.

On the other hand, meanwhile, participant W and S reported that they still enjoyed Chinese entertainment programmes more often than English ones. For participant W, as she often experienced both the language and socially-relevant difficulty in watching or listening to English entertainment programmes, eventually, she gave up the attempt to enjoy English ones. As she stated, '*As I cannot understand most of their topics and the terms (used in local English entertainment programmes), I can't laugh and relax. So why not spend time to search and watch Chinese programmes for guaranteed fun?*'. At this point, it could be also argued that although W showed her preference for home cultural media and relevant content, such a home cultural attachment was rather evoked by this student's pragmatic need for an easier relaxation in enjoying a programme in the mother tongue and home sociocultural context. In contrast, Participant S seems to have better English capability due to her previous English-relevant study at a Chinese university, and she said she did not experience language difficulties too often in watching or listening to English entertainment programmes. However, she also expressed a preference for Chinese entertainment programmes. Her experience was that when she saw the actors, scenes, and contents that are relevant to Chinese society, she had a strong sense of familiarity, and that comforted her in an overseas environment far away from the society that raised her. That is however not achievable when she was watching English programmes in the UK.

Consequently, according to participants W and S, the contexts or personal rationales behind their shown preference and attachment with home entertainment media and relevant contexts

were related to their appreciation of some practical challenges and pragmatic benefits, such as the language difficulty that prevented W from enjoying English entertainment programmes, and the benefits for S to easily receive the sense of familiarity and comfort through enjoying Chinese entertainment programmes. Moreover, the above individual experiences also suggest that the conceptual conflict of whether they should make intensive contact with Chinese or English entertainment programmes was indeed inside these participants' minds. That is because they did try to watch English entertainment programmes while they arrived in the UK and they perceived, understood, and compared the 'pros' that they could receive from remaining enjoying Chinese programmes with the 'cons' that could prevent them from fully enjoying the English programmes or even the overseas relaxation time.

In summary, according to all the above survey and interview results, whilst studying and living in British society, Chinese international students in this research either perceived a threat to their home culture or experienced a conceptual conflict between home cultural maintenance and host cultural adaptation in a series of regards. They included: using or choosing names for cross-cultural communication; participating in or adopting some learning practices, such as in terms of speaking out in public, discussing opinions with classmates, whether they should take note of everything in lecture, group work with classmates, and criticizing the contents of learning materials; celebrating festivals; and enjoying entertainment programmes. For a large proportion of Chinese international students in this research, the outcomes of the perceived threat or conceptual conflict in all aspects above evoked or encouraged them to retain strong attachment with the relevant Chinese cultural practices rather than to develop further cross-cultural contact or host cultural adaptation.

Further, Chinese international students' perceptions, evaluation and judgement of their own contact experiences in a new environment seem to play an important role in their decision-making for retaining their connection with home culture or co-cultural people in the regards that listed above. First, in their contact with British society, many Chinese international students found that they were better familiar with home culture than the host culture, thus that evoked their preference to maintain their home culture rather than adopting the host one. Such a sense of superior familiarity toward home culture is important to Chinese international students, since it is the product of prolonged influences of home society upon their life experience, and it would bring them the confidence or alternative to survive in an overseas society, whilst unfortunately that also often associates with the reduced necessity to continue adapting to host cultural practices. Second, many Chinese international students also demonstrate their highly pragmatic analysis or rationales for deciding to retain or return to their home cultural practices. They relate to, for instance, these students' pragmatic purpose of learning for achieving satisfactory results in assessments; clear perceptions of what 'real' benefits they could receive, especially in terms of better confidence in academic performance and stronger emotional support; and the straight, yet sometimes problematic understanding of their adaptation of host culture, for example in terms of feeling no immediate improvement in academic outcome, waste of time, and annoyance and challenged as the acculturative stress.

Meanwhile, it is important to remember that in certain regards, like using names for cross-cultural contact and celebrating festivals, many Chinese international students expressed their rather genuine willingness to retain the home cultural rituals, and many of these students also showed their preference for closely connecting with their co-cultural peers when celebrating Chinese festivals. The relevant interview enquiries suggest no evidence to connect with participants' superior home cultural familiarity nor the possible reluctance to participate in

host culture in the above regards; but instead, their unspoken respect for certain home cultures and their strong social bonding with their home society and previous social experiences are revealed as some important contexts to explain their commitment to the home culture and home cultural group in the above regards.

Interestingly, in some cases, whilst interview participants perceived some challenges to retain certain home cultural practices in the host environment, for example, the mispronunciation of their Chinese names by cultural others, the difficulty to celebrate Chinese festivals, and the difficulty of celebrating Chinese festivals with co-cultural peers; pragmatically, they decided to suspend their preference of retaining their strong attachment with home culture or home cultural group, and implemented alternative actions to adapt to the host cultural environment. Also, whilst some interview participants developed contact with certain carriers of the host culture and the relevant host cultural contents and perceived some exclusive benefits that could be brought by their adaptation, for example in the case of watching or listening to English entertainment programmes for off-class leisure; rationally, they decided to develop more cross-cultural contact in this regard than to reinforce their attachment to the carriers of the home culture and the home cultural contents.

Altogether, the above findings indicate that for Chinese international students in this study, their decision-making regarding their strategy of acculturation, which included but was not limited to their commitment to home culture or home cultural group and their lesser preference for developing further cross-cultural contact, is very much under their control. Concerning the meaning of 'under student's control', this researcher referred to students' perceptions and analysis upon their individual experience for the benefits, challenges, and possible consequences in both developing cross-cultural contact and attempting to retain their

home culture. Though it is worth remembering that the individual perceptions and analysis of these international students may not always fair to the host cultural group, neither always reflect the true picture nor expectation of the host culture, especially in the regard of university education.

4.3 The acquired experiences and contexts in contacting new cultures and other cultural groups

In this section, this researcher explored all the data that related to what personal experiences that Chinese international students acquired whilst they established cross-cultural contact within British universities (refer to RQ3) and what factors that existed in the British university environment influenced their development of further cross-cultural contact (refer to RQ4). Before the presentation and discussion of data, it is important to notice that the data presented and discussed in the previous section also assisted in the following exploration. It is the result of the natural contextual connection that happened across the interview data and the wide extent of topics or themes covered in both the survey and interview.

For the topics covered in the above two research questions, a series of scholars suggested different explanations in their studies, and this researcher would like to recall the previous understandings they made before getting into the data analysis. As discussed before, Kim (2001) argued that the human mind is an open system and human beings always look for new experiences and relevant understandings from their surrounding environment. That motivated people to establish a functional, reciprocal, and stable relationship with the environment. To achieve that, as Kim (2015) further argued, migrants will develop all forms of contact with the new surrounding environment, and these contacts may go beyond ordinary interpersonal or intergroup communication. For instance, they may have contact with the host cultural information that is carried by the mass media in the host society, such as language

characteristics, religious beliefs, and rituals (Gudykunst, 2003; Kim, 1988, 2005; 2015; Mckay-Semmler et.al., 2014), even without the interpersonal communication with the individuals from host cultural group. Moreover, the host social institutions could also communicate the appropriate expectations and norms of host society into migrants' minds through education, practice, and demonstration (Kim, 1988; 2001; 2005; Mckay-Semmler et.al., 2014) that not necessarily related to interpersonal communication. Further, Kim (2001) and Piller (2011) outlined the view that the established social settings that are fixed and promoted by the institutions in the host society, such as policies, expectations, and rules, would implicate the extent and pattern of the host society in retaining host cultural heritages and obtaining foreign cultures. Nevertheless, Lame (1995), Kim (2001; 2005), and Piller (2011) suggested that all the above contacts with the surrounding environment, which constructed migrant's experiences in contacting the new culture, will happen through individual migrant's observation, imitation or communication in daily life, whether passively or actively, and neither individual consent nor subjective awareness is necessary for obtaining the above experiences.

During the data analysis, this researcher found that to a large extent, the interview responses corresponded to the above understandings. Interview participants acquired their contact experiences with the overseas learning environment through their everyday participation and observation of the learning practices that were set in British universities, such as group discussion, group work and criticizing learning materials, and through their compliance with the relevant requirements or expectations that were set by universities, such as interactive learning and critical thinking. Subsequently, they also developed individual perceptions and the following evaluation and strategy of acculturation to the educational cultures and relevant learning environment in British society. Moreover, after listening to or watching British

entertainment programmes, some participants also acquired new sociocultural knowledge of different aspects of the British social environment, such as English language characteristics, local stories, and local socio-cultural context, as a part of their cross-cultural contact experience. However, the manners of the above contacts for some participants were more active or voluntarily and for some others were more passive or reluctant. Similar pictures could be also seen from the results of survey questions, as this researcher constantly asked survey participants how they felt about certain British educational and socio-cultural practices or other characteristics that applied in their daily student life. Therefore, the above findings confirm that migrants, like international students, acquire cross-cultural contact experiences whether through their active interaction or passive engagement with the educational settings, cultural information, and socio-cultural characteristics of the host society, whilst these host settings, information, or social characteristics may be shared and reflected by the people of host cultural group, social institutions, and mass media in the host society and finally perceived by migrants, regardless of their attitudes nor awareness.

While the acquisitions of both the new knowledge of the host socio-cultural contexts and the individual perceptions of host culture are found by this research as some general 'parts' of Chinese international students' cross-cultural contact experience and they correspond to the understandings of previous studies that discussed before; the survey and interview data also suggest that some of these cross-cultural contact experiences may not always be positive or acculturative, nor support the development of further cross-cultural contact.

For instance, as introduced in the earlier discussion, some Chinese students in interviews reported not only the perceived language difficulty but also the feeling of unfamiliarity with the local social contexts, which prevented them from understanding and adapting to British

entertainment programmes. That seems to support the findings of some scholars like Sun and Chen (1999), Wang (2014), and Wu (2009) which were described above, since they found Chinese international students would encounter non-linguistic difficulties in understanding the host cultural contexts behind the dialogues, even though such a finding referred to the case of university classroom learning originally. Moreover, many survey and interview participants either experienced the difficult feeling or perceived the non-linguistic difficulty in abandoning their familiar Chinese learning practices and embracing the new yet unfamiliar British learning practices, such as with regard to classroom interaction, group-working, and critical thinking. Also, some interview participants demonstrated their misunderstanding of certain British learning practices and related expectations, especially in terms of participating in classroom interactive activities. Thus, the above experiences appear to approve the common finding of Upton (1989), Holmes (2005; 2008), and Zhang and Brunton (2007) discussed earlier, namely, the feeling of unwillingness or reluctance existing in Chinese international students' experience prevents them from joining the classroom interaction with both educators and classmates, especially the classmates from other cultures. Meanwhile, they also support the shared view of Lee et.al., (2000), Liu (2002), and Volet and Renshaw (1996) discussed before, which is that Chinese international students often found themselves unfamiliar with the learning expectations and practices in overseas educational faculties.

However, this researcher would like to argue that Chinese international students themselves and their home culture should not be blamed for such a situation. It is important to remember that according to the survey data and interview data discussed in the last section, arguably, these students are unsurprisingly more familiar with their own home culture, and in contrast, the familiarity with the settings, practices, and expectations in British education is reasonably less adequate. Hence, when they acquired some negative experiences in the cross-cultural

contacts, namely, they experienced stress or perceived difficulty to adapt to the new cultures during their repeated contacts with the host environment, and then their familiarity to home culture was reminded and it caused the following maintenance of home cultural practices in many cases. Through further exploration of the interview participants' responses which were presented in the last section, it can be argued that many interview participants' statement of their preference or maintenance of home cultural practices indeed reflected their experiences of adopting a more natural option for them to adjust their emotion and gain self-comfort in a new environment for their overseas student life, such as in the regards of festival celebration and enjoying entertainment programmes. Also, these home-bonding preference or practice reflected these students' adoption of a safe and pragmatic measure to prevent negative cross-cultural contact experiences to be perceived in future while yet fulfilling their demand for learning to a certain degree, such as in the cases of engaging with the classroom interactive activities, group-working, and critical thinking.

The interpretation of the above research data supports the finding of Zhou et.al., (2008) discussed above. As Zhou et.al., (2008) outlined, the uncomfortableness experienced in Chinese international students' contacts with an overseas environment and even their possible subsequent alienation to the host culture is natural and understandable since their relatively much better knowledge of home culture and their possible deficiency of cross-cultural contact experiences to adapt to a new culture may both take effect. Besides, a basis of the acculturation strategy selection stated by Berry (1980) is also confirmed, namely, migrants' contact with the host environment will not automatically cause the decline of migrants' bonding to their home culture. That is because if the circumstance allows, migrants could utilize less-adaptive or even non-adaptive strategies to cope with their acculturative stress or perceived difficulty of adaptation in the host environment, and in this study, evidences show

that many Chinese international students either preferred the continual attachment with home culture or did conduct the home cultural maintenance to solve their experienced challenges.

Apart from reviewing the above data that connected with Chinese international students' acculturative perception and decision-making in the UK; this researcher also explored further data, especially that which concerned the wider extent of these students' cross-cultural contact experiences or their contexts.

In such a further exploration, one finding is that some problematic experiences of Chinese international students that were reported before were perceived by the university as well. For instance, whilst interviewing the university leader T, who is the senior officer of international development, he confirmed that based on the university's internal research, English language ability posed an important obstacle to prevent many international students from fitting into the new educational environment. Also, the university found that the most troublesome issue in Chinese international students' experiences is to develop a more intensive connection with the new social environment and a better understanding of the host learning environment. Consequently, the statement of T implies a positive connection between the two issues above; and at this point, it corresponds with a problematic experience of participant W discussed before, as she often met language difficulties in consuming local entertainment programmes and finally she gave up the attempt to further contact with these British cultural carriers. It could be also argued that W gave up the chance to further comprehend the British social contexts and the cultural knowledge that being carried in these British cultural carriers, too.

As T's university already perceived the above problematic international student experiences, according to T, some university-wide activities were designed and implemented to assist

international students to overcome their language barrier and the associated difficulty to develop contact with a new environment. For instance, as T illustrated, the university set up pre-sessional language courses to enhance international students' English language ability immediately after they arrived at the university and before they formally enter the university courses. Further, a range of international student events and academic support services were also built, like the annual 'Global Food and Cultural Festival' held for international students and the specific academic skills tutor that being deployed in every school of the university, in a bid to encourage these students' engagement with their peers from all cultural contexts and further their language ability and comprehension to the host academic settings, altogether.

Despite providing the above statements, T gave no direct evidence to show how successful these institutional supports are in terms of assisting international students to develop better cross-cultural contact experiences. Instead, T outlined that his university had achieved an excellent level of student satisfaction in the national student survey for a few years, which is an annual survey in the UK that all students can give feedback and comment on their courses and universities according to their experiences. Provided that is true, it is worth remembering though that as stated before, T admitted the existence of some Chinese students' problematic experiences in developing contact with and understanding the new environment and the likely connection with these students' difficult experience of using the English language. Thus, that still brought this researcher the concern for 'how Chinese international students made contact with and felt about institutional academic support', as a part of the cross-cultural experiences.

Through the following exploration of student participants' responses, this researcher found that the answer to his concern above is worrying. In general, student participants in interviews stated that whilst they experienced academic problems or felt the stress in the

British learning environment, they turned to their lecturers or academic support services in their universities, the support they received was confusing, less accurate, or less productive. Although, at this point, this researcher would like to acknowledge that he does understand these students were studying in different UK universities and across different courses, thus the above problematic experiences may not be generalized. However, what concerned this researcher most is, student W was studying at T's working university, but she is also the interview participant who had the worst cross-cultural contact experiences in engaging institutional student supports among the interview participants. For instance, W complained that after she experienced difficulty in writing English assignments and understanding her lecturers' feedback on assignments, she enquired of her lecturers but they only told her to '…*look for help from another tutor who is in charge of (improving students') academic English skills…*', or repeated the comment that she needs to '*make more sense of critical thinking and academic writing*' without clarification, neither to detail the solution. That made W felt her lecturers just passed the ball and reluctant to give her both a straightforward response and a productive suggestion. Not surprisingly, W argued that '*If I knew why (I had the said academic writing difficulty and lecturers gave me the said feedbacks), what to do (to improve), and I can solve them by myself alone in the following correction, then I wouldn't need to ask my lecturers, right?*'.

Moreover, after this researcher enquired whether she asked the university's dedicated student support or services other than her lecturers for assistance and how she felt afterwards, W said she did book an appointment with the school academic skill tutor and received a half-hour one-to-one tutorial, but the result was described as disappointing. As W explained:

'*After I enter the room, that tutor briefly checked my lecturer's feedback on my assignment. Then she showed me on what website I can check the English meanings of each vocabulary to improve my English vocabulary using in writing and how to use the university internal*

library system to look for some guidebooks of academic writing for self-learning. She was polite and her help appeared useful on its own, but they did not meet my true demand. I felt my time was wasted and they (university student support staffs) did not pay good attention to my (true) demand…I think my question, or to say, my demand, is simple: (for example,) my lecturer commented frequently that I need to be more critical to analyze a certain point, or I cannot make a plain statement without supporting argument, but I don't know why my lecturer commented it and how to make a further correction for that assignment. And I think the way to help me should be also simple: they (university student support staffs) can just show me some plain examples to help me understand the importance of taking alternative viewpoint or angle to look at one issue, and some examples of writing to help to realize the difference between making a plain statement upon a thing and making a strong argument with some supporting references upon the same thing. Throwing some books and websites to me and let me do self-helping afterwards, and telling students where is wrong but giving no detailed explanation, I suppose, both ways are not very responsible for confusing students.'

Whilst the above experiences of W suggested the possible inadequacy of certain lecturers and some university student services in communicating with international students and supporting their encountered academic problems in her university, similar experiences were reported by other participants studied in other universities as well. They reported that the learning support tutors and their lecturers often barely advised them to browse and read some guidebooks by themselves, or simply told them they needed improvement in a vague aspect of their work. In that sense, they felt these institutional supports did not help them to pinpoint the gaps and mistakes in adapting to the British educational environment, nor efficiently resolve their learning questions. Indeed, as participants X and H stated respectively, meeting a lecturer or academic support staff who can give a thorough explanation or definite guide of improvement is a rare case. That just suggests how bad these overseas students demanded a better experience in engaging with their educational institutions for academic assistance.

As a result, none of these student participants reported the continual engagement with the academic skill support services in their universities or schools, and they gradually reduced their communication with some of their lecturers in the matter of asking specific support for their encountered confusion in learning or academic difficulties. Though that is indicating the decision to be 'non-adaptive' in engaging with a new learning environment; such a move is

understandable, since their previous contacts with educational institutions already resulted in unsatisfactory experiences. At that point, this researcher was curious about how they could solve academic confusion or difficulty afterwards. They responded that they either checked the articles published in some renowned Chinese social media websites that seem to provide a straightforward answer to their popular concerns, like, *'(the guidelines of) how surviving in an overseas university as a Chinese student'* (stated by H); or, consulted their Chinese peers who graduated earlier from British universities for the advice that would help them to quickly understand what British higher education expects them to do in detail (stated by S, W, and X). They also rated the assistance above offered by Chinese sources as better than that which was offered by their institutions, as this assistance from the former arrived quicker, went straight to the points of concern with more detail, and communicated in the home language.

Hence, the above findings indicate that when further searching academic support, Chinese international students did make a pragmatic analysis to compare 'what advantages or benefits could receive from home sources' with 'what experiences obtained from the previous contact with host education institutions'. Regrettably, the negative experience in the latter evoked the withdrawal of cross-cultural contacts with host education institutions in the above matter, and their recognition of the efficiency and effectiveness for the former reinforced their bonding with the home cultural group or home social media and further reduced the necessity to make contact with host education institutions. This researcher is amazed to perceive the wide existence of participants' disappointment in the above aspect, namely, these Chinese students often acquired unsatisfactory experiences while engaging with some lecturers and university student support services in order to obtain academic support, for the reason that this situation goes against the context that Chinese international students become the largest international student group in British higher education (Hao et.al., 2016; Ministry of Education, 2018;

Zhou et.al., 2008). On the other hand, he also learned that the above finding is not a singular case in the academic world. According to the findings of McKenzie and Baldassar (2017), Mittelmeier et.al., (2018), and Woods et.al., (2013) that have been discussed earlier, in the universities of Australia, the Netherland, the United Kingdom, and the United States, the advice of university services or support for overseas students sometimes are considered by international students as nothing more than some superficial guidance or encouragement due to the shortage of good connection with international students' contexts and actual demands.

Since the student interview data suggests the above findings, this researcher became more curious about any further context for the occurrence of participant W's negative experience in developing cross-cultural contacts with her university, especially whilst the senior university officer T rather claimed that his university gained a high level of student satisfaction in the national student survey. Bearing such a curiosity, when interviewing T, this researcher asked T about how his university understood the demands or expectations of Chinese international students and any relevant context, in a bid to reveal if there is anything inside the institution that may prevent some staff and student services from efficiently and effectively engaging with these students' academic support request. The data unexpectedly revealed two concerns.

First, while this researcher requested T to explicate what 'moving into a British university' typically means for Chinese students who will graduate from a Chinese school or university, T did not explicitly describe that but rather gave some general statements, like the needs to adapt to new learning practices and studying in a multicultural environment. This researcher further enquired how he, as a leader, thought about whether the above changes may relate to these students' former learning experience or environment, but T said he doesn't know. Instead, T asked this researcher back for his opinion (as a former Chinese student) and invited

him to describe some typical settings in the Chinese universities for him. It is worth noticing though that the atmosphere of the interview was casual and T was sociable, so this researcher took T's above actions as neither an offence nor interference and briefly gave some instances, like educator's roles in classroom teaching, classroom teaching activities, and the settings for students to seek help in the campus. In the end, T expressed his amazement to learn these examples and repeated that he didn't know of them before the discussion.

Second, this researcher enquired from T about how his university understood the expectations or demands of Chinese international students in terms of obtaining student support. Yet, he did not offer any description of evidence nor a clear demonstration of the above matter. He instead repeated that insufficient English language ability and weak interaction or knowledge with the new environment are two common weaknesses for international students in his university, and language course, campus events, and dedicated student services were already set up as the solutions. Though this researcher hinted to T that Chinese students had become the top population group of overseas students in British higher education and he did confirm such a case as also true for his university; he showed no interest in expression of the demands or expectations of such a student group. T then emphasized that the university expects all overseas students to utilize the above solutions for better adaptation. He also did not respond to this researcher's later inquiry about whether his university's staff received specific training to understand the need or expectation of overseas students better, but merely repeated that the university got a good level of student satisfaction in national student surveys.

The two issues above raised from the conversation with T suggest some possible problems in T's institution. In university management, the understanding of Chinese overseas students' home educational contexts and the relevant connection to these students' adaptation to the

British learning environment appears to have been ignored. Besides, the management seems to show little interest in having a particular understanding of the demands or expectations of Chinese international students in terms of obtaining student support. Further, the institutional 'solutions' such as pre-sessional language courses, on-campus events and dedicated student service appear to be 'not differentiated' at all for students from different cultures and merely assisting students in developing English language and cross-cultural contact. Hence, this researcher identified the above problems as forming a problematic context or factor that caused some Chinese students' negative experiences when contacting their institutions for academic support.

Above all, from the theoretical perspective, it is worth reminding ourselves that, as discussed before, many studies have already discovered that some Chinese educational practices and the attached socio-cultural contexts, such as the face concern (Holmes, 2004), the emphasis on textbook knowledge transfer, and note-taking (Jin & Cortazzi, 2011; Wu, 2009; Zheng, 2010; Zhou et.al., 2005) and the high respect to existing literature and teacher's authority in knowledge transfer (Jin & Cortazzi, 2011), could cause challenges for Chinese students attempting to fit into western universities. Thus, as a social institution that bridges cross-cultural contact and houses many Chinese students, it would be inappropriate for a British university to ignore the former educational experiences and contexts of these students, also their connection to the adaptation in the British learning environment. If it is the case, the effectiveness of cross-cultural contact between the 'providers' of student support and Chinese students would be in doubt. Besides, based on the same rationale, Chinese students would have already developed some customs or carried some perceptions, which bonded deeply with their previous experiences, into the British learning environment. Hence, attributing overseas students' encountered challenges to merely their insufficiency of language

capability or cross-cultural contact; assuming overseas students would demand or expect the same in obtaining academic assistance; and, providing student support with undifferentiated purposes or contents, would not meet the actual needs of Chinese students, neither would ensure the efficiency of cross-cultural contact between Chinese students and the 'providers' of student support.

Moreover, from the realistic perspective, it is understandable that whilst Chinese international students observe a great level of difference in learning practices and even conflict with their previous socio-cultural experiences, they would feel the acculturative stress and look for exhaustive explanations and definite recommendations to comprehend the problems they met, overcome the associated difficulties, and adjust their stress as soon as possible. Indeed, in this study, participants did seek assistance from their lecturers or university student support first. However, the interview data suggests that for some of them, especially W, the expectations or needs above were not satisfied in the cross-cultural contacts with the educational institutions. As the management of the university, like T, showed neither a good understanding of 'what moving to British higher education' means for Chinese students nor the interest to consider the particular demands or expectations of these students in obtaining student support, it is thus not surprising to see why T failed to clarify whether the university staff have received specific training to understand overseas students better. In that case, the practicability or attractiveness of the support given by either lecturers or student services for international students would be compromised. At this point, not only W but other participants in other British universities also criticized the lack of relevance to their concerns and lack of specificity to their problems in the supports given by their institutions. Given such negative experiences, they turned to home 'sources' instead, and the positive experiences granted from

that pragmatically motivated them to abandon further cross-cultural contact with their institutions while they need academic support.

It is important to remember that the above findings are non-generalizable as the leaders in other universities did not accept the research invitation. Yet, the circumstance suggested by T and W for the same university should be able to alert other British universities regarding the deficiency of their cross-cultural contacts with international students while offering academic support, especially in terms of how well the management and the providers of support have understood and fulfilled these students' demands and expectations in their acculturation in the UK. Otherwise, the institutional contacts with Chinese international students for the above matter would be still a problematic factor to hinder these students' development of further engagement with British universities. Also, the findings discussed above imply that the UK university should develop a particular understanding of the challenge of overseas students' former experiences on their adaptation in British higher education. In that sense, the conflict of any educational practice and socio-cultural characteristic between overseas students' home society and the host society, as a key context to cause their acculturative stress and academic difficulties, could be pinpointed, thus more context-specific and efficient advice could be offered to overseas students. Further, provided all overseas students are treated in the above ways; Chinese students may subsequently give up the bonding with their home 'sources' in the matter of seeking academic support but to reinforce their contacts with British educational institutions as the latter already satisfy their demands or expectations in this regard.

Apart from exploring Chinese international students' experiences of having cross-cultural contacts with their British educational institutions, their cross-cultural contact experiences in the interpersonal extent and intergroup extent were also explored. It is worth reminding

ourselves that as discussed before, scholars such as Furnham and Bochner (1986), Gudykunst (2003), and Ward et.al., (2005) argued that cross-cultural contacts in the above two extents are the most common and efficient ways for migrants to learn the sociocultural knowledge that is different to that in their home society. Also, Brown (2009a; 2009b) and Jones (2010) argued that such contacts are supplying the essential information for migrants to achieve proper performance in the host society. During the analysis, the data suggested that Chinese international students established cross-cultural contacts with their peers from other cultures and some of them even obtained better sociocultural knowledge and academic performance in the new environment. However, research data also reveals that indeed many of these students had negative experiences, such as unfavourable attitudes, willingness, or stories, for developing cross-cultural contacts with peers from other cultures in British universities in either interpersonal or intergroup extent, and the relevant evidence could be found in several themes.

The first theme that typically demonstrates the negative cross-cultural contact experiences of many Chinese international students in interpersonal and intergroup extents is the conflict of values, and some preliminary evidence could be found in the results of the survey question Q48 and Q47, which showed in two result tables below.

Survey Result Table 9: (Q48) When living in the UK, you feel that chatting with classmates or schoolmates from the same cultural background can reduce the possibility of values conflict.

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	2 Disagree	24	17.0
	3 Neutral	24	17.0
	4 Agree	69	48.9
	5 Strongly agree	24	17.0
	Total	141	100.0
Total		141	100.0

Survey Result Table 10: (Q47) When studying in the UK, if you receive criticisms of Chinese traditions or customs from the people of other cultural groups, you will not feel offended.

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	1 Strongly agree	6	4.3%
	2 Agree	27	19.1%
	3 Neutral	27	19.1%
	4 Disagree	42	29.8%
	5 Strongly disagree	39	27.7%
	Total	141	100.0%
Total		141	100.0%

The results of Q48 and Q47 respectively showed that almost two-thirds of participants agreed with the statement of an assumption, which enquires whether they feel chatting with people from their co-cultural context can reduce the possibility of the conflict of values while living in the UK; and over half of the participants rejected the statement of another assumption that asked whether they feel offended during their studying in the UK while people from other cultures criticized their home cultures. Considering the above results together, first of all, it could be argued that the conflict of values is neither uncommon nor neglected by Chinese international students as they already established the opinions for this matter through their cross-cultural contacts with people from other cultures, especially after chatting with their peers in the same educational institution (Q48) and receiving the opinion of culture that was shared by some certain individuals in their British learning environment (Q47). Also, the above results suggest that a large proportion of Chinese students perceived the conflict of values occurring in their cross-cultural contacts as something negative since they preferred to avoid such conflict by reinforcing their contacts with co-cultural peers instead (Q48) and they tended to show the attitude of excluding the criticism to their home culture from cultural others (Q47). These aspects of the survey results subsequently aroused this researcher's concern as to whether these students' further development of cross-cultural contact with people from other cultural contexts would be impacted, especially since they are learning in

the British universities and British society, which are highly multicultural. Such a context, potentially, may cause a conflict of values among the members of different cultural groups.

In the following interviews, student participants offered more descriptive and empirical data. In general, half of the interview participants' responses correspond to the survey findings discussed above, and they assist this researcher to not only further reveal the contexts behind the above survey findings but also to explore his concern regarding the possible negative impact on these Chinese students' further development of cross-cultural contact with non-Chinese peers. Particularly, participant S described her experiences regarding the conflict of values at a great length. As she said, she was very active and willing to develop an informal conversation with her classmates from other cultural contexts at the beginning and such a contact went deeper to facilitate opinion sharing and discussion. However, after a few months of these cross-cultural contacts, eventually, she felt that it could be better for her to only retain some necessary conversations with the classmates from the host society instead. As she explained to this researcher why she acquired such a feeling:

'*...every time we (she and local students) discussed to a point, a point that often deep about our beliefs and traditions, then the (cross-cultural) conversation just get into a dead end as they often thought theirs (of host beliefs and traditions) are more common and reasonable...I very much dislike such an atmosphere of conversation, as well as their attitude to 'go above' other cultures...even though I guess that they did not truly mean to look down my culture and that (phenomenon) is somewhat understandable because it is common that many people often think their belonging cultures are better in some ways, if not the best, in comparing with a certain other culture.*'

The above experience suggests that during the discussion of cultures, the conflict of values was experienced by some Chinese international students like S as she detected and disliked local students' attitude of putting local culture above other cultures, even though S assumed such attitude was not genuine discrimination but the excessive pride of local culture. Such an experience indeed supports the survey findings that were discussed above, since the conflict

of values occurred in her cross-cultural contact with peers from other cultural contexts and she did view such a conflict as negative and tended to avoid it in future. Moreover, due to the impact of the above negative experience, S considered only to retain the bare necessary cross-cultural contact with local students. Thus at this point, it confirms this researcher's previous concern, namely that the experience of conflict of values may hinder Chinese international students' further development of cross-cultural contact in interpersonal or intergroup modes. Furthermore, the above experience also confirms the argument of Kudo & Simkin (2003) which were introduced above, as they found that the students of the host culture may lack cross-cultural contact experience or any interest in knowing other cultures and that may then cause some overseas students to avoid developing interpersonal contact with them and provoke the cultural isolation among overseas students. Although S did not mention whether she reinforced the contact with co-cultural peers at the end; her negative opinion towards local students' attitude to Chinese culture still reveal her strong bonding with her home society. Given that instance, it is no wonder to see over half of the participants in Q47 tended to reject the criticism of their home culture from cultural others.

In another interview, participant X also talked about his experienced conflict of values in the cross-cultural contact which was similar to that of S, but the conflict in his case happened between him and other international students instead. Initially, X stated that '*…even though sometimes you and them (of cultural others) could be some sorts of friends, there are many differences in deep-down cultural level, and that brings the misunderstanding and argument, (which is) not good for each other*'. After this researcher requested more information, he described the personal experience. In the beginning, he made friend with some classmates from Muslim societies after the class and between two classes. He explained that his course had a large number of peers from these societies and they were also kind to him, so he would

like to build a better relationship with them. However, after some off-class conversation with these Muslim peers in the same course, X found their certain thoughts and behaviours as difficult to accept, for example in terms of their views on the ways to treat the opposite gender and the ways to get married, and he also felt his Muslim peers felt the same in relation to his thoughts and behaviours in the above topics. Thus, after some casual conversations with Muslim peers and even a minor dispute as to whether some Chinese cultures are '*understandable*' and '*proper*', he felt that the conflict of values is unavoidable between two parties and he considered that as upsetting and annoying.

Participant X's above experience in contacting with peers from Muslim context reminds this researcher about the understanding of Volet (1997) and Volet and Ang (1998) that has been discussed before. As they pointed out, students may have prejudice about a certain cultural group or a bias regarding the behaviours of a specific group of overseas students and that could then prevent these overseas students from developing further contacts with them. While this seems to correspond with X's experience to a certain degree; this researcher needs to alert readers that the above understanding of Volet (1997) and Volet and Ang (1998) referred to local students' bias and prejudice originally. Moreover, perhaps, more importantly, it would be difficult to determine whether an overseas student's understanding of another international student's home culture is biased. Thus, this researcher considers the above understanding of Volet (1997) and Volet and Ang (1998) still could not explain the acquired experience of participant X satisfactorily. That motivated this researcher to perform a further reading. However, just as Lee and Rice (2007: 388) stated, '*we find that most of the literature concerning international student experiences describes their difficulties as issues of adapting or coping…few studies consider how individuals may inadvertently marginalize international students*'; this researcher feels the majority of previous studies as often emphasized the

conflict between international students and the host learning environment but that the conflicts among international students were rarely explored. That made the above experience of X salient as a new topic for possible future exploration.

Nevertheless, in general, the above experience of X, as well as the which of S, give further explanations and details to contextualize the quantitative findings of Q48 and Q47 presented before. As both participants suggested, they developed a negative feeling about experiencing the conflict of values in cross-cultural contacts with peers from other cultures, especially as they were unable to reduce the significant gap of understanding between two parties nor to accept the counterparty's attitude or opinion in cultural comparison. In that case, they learned to stop where they are and hence their further cross-cultural contacts with cultural others in either interpersonal or intergroup extent, at least for the matter of comparing and discussing each other's culture, were suspended. Moreover, while both participants have no way to solve this problem, that indicates such a suspension of further cross-cultural contact would be lengthy over time, although that did not seem to impact their academic cross-cultural contacts with non-Chinese peers during classroom learning. Therefore, it is apparent that the occurrence of conflict of values in a multicultural learning environment, namely the context, together with the following negative feelings toward such a conflict, becomes the important experiences perceived by some Chinese international students through their cross-cultural contacts with either local students or peers from other cultural groups, and such experiences hinder Chinese international students from developing further cross-cultural contact.

It is also worth noting that the interview data suggests no solid positive connection between 'experiencing a conflict of values with cultural others' and 'reinforcing the bonding with co-cultural peers'. However, participant X does demonstrate a defensive attitude to his home

culture during the communication and even a minor dispute with Muslim people, and a similar case also happened in the case of S. Together with the result of Q47 that stated before, the above research data suggest that for many Chinese international students, they still highly respect their home culture and tend to reject the criticism of cultural others upon this extent, and that just demonstrates their unspokenly bonding with their home society even in abroad.

Apart from the above theme of conflict of values, many Chinese international students also showed their mixed and somewhat negative attitudes, opinions, or stories toward the theme of developing an enhanced social relationship with peers from other cultures, as a part of their cross-cultural interpersonal or intergroup contact. This circumstance is especially true if in comparing to their contacts with co-cultural peers. The quantitative evidence could be found in the result of Q6 showed in the below table.

Survey Result Table 11: (Q6) Your friendship list consists more of the classmates or schoolmates from other cultural groups than the classmates or schoolmates from China.

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	1 Strongly agree	12	8.5%
	2 Agree	12	8.5%
	3 Neutral	33	23.4%
	4 Disagree	60	42.6%
	5 Strongly disagree	24	17.0%
	Total	141	100.0%
Total		141	100.0%

The above result of Q6 showed that nearly 60% of participants established more friendship with their Chinese fellows in the UK than with their international peers. Though the context could not be revealed by the survey question, such a finding still implies a possibility, namely that many Chinese international students may prefer or tend to stay with each other as friends rather than with cultural others. Provided such an implication is true, there should be further data to indicate that Chinese international students established better social bonding with their

co-cultural peers than with peers from other cultural contexts, as it is commonly believed that a friendship generated through and reflected by the intensive social bonding and meaningful interpersonal communication. Indeed, the above implication was confirmed and supported by the quantitative data gained from a series of survey questions, such as Q7, Q9, Q16, and Q34 together. The results are shown below in Survey Result 12, 13, 14 and 15, respectively.

Survey Result Table 12: (Q7) You usually spend time with your Chinese classmates or schoolmates after the class for leisure and entertainment, e.g. shopping, dining, travel and gaming.

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	1 Strongly disagree	6	4.3%
	2 Disagree	18	12.8%
	3 Neutral	15	10.6%
	4 Agree	75	53.2%
	5 Strongly agree	27	19.1%
	Total	141	100.0%
Total		141	100.0%

The above result of Q7 discloses that over 70% of participants often stayed with co-cultural fellows for off-class recreational activities. At this point, it suggests some contexts that may explain the finding of Q6 discussed before, namely, a substantial proportion of Chinese international students tended to retain intensive recreational contacts with each other after the class and that may leave less time for developing recreational contact with cultural others.

Survey Result Table 13: (Q16) You often follow your international classmates or schoolmates, rather than Chinese classmates or schoolmates when performing the off-class learning e.g. going to the library or developing a group discussion.

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	1 Strongly agree	18	12.8%
	2 Agree	24	17.0%
	3 Neutral	27	19.1%
	4 Disagree	45	31.9%
	5 Strongly disagree	27	19.1%
	Total	141	100.0%
Total		141	100.0%

Indeed, the off-class occasion for many Chinese international students is not only referred to socializing with co-cultural peers for recreation but also for performing informal learning together. Evidence could be seen from the Survey Result Table 13 above: in Q16, only below 30% of participants agreed with the statement that they often implemented learning activities with peers from international contexts after the class in comparison with their co-cultural fellows. Meanwhile, in contrast, half of the participants disagreed with this statement.

Survey Result Table 13: (Q9) In the event that you have the choice, you tend to sit with your Chinese classmates or schoolmates during the class.

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	1 Strongly disagree	12	8.5%
	2 Disagree	27	19.1%
	3 Neutral	33	23.4%
	4 Agree	57	40.4%
	5 Strongly agree	12	8.5%
	Total	141	100.0%
Total		141	100.0%

Moreover, even on the occasion of formal classroom learning, staying with co-cultural people is still the preference for many Chinese international students. As showed in the result of Q9 above, half of the participants agreed with the statement that while it is possible, they tended to sit with other Chinese fellows during the classroom learning than with international peers. In that sense, the opportunity to develop cross-cultural contact seems to be trivialized again.

Further, in the matter of consulting others while encountering problems overseas, people from the home cultural group remains the favoured subject for Chinese international students to talk with. According to the Survey Result Table 15 shown below, in Q34, more than 60% of participants expressed their preference to communicate with the Chinese fellows that they are familiarized with in the UK, rather than with the people from other cultural contexts in which they encountered troubles. Indeed, considering the findings of Q7, Q16 and Q9

discussed before, the above result of Q34 becomes reasonable. The reason is that while at least half of the participants in the survey preferred or were accustomed to maintaining close social contacts with other Chinese peers during the off-class recreation, off-class learning, and in-class seating, arguably, there was not much 'space' left for these students to develop and maintain a close social connection with the peers from other cultural groups in the meantime. Effecting by the above discriminations of practising social contacts on both the off-class occasion and in-class occasion, it is expected that Chinese international students would develop less friendship or weaker social relationship with cultural others, and thus they may unwilling to consult their difficult experiences with cultural others. Instead, it would be more likely that they would consult with the co-cultural people who befriended through the close relationship in daily life.

Survey Result Table 15: (Q34) When you have experienced troubles in the UK, you preferred to talk with the familiar Chinese people in the UK, rather than people from other cultural groups.

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	1 Strongly disagree	3	2.1%
	2 Disagree	18	12.8%
	3 Neutral	30	21.3%
	4 Agree	60	42.6%
	5 Strongly agree	30	21.3%
	Total	141	100.0%
Total		141	100.0%

In the following interviews with student participants, Chinese students' relatively low level of social connection with international peers that suggested from the above survey data was also reported and explained by some interview participants, as a part of their cross-cultural contact experiences in the interpersonal or intergroup extent.

On the one hand, for participant W who already reported relatively weak English ability and understanding of British higher education culture before, her experiences acquired from long-

term cross-cultural contact with peers from other cultural groups were disappointing. In general, W described that in classroom learning, she felt her classmates from other cultures were polite and kind to her. However, as introduced before, she lacked an understanding of the critical thinking that is expected and practised in the British learning environment and thus she was not active and incapable of engaging with cross-cultural group-work and group discussion during the classroom learning. Moreover, she admitted that she was struggling with understanding the English speaking and British socio-cultural contexts proficiently. Though that already triggered W's difficulty in consuming local entertainment programmes, as discussed before; she also described that the above disadvantages brought her consistent difficulty in engaging with the classroom learning materials and the topics or tasks that discussed in the group. As a result, in W's case, this researcher is not surprised to learn that her bonding with co-cultural fellows for linguistic translation and academic consultation became much significant and intensive, and she mentioned such bonding as occurred on both the in-class and off-class occasion:

'…(by) sitting with those Chinese students, especially with who did good in coursework and showed good English using skill, I can at least better understand the learning materials (that being given by the lecturers and used in the class) and the topics and contents that we need to discuss in group…I asked them (Chinese students) for translation (during the class) quietly by either whispering or passing a message…I also asked them (Chinese students) to have dinner or go to the library together more often (than before)…so that I can take the opportunity to see how they are going in finishing coursework and ask them (for helping) how to finish.'

Meanwhile, however, such bonding with co-cultural friends and classmates seems to further reduce W's cross-cultural contacts with peers from other cultural groups because she did the comparison between the experiences gained in co-cultural contact and cross-cultural contact, and she did not consider the decrease of cross-cultural contacts as a matter that deserves disappointment. As she explained,

'I really don't have time to stay with other students (of those other than Chinese peers)…Yes, I do have time to dine and go to the library with my Chinese classmates, but that is because they can help me in the study and we can understand each other by using the same language (more efficiently)…when I stayed with non-Chinese classmates (during the class), I feel I could not learn a lot from (the communication with) them since I was struggling to catch their meanings and know what they read, how they structured the discussion, and how they wrote the assignment. That was upsetting…I am not complaining about them, neither to say they were disappointed me. They (non-Chinese classmates) are nice to me though. I am just saying that judging by what I experienced with them in the classroom (learning), I knew I cannot learn much from them and I was annoyed by my difficulty in learning. (Thus) I rather throw my time into staying and asking help with (well-performed) Chinese students.'

When this researcher asked if that is only her personal experience, she commented that '*No, I and a few Chinese students (who in a similar situation) all thought the same and that's why we eventually have all group together to share information (of learning) around and to even ask for help with a same (well-performed) Chinese friends together.*'

In that sense, arguably, for some Chinese international students who struggled to fit into the British classroom learning environment and implement proficient English communication, like W, it would be reasonable that they chose to decrease the social contacts with cultural others after some cross-cultural contacts in classroom learning because they felt such contacts gave them less helpful nor productive outcomes in learning and that also upset them. In the meantime, while they remained intensive learning and social contact with Chinese classmates or friends who performed better than them on both in-class and off-class occasions, they can request and receive academic assistance conveniently and using their mother language for the relevant communication. Also, as W mentioned above, while she and other Chinese students who were in similar contexts stayed together as a group, it allowed them to exchange learning information and facilitate the request of consultation efficiently on a group basis. Therefore, in comparing with the cross-cultural contacts with classmates from other cultural groups, the bonding with co-cultural fellows gave them the sense and advantage of being supported and that corresponded with their decision to decrease cross-cultural contacts with cultural others

again. This lends support to the significance of the social capital perspective in interpreting international students' social behaviours in and out of the classroom, but further discussion upon this point will be presented in a later section.

On the other hand, for participants H, X and S, their cross-cultural experiences acquired from their contacts with friends and classmates from other cultural groups were relatively more positive than those of W; and X even developed strong cross-cultural contacts with non-Chinese peers during the classroom learning. Above all, these three participants felt that the non-Chinese peers in their classrooms were generally kind and polite to them, and most of these classmates did actively engaging in the classroom interactions like group discussion, teamwork, presentation, and group assignment together. Such a learning atmosphere gave three participants a positive feeling at the very beginning, as a part of initial cross-cultural contact experiences. Though, as stated before in the case of W, her non-Chinese classmates were also nice. So, what made the case of the other three participants different in terms of obtaining rather positive experiences from the classroom cross-cultural contacts, appears not to relate with the circumstance that cultural others treated them well. Instead, the key was found as relating to how they interacted with cultural others and that may also decide whether they would sustain the cross-cultural contacts with cultural others and obtain more positive experiences later. At this point, Participant X gave a typical example. As he said,

'*When I arrived (in the university), the whole course was just me a Chinese student, although I have many Chinese friends who lived nearby my rented accommodation or studied in the same department yet different courses. (Hence) I have no choice but I must, and indeed I loved to, interact frequently with non-Chinese classmates during the class. My English was not good at that time, and you can expect, the in-class communication with them was inefficient. But I kept asking them questions about what they meant, what topic they were discussing, which books they can recommend me to read. Literally just anything about study…after several months (of such 'question and answer' style of communication), I found not only my English ability has been improved so I can understand them much better, but also my understandings toward both the subjects that I was learning and the (British) learning environment where I spent time with… I started to be more active to participate in*

their group discussion and even to argue with them if we hold different opinions, and that made me feel I am confident and capable, and that also motivated me to take more challenge at making further contacts with them…'

When this researcher asked him to give some examples for the further cross-cultural contacts with non-Chinese classmates that he mentioned as the result of his initial efforts and talked about the relevant experiences he obtained afterwards, X cited a cheerful story:

'A most wonderful event was, I taken the role of leader to organize a group presentation as a teamwork task. (To perform it well) I have constantly discussed with every member for their opinions and how to integrate them in the presentation in a series of tutorials. At last, I have organized all members' work and their opinions in the right manner and I did the main part of the presentation and the later quiz part in front of the public. The result I received later was very good. All team members congratulated me and later (in-class contacts), they all paid more attention to my opinions and I became their unspoken opinion leader. I felt never so confident to myself for communicating and coordinating with internationals and I also felt so fruitful for I have been here (of a cross-cultural learning environment).'

For participant H and S, even though their descriptions were not as detailed as the case of X above, they also felt that they obtained improvements in English language, interpersonal communication, and academic knowledge after they made efforts at the beginning of their courses to interact with classmates from other cultural groups during classroom learning. They also confirmed that the relevant experiences of participation were friendly and exciting, and that is different from their previous educational experiences in the Chinese classroom.

However, it is important to remember that, as reported before, H and S decided to abandon participating in classroom discussion later and returned to the passive manner of learning that was practised in their previous learning experiences. It was because they brought the over-emphasis of grade and incorrect expectation of 'how in-class learning will help to achieve a good coursework grade' into the British university, and finally, they made the comparison with the case that they implemented the familiar passive manner of learning in their previous learning experiences and considered their initial participation in classroom interaction as making no direct improvement on their grades of writing and that represented wasting

classroom time which could have been spent to take notes of everything taught by lecturers or coursebook. Hence, for H and S, though they acquired positive experiences of cross-cultural contacts during the classroom learning at the beginning; unlike X, these positive experiences did not promise rewards from their further effort to continually develop cross-cultural contacts with peers from other cultural groups since they still conceptually bonded with their Chinese learning experiences and relevant educational practices yet were deficient in their understanding of the significance of adopting the British classroom interactive practice.

Another key finding from the interview responses given by the above three participants is, interestingly, that it appears that their development of contacts with peers from other cultural groups during the class did not necessarily motivate them towards cross-cultural contacts after the class, even though they did not isolate themselves in classroom and accommodation only. On off-class occasions, X only retained irregular internet text chat with his non-Chinese classmates through social network websites; and for H and S, the case was infrequent mobile messaging instead. Also, all these participants said they rarely dated out with non-Chinese classmates for off-class activities for either academic or recreational purposes. Further enquiries elicited similar explanations: they all preferred to leave off-class time to some activities that not necessarily need engagement with non-Chinese friends or classmates. For instance, after everyday classroom learning, X preferred reading or self-study, watching movies or internet videos by himself, playing PC games with random Chinese players, and chatting with family and friends back home. For H and S, they preferred chatting with the family and friends back home after daily classroom learning as well. Yet, what made them different to the case of X are that they did not play PC games nor watch movies or videos alone; instead, they preferred to go shopping and dining with Chinese peers after the class. Furthermore, the off-class companionship of co-cultural fellows and their communication

with friends or family back in Chinese society, which still not required the participation of cultural others, appeared as occupying many of their off-class time.

Thus, arguably, the positive experiences that these participants acquired for the classroom cross-cultural contacts did not stimulate further off-class cross-cultural contacts with their university peers of other cultures, because their preferred off-class activities were irrelevant with the continual engagement of neither international peers nor local peers but instead more relevant with people from the home cultural group. Giving the above understanding, this finding corresponds with the results of some survey questions directly, for instance, over 70% of participants often stayed with co-cultural fellows for off-class recreational activities (Q7), and half of the participants not tended to perform off-class learning activities with peers from non-Chinese contexts in comparison with co-cultural fellows (Q16). Also, the understanding and the relevant data discussed above contextualize the findings of some survey results that have been mentioned earlier, such as over 40% of participants tended to celebrate Chinese festivals in overseas society with Chinese friends always (Q26), and over 60% of participants preferred to talk with Chinese fellows that they were familiarized with in the UK rather than with the people from other cultural contexts when they met troubles (Q34). The reason is while a large proportion of Chinese international students often stayed and socialized together after the class; it would be then reasonable to see the tendency for many of them to remain attached with co-cultural people for either the festival celebration or consultation of trouble.

Interestingly, the above experiences of Chinese international students in implementing out-of-class social contacts and their preference for staying with co-cultural peers in the UK together indicate a factor which existed in their living and learning environment which affected their development of peer relationship and the relevant social contacts. This

researcher names it as the availability of co-cultural people in proximity. It means whilst an immediate learning environment, for example, a team, a group, a class, or a course, contains multiple Chinese international students and they share the equal convenience and opportunity to socialize with each other; then the social contacts between Chinese peers would be likely preferred and that may thus restrain the opportunity for these students to develop cross-cultural social contacts with peers from other cultural groups. The evidence for such an influencing factor inside the British learning environment can be found in the results of some survey questions discussed before, such as, that which asked whether, if Chinese students had the choice, would they tend to sit with Chinese peers during the class (Q9) and whether they always celebrated Chinese festivals with Chinese peers or not (Q26), as the results suggest that the majority of respondents preferred to stay with Chinese peers rather than non-Chinese peers. Also, based on W's experiences of staying with her Chinese classmates on both in-class and off-class occasions that discussed before; it is clear that for some Chinese students, especially those who are weak in English language ability and their understanding of host educational practices, the existence of co-cultural people in proximity becomes a most vital condition, as well as a most efficient way, to request and obtain learning support and exchange relevant information. Even for other participants such as H and S, their off-class social contact experiences still suggest that the existence of co-cultural people in proximity is essential for their shopping and dining with familiarized Chinese peers.

It is worth reminding ourselves that there is one exception to the above case: participant X, as stated before, had no Chinese peers in his course, thus he was forced to develop an intensive cross-cultural contact with classmates from other cultural groups during classroom learning, even though in the beginning he was not ready for that. Indeed, X's case is rather individual and unlikely to represent the overall picture of Chinese students in this study. However, the

above experience still implies that if there is a condition that temporarily denies Chinese international students' access to co-cultural peers in a learning environment or invalidates the proximity among these students, it may consequently motivate the necessity for Chinese international students to engage in further cross-cultural contacts with non-Chinese peers. This researcher noticed that the literature he reviewed before offered little direct support for such an implication; but the work of Brown (2009b) on international students' development of the cross-cultural relationships, discussed earlier, suggests that the international students who broke away from their intensive contacts with co-cultural classmates or friends appeared to develop better in terms of English language and cultural knowledge, while that could only be achieved through further cross-cultural contacts in contrast to self-learning in isolation.

In the further exploration of interview data and survey results, this researcher also revealed another contextual factor that existed in the British learning environment and affected these Chinese students' development of further cross-cultural contacts, namely the accessibility of the people that they were concerned with, those who are important to them and with whom it was worthwhile for them to build regular communication. While this researcher looked back to the interview data, he found all these participants had someone that they were very concerned and they were able to maintain regular contact with them. For instance, as said earlier, communicating with their families and friends resident in China was a regular off-class social activity for participant H, S and X. For W, though she spent a lot of times with Chinese classmates in the UK after the class, mainly to consult over academic problems and exchange information, as already discussed before; she also stated that greeting her family in China was still a key activity to do on daily basis. Hence, the above experiences suggest that the change of social and learning environment did not cause these students troubles in

reducing their regular contacts with families or friends in the home society since these people were the subjects that they were most concerned with, even they were abroad at the time.

Indeed, the picture above received support from the results of two survey questions, namely Q2 and Q1, and the results showed below in Survey Result Table 16 and 17 respectively. In Q2, over one-third of participants strongly disagreed with the statement of an assumption that they reduced their contacts with friends and families in China very much while they were studying abroad, and in total, over two-thirds of participants rejected such assumption. Also, in Q1, the result suggests that the families and friends in China were still being highly concerned by these international students, as over two-thirds of participants agreed that they missed their families and friends in China very much when they were studying abroad (Q1).

Survey Result Table 16: (Q2) You have reduced your contact with your friends and family in China very much during the period you studied abroad.

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	1 Strongly agree	12	8.5%
	2 Agree	24	17.0%
	3 Neutral	9	6.4%
	4 Disagree	45	31.9%
	5 Strongly disagree	51	36.2%
	Total	141	100.0%
Total		141	100.0%

Survey Result Table 17: (Q1) When you studied in the UK, you missed your families and friends in China very much.

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	1 Strongly disagree	9	6.4%
	2 Disagree	12	8.5%
	3 Neutral	24	17.0%
	4 Agree	57	40.4%
	5 Strongly agree	39	27.7%
	Total	141	100.0%
Total		141	100.0%

As stated above, the level of agreement with 'I missed my family and friends in China very much' in Q2 is as same as the level of agreement that 'I have not reduced the contact with my friends and family in China very much' in Q1, as both are over two-thirds. In that sense, the results of Q2 and Q1 mutually supported each other, and altogether both results suggest that while Chinese international students studied in the UK, the access to families and friends in China were not affected; and for many of these students, families and friends in China were their most significant people in China that merited remaining regular contacts back to China, and indeed they did retain such contacts without compromise.

However, here comes a question: did people from other cultural contexts become Chinese students' most significant people in the UK as well and was it important for them to remain regular contacts, in a similar fashion to their families or friends in China? Based on the research data, the answer is 'no', at least for most Chinese international students in this study. The reason is that according to the results of survey question Q34 and Q6 that presented before, only 25% of participants showed a preference to communicate with cultural others whilst they had troubles in the UK (Q34) and only 17% of participants had more non-Chinese friends than Chinese friends (Q6). Thus, for people from other cultures to become Chinese students' most significant relationship in the UK is not a common circumstance; and nor is contacting trusted people from other cultures while in trouble a popular preference among these students. Indeed, this finding is also supported by the interview data. As reported before, X rarely contacted his non-Chinese classmates after the class but spent time on self-learning and reading, playing PC games with random Chinese people, and contacting friends and families in China. Besides, for the rest of the three participants, they rarely contacted non-Chinese peers but spent off-class time socializing with other Chinese peers and contacting friends and families in China. As such, the development of further informal social

contacts with non-Chinese peers on off-class occasion simply did not occur and was not noteworthy for any of the four student participants in interviews.

Giving the fact that the families and friends in China still are the most important subjects for most participants rather than their non-Chinese peers, plus the finding that the change of living environment did not limit these students' social contacts to their families or friends in China; it is clear that Chinese international students' 'access' to their significant people is unaffected. Also, for most of these students, their 'people of concern' are not their peers of other cultures, so reducing the necessity to further the cross-cultural contact with these peers. Furthermore, when most of these Chinese students spent their off-class time in contacting their families and friends in China as they can and preferred to do it and they did it along with the socialization with other Chinese peers in the UK; the restraint of the chance and time to build further social contacts with non-Chinese peers after the class seemed self-evident. In summary, they suggest that Chinese students' access to their most significant people, namely their families and friends in China, is uncompromised in the UK; regularly performed by students after the class; and able to reduce the necessity and space for them to develop further social contacts with non-Chinese peers.

After presenting and analysing the above survey and interview data, this researcher can now construct an overall picture to describe Chinese international students' experiences acquired in developing contacts with people from other cultures while they studied in the UK.

Firstly, even after engaging with the British learning environment for a period, many Chinese international students still felt unfamiliar with some host learning practices, and certain students still lacked familiarity with the British sociocultural contexts that were available in

the local entertainment programme. In learning, they often experienced a difficult period in coping with the differences in educational experiences and embracing new classroom learning practices and expectations. For students who had weak English capability and a lack of understanding of British higher education, their feeling of acculturative stress seemed worse and they tended to have a more negative attitude to developing classroom cross-cultural contact.

Secondly, some students were disappointed with and criticized the communication with some lecturers or student support services who facilitated institutional academic support. Whilst these students experienced academic difficulties and acculturative stress that was often caused by the differences in educational settings and experiences, they felt the institution did not offer satisfactory responses for them to efficiently understand and solve the difficulties above and finally adjust to the stress. The interview with a university leader supported the above finding, since his institution seemed to emphasize improving international students' English ability and cross-cultural contact opportunity, but neglected the importance of understanding these students' previous experiences and the underlying differences in the respective educational contexts.

Thirdly, some Chinese international students also experienced a conflict of values during their informal cross-cultural conversation with local classmates or classmates from another cultural group. The occurrence of such conflict referred to their perception of some local students' problematic attitude of rating local culture above other cultures or the major differences in the values between them and another cultural group. In general, Chinese students had a negative feeling as a result of experiencing these conflicts since their counterparty's position was hostile to their home cultures and they could not accept their

counterparty's position: thus such experience hindered them from developing further informal cross-cultural conversations with these same subjects.

Fourthly, during formal classroom interaction, Chinese students found their peers from other cultural groups were nice to them. However, for some of them who had weak English ability and understanding of the host educational practices, such cross-cultural contact was struggled to achieve progression and upsetting. That led to less classroom cross-cultural contacts subsequently, and they reinforced the contacts with their Chinese peers instead. For other Chinese students, some of them were active in joining in classroom interaction at least at the beginning, and they felt some improvements were achieved. However, these positive experiences acquired during the initial contacts did not always promise future development: in one case, a student was inspired and developed classroom cross-cultural contacts further; but in the other two cases, students decided to abandon the project as their perspectives were still highly influenced by their former educational experiences.

Finally, in terms of off-class social contact, Chinese students often reported their preference of remaining with co-cultural peers for academic or recreational activities and to maintain regular communication with friends and families in China. This suggested that little time or opportunity remained for the development of social contact with non-Chinese peers. Also, some students rarely contacted nor socialized with non-Chinese peers after the class, and their off-class activities did not require the participation of non-Chinese peers.

Besides, according to research data, this researcher further explored the contexts of the above student experiences and revealed some factors in the British learning environment that affected Chinese international students' development of further cross-cultural contacts.

Firstly, this researcher identified the availability of co-cultural friends in terms of proximity as a factor in the learning environment that prevented some Chinese international students' further cross-cultural contacts. For students who were weak in English and lacked the understanding to host education practices, having Chinese fellows in proximity offered them a very efficient means to obtain academic support and share information. For other Chinese students, this factor also supported their intensive off-class socialization among themselves. However, in either case, the necessity or space to develop further cross-cultural contact with non-Chinese peers was reduced. An interview case further implied that removing access to co-cultural peers in proximity in the learning environment would be a facilitating factor to motivate Chinese student's classroom cross-cultural contact instead.

Secondly, the occurrence of a conflict of values was identified as another affecting factor in the host environment. It occurred in the informal cross-cultural contacts and referred to either the problematic attitude of local students who tended to consider local culture better than Chinese students' home culture or difficulties in the socio-cultural understandings between Chinese students and other foreign students. Nevertheless, such conflict formed a negative experience for Chinese students and resulted in their perceived preference to retain bonding with the home cultural group to prevent the occurrence of the above conflict, which would limit their willingness to develop further informal cross-cultural contacts eventually.

Thirdly, Chinese international students' access to the people they care for in China also became an affecting factor in the British environment that limited the opportunity or time available for further cross-cultural contacts. Since many of these students' desire to maintain contact with their families and friends in China was unaffected in a new environment, and

these co-cultural people in the home society, other than their non-Chinese peers in the host society, are those whom Chinese students considered it worth remaining in regular co-cultural with; arguably, the opportunity or time available for developing cross-cultural contact was giving way to the maintenance of co-cultural contacts back home.

Finally, it is worth repeating that a British university's issues in responding to overseas students' former educational experiences and in understanding the underlying differences across educational systems is also an external factor that prevented some Chinese students' further contacts with their educational institutions. While Chinese international students experienced academic difficulties and acculturative stress that was often caused by the conflict of educational experiences and difference in educational contexts, their British universities failed to consider the contexts above, and they were disappointed to obtain some overly-general responses, decided to consult co-cultural peers instead, and did not contact the university's student services or lecturers further.

There are some implications of these findings that add to the literature discussed above. For example, according to Brown (2009a; 2009b), Furnham and Bochner (1986), Gudykunst (2003), Jones (2010) and Ward et.al., (2005), developing intensive cross-cultural contact with people from other cultural groups in the host society, whether in interpersonal level or intergroup level, would offer migrants new yet essential socio-cultural knowledge that could support their acculturation and performance in the host society. The communal conversations occurring on both formal and informal occasions are considered by Brown (2009a; 2009b), Gudykunst (2003), Leask (2009), Schartner (2015), Volet and Ang (1998), and Wards et.al., (2005) as important in supporting the above cross-cultural contact as they help to develop

social ties between individuals and facilitate the exchange of sociocultural information across cultural groups.

The findings of this study both supported and refuted the above understandings. Above all, Chinese students in this study did indeed establish some contacts with classmates from other culture amid formal classroom learning because of interactive classroom practices, and most interview participants also acquired improvements in both academic and personal aspects. However, it is worth remembering that only one interview participant who had no Chinese peer in proximity developed such contacts further in future and his learning performance was improved continually, and other participants soon abandoned such contacts. In that case, the above findings only offered conditional confirmation to the opinion of previous studies that stated before. Moreover, a substantial proportion of Chinese students still preferred to and developed many off-class informal social contacts with co-cultural fellows other than non-Chinese peers. This is especially true for the students with weak English and a similarly shallow understanding of host educational practice as they can receive supports from nearby co-cultural people conveniently and efficiently during their off-class bonding. Besides, a large proportion of Chinese students regarded their families and friends in China, other than non-Chinese peers, as the most significant subjects that were worth keeping regular contact with. Unanimously, they simply refuted the significance of cross-cultural contact in supporting migrants' performance and acculturation in a new society that was claimed by previous studies. Instead, the purposes or relevant 'benefits' of developing intensive co-cultural contacts are emphasized by Chinese students, such as having co-cultural peers in proximity and how relevant close contacts could help underperforming Chinese students to efficiently obtain academic support and help other students to implement their preferred off-class co-cultural recreational activities.

4.4 The acquisition and valuation of social capitals whilst making contact in a foreign society

It is worth remembering that in the previous section of data analysis and discussion, the contact experiences of a large proportion of Chinese international students in the UK demonstrated their willingness and tendency to obtain certain resources, advantages, or benefits from their social contacts with the home cultural group, which included, for instance, academic support, consultation for any trouble they encountered, exchange of academic information, and co-cultural peer companionship on the off-class occasions. Indeed, these resources, advantages, and benefits stated above reflected the essentials of social capital. According to many researchers and their studies discussed before, social capitals were generally recognized as both some tangible resources and some intangible advantages that are available for people to obtain through participation in a social network. They may refer to some information, group recognition, reciprocation, and opportunity (Bourdieu, 1986; Briggs, 1997; Burt, 1992, 1997, 2000; Lin, 1999, 2001; Lin, Cook & Burt, 2001; Woolcock, 1998); the trust, respect, and traditions that exist in certain social networking of individuals to permit qualified participants to exchange all types of resources and generate further social benefits (Coleman, 1988, 1990; Fukuyama, 1995, 1999; Paxton, 1999; Putnam, 1993a, 1993b, 1995, 2000; Woolcock, 1998); and even a cooperative social network itself that is capable of enabling and improving the opportunity for participants to obtain resources or social benefits from it (Paxton, 1999; Putnam, 1993; 1995). Giving the above previous theoretical understandings as well as the research data that has been discussed earlier, it appears that Chinese overseas students' intensive contacts with their home cultural group allowed them to actively participate in the co-cultural relationship, and such participation provided certain social capitals, like some academic information shared by co-cultural people, opportunity to seek co-cultural support, reciprocation in companion, and a cooperative co-cultural network, which altogether are exclusive for the participants like them.

Despite the above supposition, this researcher would like to remind that further study of these students' responses and experiences is required in order to develop a better understanding of what social capitals Chinese international students acquired and how they appraised the social capitals that they acquired or available to be acquired from any social connection, not necessary the home cultural group merely. Thus, he analyzed the results of a series of survey questions in the first place as these questions and the relevant results suggested whether some resources, advantages, or benefits were acquired by Chinese students through their social connections in the British universities. The results and discussions are presented below.

Survey Result Table 17: (Q24) You feel that getting along with only your friends or classmates from China is already enough to help you to get away from the sense of loneliness when studying abroad.

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	1 Strongly agree	36	25.5%
	2 Agree	39	27.7%
	3 Neutral	12	8.5%
	4 Disagree	30	21.3%
	5 Strongly disagree	24	17.0%
	Total	141	100.0%
Total		141	100.0%

The result of Q24, shown above, demonstrated that over half of the survey participants agreed with a statement of assumption which asserted that getting along with only their co-cultural peers in the UK would be already enough for them to get away from the sense of loneliness while studying abroad. In that sense, the above result suggests that for a large extent of Chinese international students, when they had a sense of loneliness due to the change of environment, they did utilize the co-cultural contacts with other Chinese fellows to pursue comfort; and they were satisfied with the comfort that was offered through such co-cultural contacts alone, which also implies that, accordingly, they would not need to pursue support from the cross-cultural contacts with their peers in other cultures in this matter.

Through analysis of the above case, this researcher learned that developing and retaining a stable social connection with co-cultural friends or classmates served as both an important prerequisite, and an approach that offered many Chinese overseas students an intangible benefit enabling them to overcome the acculturative stress which occurred during the change of social environment. Hence it mitigated the sense of loneliness through the companionship of co-cultural peers in a good connection. Indeed, in that sense, this finding corresponds well with two criteria of social capital that have been discussed before in the literature review. They are: social capitals could be the collection of all the resources and advantages that embedded in a stable and long-term social connection, and social capitals require people's constant and purposive engagement in such social connection (see, for instance, Bourdieu, 1986; Briggs, 1997; Lin, 1999, 2001; Lin et.al., 2001). Consequently, to a broad extent, the companionship of co-cultural friends and classmates is identified as a sort of social capitals that Chinese international students tended to and willing to obtain, as that is only obtainable through their stable social connection with co-cultural peers and important to resolve their feeling of loneliness. Also, it is worth noticing that to be further specific, this social capital could be referred to these students' acquisition of a specific 'benefit', which is the mitigation of the sense of loneliness through co-cultural companionship and communication.

In Q25, Chinese international students also demonstrated their tendency to associate principally with co-cultural peers in the UK. According to the Survey Result Table 18 shown below, around 75% of participants agreed with the statement of 'spending most of the time with Chinese peers can give them a familiar social surrounding similar to that in China'. Such a substantial proportion of agreement not only suggests that Chinese international students commonly developed the co-cultural contacts among themselves, but more notably, whilst

such contacts were intensive, they could reproduce or simulate a home-feeling surrounding, which could offer them the sense of familiarity. In that sense, it could be argued that, similar to the finding of Q24 that has been explained above, the companionship of Chinese friends and classmates is still an important broad social capital for Chinese international students, as it is a vital social resource to allow them to develop a familiarized social environment in the UK, and this resource is available exclusively for these Chinese students through their stable and intensive investment of the time in engaging with co-cultural peers in the UK. Moreover, through such co-cultural contact and companionship, just like the case in Q25, an intangible benefit seems to be acquired by these students as well, namely the development of a sense of familiarity in the UK that may help them to feel more comfortable during the acculturation. Though, more exploration is required to confirm such a suggestion.

Survey Result Table 18: (Q25) You find that spending most of your time with Chinese classmates or schoolmates while studying at your British university could offer you a familiar social environment similar to that you experienced in China previously.

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	2 Disagree	24	17.0%
	3 Neutral	12	8.5%
	4 Agree	72	51.1%
	5 Strongly agree	33	23.4%
	Total	141	100.0%
Total		141	100.0%

While the above survey questions (Q24 and Q25) suggested that Chinese students acquired certain benefits or resources for their acculturation in the UK, question Q28 rather revealed that which that could contribute to their future life after the overseas study. In response to Q28 shown below, almost 60% of participants agreed with the statement of an assumption, which asked whether developing a good co-cultural friendship in the UK could supply them access to a better Chinese social network once they return to China. In that sense, such a result confirmed that a substantial proportion of Chinese international students had a rather

pragmatic and positive understanding of the outcome of the close social ties with co-cultural peers in the UK, and such outcome is exclusive for them through their underlying intensive co-cultural contacts, namely, being admitted into an extended yet 'invitation-only' co-cultural personal connection.

Survey Result Table 19: (Q28) Making friends with your Chinese classmates or schoolmates in your British university could provide you with access to a better Chinese social network when you return to China.

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	2 Disagree	18	12.8%
	3 Neutral	45	31.9%
	4 Agree	42	29.8%
	5 Strongly agree	36	25.5%
	Total	141	100.0%
Total		141	100.0%

Interestingly, if we follow the definition of social capital that commonly agreed upon by scholars, the above case of Q28 suggests different sorts of social capital that were obtained from Chinese international students' maintenance of intensive co-cultural social contacts and development of co-cultural friendship. For instance, given the perspective of Bourdieu and some other scholars (e.g. Briggs, 1997; Lin, 1999, 2001; Lin et.al., 2001) that has been introduced before, the above case indeed suggested Chinese overseas students' acquisition of an enhanced opportunity as a sort of social capital acquired in the broad extent. That is because, after they had made friends with Chinese peers in the UK, they were offered not only the permission to 'add' these co-cultural friends into their social connection but also the unspoken qualification and priority to be introduced to these friends' connections, which would thus assist these students to multiply their co-cultural social connection back home. Moreover, as already discussed in the literature review, Paxton (1999) and Putnam (1993; 1995) pointed out that social network itself is also a sort of social capital since it is a crucial and unique social resource that enables participants of such a social network to exchange all

other resources amongst themselves and to acquire all sorts of benefits that result from

bonding with such a social network. In that case, it seems an extended network of co-cultural

friends who shared their overseas student life is either a social resource and a sort of social

capital that could be acquired through Chinese students' intensive co-cultural contacts and

close social ties with other Chinese fellows in the UK.

Survey Result Table 20: (Q30) When you stayed with your Chinese friends or classmates in the UK, you have often received their help, e.g. advice, comments or personal guiding, to solve daily life problems.

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	2 Disagree	6	4.3%
	3 Neutral	15	10.6%
	4 Agree	84	59.6%
	5 Strongly agree	36	25.5%
	Total	141	100.0%
Total		141	100.0%

In survey question Q30, another social benefit is revealed for Chinese international students'

development of stable social contacts with other Chinese fellows in the UK, namely receiving

co-cultural peers' assistance to resolve problems that occurred in daily life. As shown in the

above Survey Result Table 20: after the survey enquired whether stayed with Chinese friends

or classmates in the UK often provide these students with the above social benefit, over 85%

of participants chosen the options of the agreement for such statement. The finding above

suggests further evidence to explain the tendency of Chinese students to keep close social

connections with each other in the UK on off-class occasion, which this researcher has

explored and discussed earlier. That also reveals the fact that most of these students already

experienced and confirmed the acquisition of this sort of social capital through their

development of co-cultural friendship. Moreover, this survey result confirmed that these

Chinese international students acquired information, especially the advice and comments

provided by their co-cultural friends that are important for them to resolve daily life

challenges. Indeed, information is a sort of social capital that is recognized by scholars such as Bourdieu (1986), Briggs (1997), Lin (1999, 2001), Lin, Cook and Burt (2001) and Woolcock (1998) as an important social capital in broad extent since information, especially important information, often contains the opportunity for the receiver to improve his or her circumstance, but usually, the exchange of important information could only occur among some participants who have developed a stable social connection together so that they trust, respect and look after each other reciprocally and exclusively.

Survey Result Table 21: (Q32) When you stayed with your Chinese classmates, you have received their help in terms of improving individual learning quality e.g. note-taking and understand questions and topics.

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	2 Disagree	18	12.8%
	3 Neutral	24	17.0%
	4 Agree	72	51.1%
	5 Strongly agree	27	19.1%
	Total	141	100.0%
Total		141	100.0%

Indeed, Chinese international students' development and maintenance of co-cultural contacts in the UK is intended not only to enable them to receive co-cultural peer assistance in resolving daily life problem but also in order to receive peer academic assistance to improve learning quality. According to the result of Q32 shown above, more than 70% of participants confirmed that through social contacts with their Chinese classmates, they received co-cultural assistance from these peers in terms of improving the quality of personal learning quality. In that sense, receiving co-cultural peers' academic assistance is identified as the social benefit that was acquired by an overwhelming proportion of Chinese international students through co-cultural contacts. Besides, this researcher would like to assert that, similar to the case of Q30, these students in Q32 indeed acquired information, in the forms of

comment and advice, from their co-cultural peer contacts, and that is both a vital social resource and a social capital to a broad extent.

It is also important to remind ourselves here that although the above survey questions have revealed some sorts of social capital that are both available for Chinese international students to acquire and have been acquired already; the survey questions that have been introduced even earlier have also given support to the above findings concerning acquired social capital.

For instance, when looking at the survey question Q26, over 42% of participants confirmed their tendency to retain a strong connection between enjoying Chinese customs and staying with cultural fellows. That probably implies a situation where Chinese international students accompanied each other in the home festivals for the purpose of mitigating the sense of loneliness and developing the sense of familiarity, which are two intangible advantages, as well as two specific types of social capital, that are associated with the broad social capital of peer companionship. Indeed, a similar picture could be also found when checking the results in Q7, as over 70% of participants agreed that they often stayed with each other for relaxation outside the learning environment. That also indicated the efforts for Chinese international students to grant the benefits at improving the sense of loneliness and sense of familiarity, which also served as two specific types of social capital that embedded inside their stable co-cultural connection, and associated with the social capital of acquired peer companionship.

Moreover, the result in Q6 shown that just over 50% of participants often group together after their ordinary classroom learning for some further informal learning activities, and that seems to show resonance with a revealed fact, namely over 70% of survey participants received academic assistance, as a tangible, specific social capital, to boost their personal learning quality. Also, the data in Q34 suggested that over 60% of participants presented their

preference to communicate with familiar co-cultural peers when they encountered difficulties or challenges in the UK. That appears as a context that well-matched with a circumstance revealed above, namely, most Chinese students in the survey confirmed the receipt of assistance for daily life problems, as a specific type of social capital, through their co-cultural friends. Meanwhile, the acquisition of these academic and daily life assistance has also suggested the association with the acquisition of information, a broad theme of support, and a broad type of social capital which has been highlighted by scholars such as Bourdieu (1986), Briggs (1997), Lin (1999, 2001), Lin, Cook & Burt (2001) and Woolcock (1998).

When this researcher implemented interviews, responses provided by student participants have also confirmed the above findings to a large extent, although some diversities and further details have been also discovered.

On the one hand, student participants in the interviews commonly highlighted the fact that their cross-cultural contacts with Chinese peers in the UK were often fulfilled by the development of peer companionship in off-class situations, particularly that has connected with their social efforts to obtain both emotional and practical supports. As stated before, apart from participant X, who had no Chinese peers in proximity; all other three participants have spent much of their off-class time performing relaxation activities with their Chinese peers. That is especially true for participant W. As already introduced before, W arranged dining with other well-performing Chinese classmates to take the opportunity and receive academic help from them. For H and S, in following inquiries, they have reported that when performing entertainment and fun activities with the companion of familiar Chinese peers, they felt '*…comfortable, because we can use the same language and share similar values and life experiences back home…*' (as stated by participant H), and '*…not lonely anymore…(as)*

that reminded me I am still a part of the Chinese community (even in the UK) that someone (of Chinese peers) are there to care met… for example helping me to carry heavy bags after shopping and sharing the tips in living!' (as stated by participant S). This researcher may argue that the activities of relaxation could be also implemented by the individual him/herself and did not necessarily need the involvement of other people. Thus, arguably, the development of co-cultural companionship with Chinese peers for relaxation is purposive, which has then implied that the nature of their investment and development upon co-cultural contact may be highly pragmatic for obtaining certain sorts of resources or benefits that are associated with. That just confirm the criteria which agreed among scholars, namely, social capitals required people's continual and purposive engagement into a social connection, and social capital could be the available resources or advantages that embedded in a stable and long-term social connection for people to obtain after their engagement (see, for instance, Bourdieu, 1986; Briggs, 1997; Lin, 1999, 2001; Lin et.al., 2001).

Interestingly, for H and S these two participants, the social capital that they expected to obtain and have already obtained are referred to the acquisition of the sense of familiarity, the improvement of the sense of loneliness, and partially, the assistance for solving daily life problems, rather than participant W's improving learning quality. The reason may be relevant to the personal contexts, as both H and S have had reported much better English language and understandings to British learning environment than W, and apparently, W was very worried about her academic achievement as she failed the group assignment as well as had trouble in completing individual assignments and understanding her lecturer's comments. In that sense, H and S did not have to grant co-cultural friends' academic support as the social capital in their off-class occasion, but that is necessary for W instead.

In that case, a new insight into social capital has been suggested, which is regarding whether the value between different types of social capital should be the same or not. In the case of international students, the answer is negative after their pragmatic consideration of personal contexts, especially the which about what problem that they need to solve the most, or in other words, what resources or benefits that they need the most from their engagement in a social connection. That seems to supplement the understandings of previous studies that reviewed before. While the previous studies have paid much attention to theorizing the concept of social capital and categorizing the elements and types of social capital; yet, an individual's autonomous perception and relevant consideration upon the selection of social capital seems missing. That is indeed important for migrants, like international students, to decide the relevant behaviours or strategies in developing social connection and acculturation; as Berry (1997) stated, migrants have different personal contexts, such as expectations and willingness, to accommodate a new environment, so that their autonomous evaluation upon what resource or benefit they should obtain the most to assist their adjustment in a new society is both necessary and reasonable.

On the other hand, during the interviews, some student participants have also outlined the recognition of other types of social capital. For instance, H, S, and X have all mentioned that they have heard many stories about some of their friends who graduated from overseas and had been granted the advantage of having access to better Chinese social network by being befriended by Chinese classmates, which brought their friends the following opportunity to set up collaboration in business with all the 'old boys' of course in the UK together.

Although admiration has been given by those participants; however interestingly, they all stated that they have not developed any co-cultural friendship specifically or purposively for

this type of social capital, and reasons are varied. As S said, '*I think I don't like doing business…making friends with Chinese classmates to develop better social networking in China and further business is not my type of tea at all*'. H and X rather suggested that they were planning to look for a relevant doctoral opportunity in the UK after their current degree, and that makes acquiring such a social capital pointless for both people. In that case, what Berry (2007), Ward et.al., (2005), and Ward and Kennedy (1993) suggested before has been confirmed. That is, individual migrants' selection of acculturation strategy, which included the decision upon the pattern and orientation to develop social contact, will be influenced by their perception of personal contexts and life experiences, and it appeared that the above principle may also apply to the case of deciding whether an international student, as a migrant, should develop and engage in a certain type of social connection for a certain associated social capital. Again, that brings a supplement to the existing studies.

Moreover, when this researcher asked about whether they considered the trust that given by their Chinese peers because of their commitment to home culture and home cultural group as important for them to strike for; their responses are both yes and no. Participant X has given a typical description and explanation at this point. As he stated,

'*On one side, yes (it is important to grant) because without the trust of your peers, you can hardly communicate with them anymore and let alone their possible help to you. They just don't recognize you as a part of the group. On another side, (however) no. Trust comes from cooperation and reciprocation among people, but for different people, even they come from the same culture, what do trust, cooperation, and reciprocation mean are different. (For example) My ex-girlfriend and some of her Chinese friends thought the only good level of trust counts, and that comes from doing some stupid thing reciprocally, for example, one people should write the assignment on behalf of another and another will take care of that people's daily life and sometimes the personal expense as well. That is ridiculous. I can't do that. My current girlfriend, instead, thought the long-term, constant companion with friends is the most important way to both express and obtain trust. So, as you can see, the term of the trust is too vague in its nature, and it is not worth always strike for the trust from others, as you may find yourself unable to commit to certain expectations or norms that they are having.*'

Meanwhile, participant S also expressed doubt about the necessity to commit to the home cultural group; as she argued, '*I keep my own time and pace for myself at most cases… making regular contact with others (of Chinese peers), listening to and helping them, and earning their trust, (should) subject to my willingness and availability at that moment.*' Participant W is even more aggressive and pragmatic: she thought the purpose for her to come to study in the UK is to get the degree and go home. When she was having trouble in overseas learning, she can't do and should not do more than treating and accompanying her Chinese friends, though her Chinese friends are important for W to ask for co-cultural academic help subsequently.

Therefore, the above interview results have suggested significance to some previous studies. According to Coleman (1988; 1990), Fukuyama (1995; 1999), Paxton (1999), Putnam (1993a; 1993b; 1995; 2000), and Woolcock (1998), the social trust and the unspoken norm of reciprocation exist within a long-term social network have been considered as two important themes of social capitals. However, they have not been fully confirmed in this study. The reason is that even though participants are aware of what social capital there is available, like social trust and reciprocation, for them to grant by making efforts in developing co-cultural contact, as well as the significance of these social capitals; that does not mean they must and will then do it. Instead, participants have rather displayed their critical thought and a pragmatic attitude in personal extent toward the underlying meanings of a certain social capital, the relevant 'cost' to acquire that social capital, and whether they should commit themselves to agree with and acquire that social capital in action. In other words, the decision-making is based on the measurement of whether they need a certain type of social capital urgently and whether they like to grant a certain type of social capital, and it is the element that is absent in the said previous understanding of social capital.

In that sense, when acquiring social capital has been confirmed as the fundamental reason for Chinese international students to remain or develop co-cultural contacts, but meanwhile, the lower level of personal need for a certain social capital, or the personal dislike of it, may also serve as the fundamental reason for them to not perform certain extent of co-cultural contacts. This interpretation, indeed, can explain quite a few contradictory results in the survey. For example, in Q38 and Q41 as shown below respectively: nearly 90% of participants agreed that using English as much as possible in the British learning environment is important for their studies, and nearly 75% of participants agreed that studying in the UK requires them to accept a new way of learning.

Survey Result Table 22: (Q38) Using English in a learning environment whenever possible is important for your present overseas study.

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	1 Strongly agree	45	31.9%
	2 Agree	81	57.4%
	3 Neutral	9	6.4%
	4 Disagree	6	4.3%
	Total	141	100.0%
Total		141	100.0%

Survey Result Table 23: (Q41) Studying in the UK requires that we accept a new way of learning.

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	1 Strongly agree	27	19.1%
	2 Agree	78	55.3%
	3 Neutral	21	14.9%
	4 Disagree	12	8.5%
	5 Strongly disagree	3	2.1%
	Total	141	100.0%
Total		141	100%

However, in contrast, as shown below tables: the results in the questions of Q11, Q43, Q21, and Q18 have all suggested that a large percentage of Chinese international students still

commit to the use of home language to communicate with their co-cultural friends; and they

have also expressed the attitude that if it has not been done for any reason, in whether in-class

and off-class occasion, they will still feel strange and not understandable.

Survey Result Table 24: (Q11) You have used Chinese as the key language to communicate with your Chinese classmates or Chinese schoolmates during the class.

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	1 Strongly disagree	3	2.1
	2 Disagree	36	25.5
	3 Neutral	12	8.5
	4 Agree	72	51.1
	5 Strongly agree	18	12.8
	Total	141	100.0
Total		141	100.0

Survey Result Table 25: (Q43) If the communication between two Chinese students is not in Chinese, you will feel that is strange.

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	1 Strongly disagree	6	4.3
	2 Disagree	27	19.1
	3 Neutral	24	17.0
	4 Agree	54	38.3
	5 Strongly agree	30	21.3
	Total	141	100.0
Total		141	100.0

Survey Result Table 26: (Q21) When you have been advised to communicate with students from other cultural groups in classroom learning rather than staying with your group of Chinese classmates or schoolmates, you feel uncomfortable.

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	1 Strongly agree	36	25.5
	2 Agree	60	42.6
	3 Neutral	21	14.9
	4 Disagree	18	12.8
	5 Strongly disagree	6	4.3
	Total	141	100.0
Total		141	100.0

Survey Result Table 27: (Q18) You feel that it is not understandable if you use English rather than your mother language of Chinese to communicate with Chinese classmates or schoolmates outside the classroom learning.

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	1 Strongly agree	30	21.3
	2 Agree	57	40.4
	3 Neutral	21	14.9
	4 Disagree	21	14.9
	5 Strongly disagree	12	8.5
	Total	141	100.0
Total		141	100.0

The reason that can explain the above contradiction could be related to the key point of findings that have been raised two pages earlier. That is, in a simple way, on the one hand, Chinese international students will choose to implement some actions to grant certain sorts of social capital, for example in the above example, they appeared as willing to enhance the contacts and communications in the host learning environment to obtain the improvement in learning quality or performance. While that may imply the possible improvement of cross-cultural contacts with cultural others in the learning environment; on the other hand, Chinese international students will also choose to not implement other actions once they have measured the circumstance and realized that they do not necessarily need the relevant sort of social capital in near future, or they did not like to grant it. In the above cases, that refers to the unwillingness for some Chinese international students to use English to communicate with co-cultural friends, because obviously English language improvement is not as important or urgent as receiving the emotional and practical support from co-cultural friends, so using home language to communicating with co-cultural friends is the best approach, and certainly, they are also not going to like the consequence of practising English with Chinese classmates by using it as the key communication means, if their Chinese classmates become confused by it and find such conversation is not understandable at all. Indeed, this finding confirms the finding of Massey & Espinosa (1997) and Massey et.al., 1994). As introduced

before, these scholars found that migrants have bonded with co-cultural people intensively because it is much convenient for them to ask and obtain relevant supports or benefits, as some social capitals, from such a close-tied social connection than from host society.

Also, the above finding has implied a key rationale for Chinese international students to value their acquired social capital, especially against that which may be offered by or in the host environment. Although it appeared as highly pragmatic; these students from China may have compared the significance of possible resources and benefits that they could acquire through the development of cross-cultural contacts, with the significance that they could acquire through the co-cultural contacts. Besides, in many cases, the significance of social capital acquired by retaining co-cultural relationships seems much bigger. Giving an example of the sense of familiarity: if looking at the result of Q36 that shown in Survey Result Table 28 below, it is clear that two-thirds of participants agreed with the statement of an assumption, which asked about whether the sense of familiarity with the Chinese community critically drove them to return home society afterwards.

Survey Result Table 28: (Q36) The sense of familiarity with the Chinese community is a key reason that will drive you to return to China after this study.

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	1 Strongly disagree	12	8.5
	2 Disagree	33	23.4
	3 Neutral	15	10.6
	4 Agree	51	36.2
	5 Strongly agree	30	21.3
	Total	141	100.0
Total		141	100.0

When such a sense of familiarity with the home culture and home cultural group can only be retained and reinforced by the close social connection with co-cultural people; it is no wonder that both the sense of familiarity and the action to acquire it has been highly valued by both

survey participants and interview participants, as has been stated before already. Indeed, this echoes the findings of Mutsindikwa & Gelderblom (2014) and Biao & Shen (2009). As introduced before, in two separate studies upon the migrants' connection with home society, Mutsindikwa & Gelderblom (2014) and Biao & Shen (2009) found together that while migrants have strong reasons to remain connecting with their original cultural group or will return home society soon, then the indicating necessity to remain committed to home society would overwhelm the willingness or demand to develop further cross-cultural contact with the host society.

In light of the above understanding, it signified an alert to higher education institutions in the UK, which is about the importance of not only developing international students' social capital through cross-cultural contacts but also enhancing the significance of those sorts of social capital that could be acquired from the cross-cultural contacts, in a bid to convince international students to rather choose to reinforce their contacts and interactions with cultural others than co-cultural friends. Indeed, this researcher would like to remind that, such a point was not found in the interview with university leader T. Though T explained that many institutional activities have been deployed to encourage overseas students to participate in cross-cultural contacts, such as holding the International Food and Cultural Festivals; when no clear host social capital has been identified other than the vague statement of 'enhanced cross-cultural experiences', it would be very doubtful to see how efficient these institutional activities could be. In other words, they may not be an efficient way to stimulate international students' cross-cultural contact, if international students perceived no more important resources and benefits that could be obtained from developing cross-cultural contact in a host learning environment than from their usual intensive, stable contact with co-cultural peers.

Chapter 5 Conclusion

5.1 Summary of key findings and fulfilment of research questions

At the beginning of this thesis, I identified the key purpose for implementing this study, as being to explore more broadly Chinese international students' commitment to their home society. My objective was to generate more comprehensive understandings of these students' bonding to their home cultural group and home culture and their contacts with non-Chinese people, especially in terms of the forms of manifestation, the facilitating factors behind the context, and the fundamental rationale which might explain its occurrence and continuality. This research purpose was then fulfilled by a few key findings to a macro extent: they relate to six aspects of concern in total, which match the research objective identified initially.

The first key finding reveals the extent of Chinese international students' commitment to their home culture during their study period in overseas society. These international students retained their home cultural practices in several ways, such as introducing Chinese names to cultural others; being unable to abandon home classroom learning practices and experiences in a new classroom environment, especially in terms of speaking out in public and engaging with cultural others in the classroom interactive activities; expecting to celebrate Chinese festivals and preferring to celebrate with Chinese peers together; and watching and listening to Chinese entertainment programmes for recreation. The findings above were highlighted by accompanying unfamiliarity and even the conflict with the expectations, values, and practices prevalent in the British environment, and these students' difficult experiences to adjust their expectations or perceptions to adapt to new environment continually. Therefore, arguably, that also confirms the fact that Chinese international students experienced strong conceptual conflict between home cultural maintenance and developing cross-cultural contact and the resulting adaptation in the above issues, with the outcomes that these issues were in favour of

their commitment to home culture instead. However, it is important to remind ourselves that the commitment to home culture is not constant. This study also revealed that when Chinese international students perceived some major difficulties in retaining certain home cultural heritage or practice and they found themselves unable to overcome, then their home cultural commitment would be compromised or revoked.

The second finding concerns the way in which Chinese international students' cross-cultural contact experiences have had an impact on their decision for remaining commitment to home culture and bonding with co-cultural people other than developing cross-cultural contact, and this study revealed a completed picture of processing for the above concern. That is, Chinese international students often encountered inefficiency in developing cross-cultural contact in the British classroom and difficulties in adapting to a new learning environment. Meanwhile, these students often found that they were comfortable with and preferred Chinese learning practices, and this suited them much better than adapting to the local ones. Such experiences would then facilitated their preferences and thus their decisions to remain strong attachment with home educational culture, in a bid to reduce the acculturative pressure brought about by the inefficient cross-cultural contact and following inefficient adaptation. Besides, this study also suggested that rather than merely reacting to the acculturative pressure and problematic cross-cultural contact experiences by 'taking a flight back' to their familiar home culture; these students tended pragmatically to measure the emotional and academic support that they have received or would receive from their commitment to home culture and the reinforced social contacts with co-cultural peers, as well as the language and emotional difficulties that prevented them from achieving academic success in the British learning environment, in the course of the decision to remain attached with certain Chinese cultures and home cultural group in the British university, other than to take the risk and develop cross-cultural contact.

The third key finding concerns the complexity of the experiences that Chinese international students acquired through their cross-cultural contacts in British universities. In general, these students shared a sense of unfamiliarity with the British learning environment. Also, their difficult period during which they were expected to temporarily put away the familiarized Chinese learning practices and relevant Chinese learning values, and then to embrace the new yet unfamiliar learning practices and relevant expectations in British higher education, has been a real challenge. However, those Chinese international students who have a weak grasp of the English language and lack understanding of British higher education in advance were more struggled to cope with the above challenge and have experienced even worse feeling from the resulting academic difficulties.

Additionally, Chinese international students reported their disappointment toward the cross-cultural communication with local staffs who provided academic assistance to them. They felt the British higher education institutions have not offered them straightforward answers nor relevant explanations for the academic difficulties and the underlying acculturative stress they encountered, of which were often caused by the differences in educational settings and experiences. The study also found that certain British universities appeared to emphasize improving students' English ability and cross-cultural contact opportunity, but neglected the importance to understand students' former experiences and underlying differences in educational contexts. Nevertheless, the above experiences put away these students' further attempt to contact their educational institutions in the UK and meanwhile evoked their preference to remain bonding with other Chinese fellows to resolve the difficulties and adjust to the stress more efficiently.

Moreover, Chinese international students have also experienced the conflict of values during their informal communication with classmates from other cultural contexts. When the context of such conflict was referred to the competition of students' pride in their home cultures and the differences in the underlying beliefs or values between Chinese society and another society, the occurrence of conflict of values still gave Chinese students an uncomfortable feeling with the result that they were deterred from further in-depth cross-cultural contacts on informal occasion, even though they were still sharing the same learning and social environment in a British university.

Furthermore, Chinese students who have a weak grasp of the English language and lacked an understanding of the British university learning environment in advance often found that their cross-cultural contacts during formal classroom learning provided non-productive or non-helpful outcomes in learning, and that exacerbated their acculturative stress and the negative feeling towards the above contacts. As a result, they opted for remaining minimal classroom cross-cultural contacts with peers from other cultures. Meanwhile, for other Chinese students, they appeared more disposed to make efforts in participating in classroom cross-cultural interactions, at least at the beginning of their courses, and they received improvements in a series of language or academic aspects as a result. However, the above positive experience did not always promise their continual engagement in classroom interactions, because some of them were inspired by the positive experience and developed the classroom cross-cultural contacts further but others were bonded by their previous educational experiences and expectations and reluctant to move on.

The fourth finding of this study regarded the factors or forces in the host environment that could affect the further cross-cultural contacts of Chinese international students. This study

has suggested several key points of concern. In general, cultural discrimination and racial separation were not reported nor confirmed in this study, which ruled out these two factors. Meanwhile, this study identified the availability of those students' co-cultural friends in proximity as a key factor in preventing further cross-cultural contacts. For underperforming Chinese international students, the existence of Chinese classmates in proximity becomes the most important and quickest mean to ask for academic support and sharing some academic information. For other Chinese students, their social connections with Chinese classmates in proximity are also intensive, though they are mainly in the form of after-class socialization for recreational purpose. However, in both the above cases, the necessity or space to develop further cross-cultural contact with non-Chinese peers are reduced accordingly. In that sense, the temporary removal or blockage of Chinese international students' access to their co-cultural peers in proximity would be a facilitating factor to motivate these students to develop cross-cultural contacts further.

Additionally, this researcher has also suggested the occurrence of value conflict as another preventative factor for cross-cultural contacts in the British learning environment. During the informal cross-cultural contacts, Chinese international students experienced the problematic attitude of local students who tended to consider local culture better than Chinese students' home culture and the disagreement in the values and beliefs of some socio-cultural practices between Chinese students and other overseas students. As a result, they caused the negative feeling for Chinese international students and their willingness to prevent the occurrence of the conflict of values in future, which have limited their willingness to develop further informal cross-cultural contacts eventually. Besides, in some cases, the conflict of values may also choose to reinforce their co-cultural contacts as a response, and that would still bring a negative influence to bear on the later development of cross-cultural contacts.

Relatedly, a factor limiting time and opportunity available for Chinese international students to develop further cross-cultural contacts is identified as the access to the people they very care for, namely their families and friends in China. This study found that these co-cultural people in China, rather than Chinese students' international friends and host classmates, are those whom they consider it worth remaining in regular co-cultural with. Also, these students' desire and practice to maintain contact with these very concerned co-cultural people were unaffected amid a new environment. Arguably, the development of further cross-cultural contact will be much reduced then as it has given way to the maintenance of co-cultural contacts back home.

At last, this study revealed the British university's deficiency in responding to international students' academic support request as also a preventative factor for Chinese international students' further cross-cultural contacts. The reason is that while these students encountered academic difficulties and the underlying stress of acculturation that often related to the conflict of educational experiences and difference in educational contexts, their lecturers and student services failed to understand the above contexts but provided ambiguous advice or some overly-general information. That has then caused the disappointment and criticism of these students, which evoked them to decide to consult co-cultural peers instead and did not enquire their educational institutions anymore for resolving academic difficulties.

The fifth and sixth macro-finding of this research explored the social capitals acquired by Chinese international students in overseas learning experiences, which deemed as the fundamental rationale for international students' possible commitment to home culture and the home cultural group while they are studying in an overseas society and are expected to

adapt in the host environment. In particular, the fifth key finding concerned what social capital Chinese international students acquired through their strong attachment with home culture and the home cultural group, and the sixth key finding concerned how these international students valued the social capital acquired in either the commitment to home culture and home cultural group or the adaptation to host environment. Indeed, the findings above corresponded to the last two research questions, respectively.

As the fifth key finding, this research revealed that the companion of friends, improvement of the sense of personal loneliness, reproduction of the sense of familiarity to the home social surrounding in proximity, accessibility to a better social network back home, assistance to solve daily life problems, and assistance to improve academic study quality, are indeed some important resources, benefits, and advantages that were existed in the Chinese international students' strong social interactions with their home culture and home cultural group. They have been also identified as different sorts of social capital that are exclusively available for Chinese students to acquire as a result of their commitment to the home cultural group and home culture. Meanwhile, this research also suggested that for different Chinese students, their focuses on acquiring social capital are different. For some Chinese students who did not report serious academic or English language difficulty, they have demonstrated the demand for the social capital that could provide emotional support; and for some underperforming students, they have rather shown more emphasis on obtaining the social capital that could offer academic supports. Furthermore, this study found that some sorts of social capital, such as a better social network in China and a wide extent of social trust from the peer group, have been well understood and admired by the Chinese student participants in the interview. Although, these social capitals were thought as not so much necessary to be obtained by some

Chinese students, and thus these social capitals were not on the top list of those students' efforts for developing relevant co-cultural contacts.

As the sixth and the last key finding, this research suggested three fundamental concerns that summarize how Chinese international students have valued the social capital that could be obtained by either developing cross-cultural contacts or bonding to home cultural practices or co-cultural people. Above all, Chinese international students would choose to implement a certain action of acculturation, whether it's for developing cross-cultural contact or remaining attachment with their home culture and co-cultural people, once they perceived that certain social capital could be acquired as a result of such an action. Besides, these students would choose not to implement an action, once they have assessed the circumstances and realized that they do not necessarily need to obtain the associated social capital soon or they do not like to reciprocate their effort for the said social capital. Moreover, in the circumstance whilst there are multiple options that Chinese international students could implement and these options are connecting with different social capitals; Chinese students would rule out the option by measuring which associated social capital is less urgently wanted nor important for the near future, and which one is less preferred in comparison with another one. In general, in assessing whether to retain their bonding with their home culture and co-cultural people or to develop further cross-cultural contact with cultural others, Chinese international students demonstrate their decision-making based on evaluating not only which social capital could be acquired in any option but also which social capital is the most needed or preferred amongst multiple available social capitals, to the extent of personal context or experience.

In a summary, this study identified the existence of the phenomenon of Chinese international students' commitment to home society and its extent as a form of cultural practice. It also

offered an exhaustive description of the stories, preferences, comments, and feelings that composed those Chinese students' cross-cultural contact experiences. Further, an analysis was implemented, explored some common external influencing factors that may prevent or facilitate these students' cross-cultural contacts from their experiences in the UK. Eventually, according to the above students' experiences and the survey data, this study further revealed the positive connection between the acquisition of social capital and these students' decision-making or behaviours for their acculturation in the UK. The above findings and investigation helped this study to generate a more comprehensive understanding of Chinese international students' commitment to home society, namely their bonding with the home cultural group and home culture, with the in-depth insight that produced via the social capital perspective.

5.2 Contributions to existing knowledge and practical implications

Principally, this research utilized the model of acculturation strategies established by Berry (1980; 1997; 2006; 2007); cross-cultural communication theories suggested by scholars such as Furnham & Bochner (1986), Gudykunst (2003), Kim (1988; 2001; 2005; 2015) and Wards et.al., (2005); and the social capital perspective contributed by scholars such as Bourdieu (1986), Briggs (1997), Coleman (1988; 1990) and Putman (1993a; 1993b; 2000), as three key 'lens' of knowledge, to explore the acculturation experiences of Chinese international students in British universities and their relevant commitment to their home culture and home cultural group. Consequently, during the research, all three key theories, particularly their theoretical assumptions and rationales, were contextualized in the specific case of Chinese international students and their British higher education study environment.

By examining the key findings of this research in the context of the knowledge suggested by these key theories, first, the limitation of existing knowledge is discovered and the reasons

are suggested. Given the example of Berry's model of acculturation: although it identifies the conflict between home cultural maintenance and cross-cultural contact and relates the causes to the perceived cultural gap between two societies and the migrant's willingness, it could not fully explain some cases discovered in this study. For instance, some Chinese international students actively participated in the host learning practices at the beginning and achieved some positive feelings, but decided to switch back to home learning practices later; and some of them decided to use English names and cease celebrating Chinese festivals despite their willingness to remain home cultural practices. As this study further suggests, the reasons are that the existing knowledge of Berry's model of acculturation does not recognize Chinese international students' pragmatic yet somewhat problematic perception of the purpose and consequences of host cultural adaptation, neither these students' pragmatic perceptions of the factors which prevail in the environment influence their ability of home cultural maintenance. Though, this researcher utilized different theories to construct a more reasonable interpretation and fulfil the identified knowledge gap with a diverse 'lens' of knowledge. Thus, the exposure of limitation of a certain theory and its relevant arguments or rationales suggested by this study demonstrated the non-linear characteristics of acculturation and the infeasibility for any one theory to take full account of migrant's acculturation experiences.

Second, the contextualization and comparison of these key theories in relation to the research findings also indicate important supplements to, and the issues of concern with, the existing theories, even if the existing theories appear to be able to interpret the research findings. One example is that of the social capital perspective. On the one hand, in this study, it confirmed the positive connection between a migrant's continuing and intensive participation in social contact and the acquisition of the resources or advantages that are embedded in and given by such a stable social relation, and it thus revealed that a key rationale for Chinese international

students' preference and following maintenance of co-cultural contacts is to acquire certain associated social capitals. On the other hand, this study has still raised supplementary concern regarding the procedures and principles that these international students may need to process in their decision-making. For example, the possible evaluation of the relative importance, or personal preference, among different social capitals that are available to be obtained through participating in two different types of social connection; and the evaluation of the efforts or costs that these students need to make in order to obtain certain social capital. In that case, this research has not only identified the extent of the need for developing existing knowledge of these key theories further, but also demonstrated the fact that the decision-making of an international student's commitment to any culture or cultural group is highly complicated, whilst existing knowledge may not yet able to define or describe it at full.

The above contributions to existing knowledge along with the key findings of this research that discussed before also have important implications for the practices of British higher education. Above all, while international students' acculturation is found as not to be a linear process that leads straight to integration, their return to home cultural practices and bonding with the home cultural group should not be problematized by British universities, neither for these students' possible negative experiences and performances in developing cross-cultural contacts, especially given that it is natural to see different acculturation strategies being used by different people. Additionally, it is important reminding that the selection of the 'less adaptive' acculturation strategy, namely remaining committed to home culture and home cultural group rather than developing better cross-cultural contact, is found as subject to the influence of many aspects of students' experiences, such as their levels of contact with the British learning environment, relevant experiences acquired, and their abilities, expectations, and perceptions. Thus, blaming international students' home culture and any single aspect in

above, or ignoring the complicated picture of influence above, is unfair. To improve international students' adaptation to the new environment, British higher education should consider and understand the contexts of international students' contact with new environment carefully in order to locate any factor that may influence their relevant strategy selection and thus hinder their acculturation performance, and then develop accurate responses to minimize such influence. At last, this study has revealed that international students may develop intensive cross-cultural contacts or retain bonding with co-cultural people to acquire some social capitals that they need urgently or prefer. Thus, if no more important or apparent social capital has been identified or given to international students, it would be doubtful to see how efficient the university's student services and supporting activities could be in terms of satisfying international students' actual demands or expectations. In other words, better and more apparent social resources or benefits should be associated with student services and supporting activities to encourage international students to develop intensive and stable contacts with peers from other cultural contexts than merely co-cultural peers.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Survey

Survey to understand Chinese international students' commitment to home society

Introduction of this survey 问卷介绍

This survey aims to understand your connections with Chinese cultures and your surrounding cultural group members when you are studying in a British university as an overseas student. This survey will take about 15 minutes to complete.
这调查试图了解中国留学生在留学期间对中国母文化以及和身边各种来自不同文化团体的成员之间的联系。这个问卷调查约需 15 分钟完成。

Before you take this survey, it is important to remember that you should be a Chinese international student, and studied in a British university for more than 2 months already. If you do not meet the above conditions, then this survey is not suitable for you to participate in.
在您开始填写这个问卷之前，请注意您应该是中国留学生并已经到达英国大学学习超过了 2 个月。如果您并没有满足以上的条件，那么这个问卷调查并不适合您。

This survey asks about your experiences, mainly by asking you to rate the level of your agreement with different statements, so there is no 'wrong' answer. All your personal information and responses will be strictly protected, will be only used for this research, and will be remained anonymous in reporting. If you looking for any further explanation, or would like to raise any comment or concern, please feel free to email me at Ying.Xu@hud.ac.uk and I will respond you shortly.
请您阅读各个问题中所陈述的假设，然后勾选您觉得最符合您想法或经验的的同意度选项。所以这个问卷调查并不会有任何"不正确的"回答。所有您的个人信息和回答都将被严格的保密，只会被用于这个研究，和将会在研究报告中保持匿名。如果您需要更多的解释或者您希望提出任何建议，请向我发送电邮到 Ying.Xu@hud.ac.uk，我将在最短时间内回复您。

*请注意，在下面的问卷中，所有的"同学"均指代您在英国学习的同班或同校同学，所以"中国同学"也指的是您在英国学习的同班或同校的中国同学，而非您在中国学习期间的同学。

Personal background 个人背景

A. Which type of university are you studying in the UK now? 请问你现在在英国哪类大学学习？

○ Ancient university (included the universities that granted university status before 1800, like Oxford, Cambridge, St. Andrews, Glasgow, Aberdeen, and Edinburgh) 古典大学（包括在 1800 年前获得大学地位的大学，如牛津，剑桥，圣安德鲁，格拉斯哥，阿伯丁，和爱丁堡） (1)

○ Red brick university (included the universities that granted university status between 1800 and 1960, like Manchester, Birmingham, Liverpool, Leeds, Sheffield, Bristol, Reading, Nottingham, Newcastle, Leicester, Exeter, etc.) 红砖大学（包括在 1800 年到 1960 年间获得大学地位的大学，如曼切斯特，伯明翰，利物浦，利兹，谢菲尔德，布里斯托，雷丁，诺丁汉，纽卡斯尔，莱切斯特，艾希特等） (2)

○ Plate glass university (included the universities that granted the university status between 1960 and 1992, like Aston, Bath, Bradford, Brunel, Cranfield, Dundee, East Anglia, Essex, Heriot-Watt, Kent, Keele, Lancaster, Loughborough, Salford, Stirling, Strathclyde, Surrey, Sussex, Warwick, Ulster, York etc.) 平板玻璃大学 （包括在 1960 年到 1992 年间获得大学地位的大学，如阿斯顿，巴斯，布兰福德，布鲁内尔，克兰菲尔德，邓迪，东安格利亚，埃塞克斯，赫瑞瓦特，肯特，基尔，兰卡斯特，拉夫堡，赛佛，斯特林，史崔克莱德，萨利，萨塞克斯，华威，阿尔斯特，约克等） (3)

○ New university (included the universities that granted the university status after 1992, like city university or metropolitan university in major cities, Bath Spa, Bedfordshire, Bolton, Bournemouth, Brighton, Central Lancashire, Chester, Coventry, Derby, Edinburgh Napier, Greenwich, Hertfordshire, Huddersfield, Kingston, Leeds Trinity, Lincoln, Liverpool Hope, Liverpool John Moores, London South Bank, Middlesex, Nottingham Trent, Plymouth, Portsmouth, Sheffield Hallam, South Wales, Staffordshire, Westminster, etc.) 新式大学 （包括在 1992 年后获得大学地位的大学，如各个大城市的城市大学或都会大学，巴斯温泉，布德福德郡大学，博尔顿，伯恩茅斯，布莱顿，中央兰开夏，切斯特，考文垂，德比，爱丁堡纳皮尔，格林威治，赫特福德郡，哈德兹菲尔德，金斯顿，利兹圣三一，林肯，利物浦霍普，利物浦约翰摩尔兹，伦敦南岸，米德尔塞克斯，诺丁汉特伦特，普利茅斯，普特茅斯，谢菲尔德哈雷姆，南威尔士，斯塔福德郡，威斯敏斯特等） (4)

○ University of London Group (included college universities like University College London, King's college, London School of Economics and Political Science, Queen Mary, SOAS etc.) 伦敦大学集团（包括一系列独立学院，如国王学院，伦敦政经学院，玛丽王后学院，亚非学院等） (5)

B. What type of degree course are you studying? 请问你现在就读哪一种类型的大学学位课程？

○ Undergraduate 本科和大专课程 (1)

○ Master taught 授课式硕士课程 (2)

○ Master by research 研究型硕士课程 (3)

○ Doctoral 博士课程 (4)

C. How long you have been to the UK? 请问你来英国已经多久了？

◯ Only a few months 只有几个月 (1)

◯ More than half year but less than 1 year 大于半年但少于 1 年 (2)

◯ More than 1 year but less than 3 years 大于一年但少于 3 年 (3)

◯ More than 3 years 大于 3 年 (4)

D. What is the most influential motivation that encouraged you to go abroad study in the UK? Please only select only ONE option that you think is the most important one for you. 请问下列哪一个选项是当时最激励你到英国留学因素？请只选择对你而言最重要的一个选项。

◯ Parents told me to do so or parents' encouragement 父母要求我出国就读或父母的鼓励 (1)

◯ Teachers told me to do so or teachers' encouragement 老师要求我出国就读或老师的鼓励 (2)

◯ Friends' encouragement, advice or example 朋友们的鼓励，建议或榜样 (3)

◯ Others 其他因素或原因 (4)

E. If your answer to the last question is 'encouraged by parents, teachers or friends', then what is their most important point of view in terms of study in the UK in that time? Please only select ONE option that you think is the most appropriate one to describe. 如果在上题，你选择了受父母，老师或朋友的影响而留学；请问当时他们对到英国留学最主要的观点是什么？请选择最能描述清楚的一个选项。

◯ Study in the UK will give you a better degree for a better job in China 出国学习能让你获得一个更好的学位从而在中国能找到一个更好的工作 (1)

◯ Study in the UK will give you a more international, critical perspective that will be good for any career development 在英国学习能让你获得一个更国际化，批判性的视野从而有利于各种职场发展 (2)

◯ Study in the UK will give you a rare opportunity to experience a very different learning and living environment that will help to improve your personal experience 在英国学习能给你一个珍贵机会去体验一种非常不同的学习和生活环境，从而丰富个人经历 (3)

◯ Study in the UK will make you more capable of adapting to live in a new environment 在英国学习能让你获得对新环境更好的适应力 (4)

F. Where did you spend most of your time in education in China? Please only select ONE option. If you have spent time equally in different cities, then please select the most recent one. 在中国时，

你在哪里完成大部分的教育的？请选择一个选项。如果你在不同的城市度过了相同的受教育时间，那么请勾选最近完成过教育的那个城市。

○ Tier-one, highly developed cities included Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Shenzhen and Tianjin 一线超发达城市，包括北京，上海，广州，深圳和天津 (1)

○ Municipalities under direct jurisdiction of the Central government other than Beijing and Tianjin and the Capital cities in coastal provinces e.g. Nanjing and Hangzhou, other than Guangzhou 直辖市（不包含北京和天津）和沿海省份的省会城市，例如南京和杭州（不包括广州） (2)

○ Capital cities in non-coastal provinces e.g. Wuhan and Chengdu 非沿海省份的省会城市，例如武汉和成都 (3)

○ Non-capital cities or towns from coastal provinces e.g. Dongguan and Xiamen 沿海省份的非省会，非一线城市，例如东莞和厦门 (4)

○ Non-capital cities or towns from inland provinces e.g. Yichang and Jiujiang 内陆省份的非省会，非一线城市，例如宜昌和九江 (5)

G. Before you came to the UK, what was your latest, finished educational level in China? 在你到英国学习前，你在中国所获得的最高完整学历是什么？

○ Senior high school 高中 (1)

○ HND 大专 (2)

○ Undergraduate 本科 (3)

○ Postgraduate 研究生 (4)

H. What is your father's occupation? 请问你父亲的职业？

○ Higher managerial, administrative or professionals e.g. Bankers; owners, General Managers and chief managerial officers of larger organizations; government senior officers or leaders; national academicians; chief physicians and dentists 较高级的管理或行政人员或高级专业人士。例如银行家，较大型组织的业主，总经理和首席管理者，政府高级职员或领导，院士，主任医生和牙医 (1)

○ Lower managerial, administrative or professional e.g. managers in larger organizations; owners of medium-sized business; senior police officers; government officers; special professionals in electrical; teaching and engineering; lawyers; accountant; professors in universities; actors and actresses; and experienced physicians 一般的管理或行政人员或非高级专

业人士。例如较大型企业内的经理，中型企业的业主，高级警官，普通公务员，特殊电气，教育或工程专家，律师，大学教授，演员，和主治医生 (2)

○ Intermediate occupations, small employers and non-professional self-employed, and lower supervisory and technical e.g. junior or assistant managers in smaller organizations; owners of small business; senior teachers or lecturers; junior public servants; policemen and firemen; IT workers; senior electricians and fitters; experienced or chief nurses; and junior doctors 中等职员，小雇主，非专业自雇人士和较低级的监管性和技术性工种。例如小企业内的一线或助理管理者，小型企业的业主，高级老师或讲师，初级公务员，普通警察和消防员，IT 工人，高级电工和钳工，高级护士或护士长，和普通医生 (3)

○ Semi-routine occupations and routine occupations e.g. clerks; postal workers; chefs; sales and marketing assistants; labor workers in manufacturing and building industries; farmers; and nursing workers and cleaners 半重复性和重复性的职业，例如文员，邮递工人，厨师，导购和市场营销人员，制造业和建筑工人，农民，护理人员和清洁员 (4)

○ Long-term unemployed, included househusband 长期失业者，包括家庭主"夫" (5)

I. What is your mother's occupation? 请问你母亲的职业？

○ Higher managerial, administrative or professionals e.g. Bankers; owners, General Managers and chief managerial officers of larger organizations; government senior officers or leaders; national academicians; chief physicians and dentists 较高级的管理或行政人员或高级专业人士。例如银行家，较大型组织的业主，总经理和首席管理者，政府高级职员或领导，院士，主任医生和牙医 (1)

○ Lower managerial, administrative or professional e.g. managers in larger organizations; owners of medium-sized business; senior police officers; government officers; special professionals in electrical; teaching and engineering; lawyers; accountant; professors in universities; actors and actresses; and experienced physicians 一般的管理或行政人员或非高级专业人士。例如较大型企业内的经理，中型企业的业主，高级警官，普通公务员，特殊电气，教育或工程专家，律师，大学教授，演员，和主治医生 (2)

○ Intermediate occupations, small employers and non-professional self-employed, and lower supervisory and technical e.g. junior or assistant managers in smaller organizations; owners of small business; senior teachers or lecturers; junior public servants; policemen and firemen; IT workers; senior electricians and fitters; experienced or chief nurses; and junior doctors 中等职员，小雇主，非专业自雇人士和较低级的监管性和技术性工种。例如小企业内的一线或助理管理者，小型企业的业主，高级老师或讲师，初级公务员，普通警察和消防员，IT 工人，高级电工和钳工，高级护士或护士长，和普通医生 (3)

○ Semi-routine occupations and routine occupations e.g. clerks; postal workers; chefs; sales and marketing assistants; labor workers in manufacturing and building industries; farmers; and nursing workers and cleaners 半重复性和重复性的职业，例如文员，邮递工人，厨师，导购和市场营销人员，制造业和建筑工人，农民，护理人员和清洁员 (4)

○ Long-term unemployed, included housewives 长期失业者，包括家庭主妇 (5)

J. Before you came to study in the UK, did you ever have overseas travel experience (included summer camp trip)? 在到英国学习前，请问你有没有到其他国家旅游的经验（包括夏令营活动）？

○ Yes 有 (1)

○ No 没有 (2)

K. Before you came to study in the UK, did you ever study overseas on degree courses? 在到英国学习前，请问你有没有在海外学习过大学学位课程？

○ Yes 有 (1)

○ No 没有 (2)

L. If the above answer is yes, which country you have studied in before? 如果上面的问题你回答了是，请问你来英国之前在哪一个国家学习过大学学位课程？

○ Australia, New Zealand, and European and American developed countries (e.g. United States, Canada and Germany) 澳洲，新西兰，和欧美发达国家（如美国，加拿大和德国）(2)

○ Asian developed countries (e.g. Japan, Korea and Singapore) 亚洲发达国家（如日本，韩国和新加坡）(1)

○ Developing countries in Southern Asia and Southern-east Asia (e.g. Thailand, India and Malaysia) 东南亚和南亚发展中国家 （如泰国，印度和马来西亚）(4)

○ Others (e.g. Turkey, Middle East, South Africa and etc.) 其他地区或国家 （如土耳其，中东，南非等）(5)

M. Before you came to study in a British university, did you ever receive any teaching from overseas programmes in China? 在你到英国大学学习前，你有在中国学习过任何的海外在华教育项目吗？

○ Yes 有 (1)

○ No 没有 (2)

N. If the above answer is yes, on what type of overseas programmes in China did you study? If you have been to different overseas programmes in China, please select the most recently finished one.

如果上面的问题你回答了是，请问你之前在中国学习过哪一类的海外教育项目？如果你学习过多个海外教育项目或课程，请钩选最近完成过的那个。

○ English language courses offered by overseas institutions 海外培训机构的英语培训课程 (1)

○ A-level 普通教育高级程度证书 (2)

○ Foundation 大学预科 (3)

○ Undergraduate 大学本科或大专 (4)

○ Top-up 专升本，2+2 或 3+1 等大学衔接课程 (5)

○ Other 其他 (6)

Cultural commitment and interaction with cultural groups 文化认同感与文化团体交际

Q1 When you studied in the UK, you missed your families and friends in China very much.

	Strongly disagree 强烈不同意 (1)	Disagree 比较不同意 (2)	Neutral 不确定/中立 (3)	Agree 比较赞同 (4)	Strongly agree 强烈赞同 (5)
当你在英国学习的时候，你会十分挂念在中国的家庭和朋友。	○	○	○	○	○

Q2 You have reduced your contact with your families and friends in China very much during the period you studied abroad.

	Strongly disagree 强烈不同意 (5)	Disagree 比较不同意 (4)	Neutral 不确定/中立 (3)	Agree 比较赞同 (2)	Strongly agree 强烈赞同 (1)
在英国学习期间，你跟在国内的家庭和朋友的联系减少了很多。	○	○	○	○	○

Q3 Whenever possible in the UK, you would rather introduce your Chinese name than English name to friends or classmates from other cultural groups.

	Strongly disagree 强烈不同意 (1)	Disagree 比较不同意 (2)	Neutral 不确定/中立 (3)	Agree 比较赞同 (4)	Strongly agree 强烈赞同 (5)
只要有可能，在英国你更会将你的中文名字介绍给来自其他文化背景的朋友或者同学，而不是你的英文名。	○	○	○	○	○

Q4 In British classroom, you feel uncomfortable if you have been asked to speak out in front of the class.

	Strongly disagree 强烈不同意 (1)	Disagree 比较不同意 (2)	Neutral 不确定/中立 (3)	Agree 比较赞同 (4)	Strongly agree 强烈赞同 (5)
在英国课堂上，如果你被要求当众发言，你会感觉不自在。	○	○	○	○	○

Q5 In your course, you prefer to consider the Chinese classmates as your examples to follow in terms of learning, rather than the students from other cultural groups.

	Strongly disagree 强烈不同意 (1)	Disagree 比较不同意 (2)	Neutral 不确定/中立 (3)	Agree 比较赞同 (4)	Strongly agree 强烈赞同 (5)
在英国你会更倾向于将你的同班或同校的中国同学视为你的学习上的榜样，而较少倾向于非来自其他文化背景的学生。	○	○	○	○	○

Q6 Your friendship list consists more of the classmates or schoolmates from other cultural groups, than the classmates or schoolmates from China.

	Strongly disagree 强烈不同意 (5)	Disagree 比较不同意 (4)	Neutral 不确定/中立 (3)	Agree 比较赞同 (2)	Strongly agree 强烈赞同 (1)
在英国留学，你的朋友圈中的大部分的朋友来自其他文化背景而非你的中国同学。	○	○	○	○	○

Q7 You usually spend time with your Chinese classmates or schoolmates after the class for leisure and entertainment, e.g. shopping, dining, travel and gaming.

	Strongly disagree 强烈不同意 (1)	Disagree 比较不同意 (2)	Neutral 不确定/中立 (3)	Agree 比较赞同 (4)	Strongly agree 强烈赞同 (5)
在英国你经常在课余跟你的中国同学一起度过娱乐兴趣活动，例如逛街购物，进餐，旅游和游戏。	○	○	○	○	○

Q8 After a few months' living in the UK, you found British ways of living are not so strange to you now.

	Strongly disagree 强烈不同意 (5)	Disagree 比较不同意 (4)	Neutral 不确定/中立 (3)	Agree 比较赞同 (2)	Strongly agree 强烈赞同 (1)
经过了数月在英国的生活，你发现英国人的生活方式对于你来说不再陌生。	○	○	○	○	○

Q9 In the event that you have the choice, you tend to sit with your Chinese classmates or schoolmates during the class.

	Strongly disagree 强烈不同意 (1)	Disagree 比较不同意 (2)	Neutral 不确定/中立 (3)	Agree 比较赞同 (4)	Strongly agree 强烈赞同 (5)
在你能选择的情况下，上课时你通常跟中国同学一起坐。	○	○	○	○	○

Q10 You feel it's understandable if you do not treat your Chinese classmates or schoolmates better than classmates or schoolmates from other cultural groups.

	Strongly disagree 强烈不同意 (5)	Disagree 比较不同意 (4)	Neutral 不确定/中立 (3)	Agree 比较赞同 (2)	Strongly agree 强烈赞同 (1)
假如你对待中国同学不比对来自其他文化背景的同学更好，你觉得这是可以理解的。	○	○	○	○	○

Q11 You have used Chinese as the key language to communicate with your Chinese classmates or Chinese schoolmates during the class.

	Strongly disagree 强烈不同意 (1)	Disagree 比较不同意 (2)	Neutral 不确定/中立 (3)	Agree 比较赞同 (4)	Strongly agree 强烈赞同 (5)
在上课时，你使用中文作为你跟中国同学沟通的关键语言。	○	○	○	○	○

Q12 You will not feel disappointed if there is little chance for you to celebrate Chinese festivals in the UK.

	Strongly disagree 强烈不同意 (5)	Disagree 比较不同意 (4)	Neutral 不确定/中立 (3)	Agree 比较赞同 (2)	Strongly agree 强烈赞同 (1)
如果在英国很少有机会能让你庆祝中国传统节日，你也不会觉得失望。	○	○	○	○	○

Q13 Criticizing the contents of learning materials that you have read is challenging for you in your British learning experience.

	Strongly disagree 强烈不同意 (1)	Disagree 比较不同意 (2)	Neutral 不确定/中立 (3)	Agree 比较赞同 (4)	Strongly agree 强烈赞同 (5)
在你的英国学习体验中，批判所阅读到的学习资料是具有挑战性的一件事。	○	○	○	○	○

Q14 You have no difficulty in cooperating with students from other cultural groups during the class.

	Strongly disagree 强烈不同意 (5)	Disagree 比较不同意 (4)	Neutral 不确定/中立 (3)	Agree 比较赞同 (2)	Strongly agree 强烈赞同 (1)
你觉得在英国课堂上跟来自其他文化背景的学生一起合作并不困难。	○	○	○	○	○

Q15 You assume your classmates or schoolmates from other cultural groups are likely to know you less well, in comparison with your Chinese classmates or schoolmates.

	Strongly disagree 强烈不同意 (1)	Disagree 比较不同意 (2)	Neutral 不确定/中立 (3)	Agree 比较赞同 (4)	Strongly agree 强烈赞同 (5)
在英国学习时，跟你的中国同班或同校同学对比，你会假设来自其他文化背景的同学不能很好的理解你	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

Q16 You often follow your international classmates or schoolmates, rather than Chinese classmates or schoolmates when performing the off-class learning e.g. going to the library or developing a group discussion.

	Strongly disagree 强烈不同意 (5)	Disagree 比较不同意 (4)	Neutral 不确定/中立 (3)	Agree 比较赞同 (2)	Strongly agree 强烈赞同 (1)
在英国，你会经常跟来自其他文化背景的同学去一起进行课余学习，例如一起去图书馆和发起小组会议，而不是跟中国同学一起。	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

Q17 You hesitate to discuss opinions with your classmates during the British classroom learning.

	Strongly disagree 强烈不同意 (1)	Disagree 比较不同意 (2)	Neutral 不确定/中立 (3)	Agree 比较赞同 (4)	Strongly agree 强烈赞同 (5)
当你在英国课堂学习时，你会不情愿与同班同学讨论观点。	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

Q18 You feel that it is not understandable if you use English rather than your mother language of Chinese to communicate with Chinese classmates or schoolmates outside the classroom learning.

	Strongly disagree 强烈不同意 (1)	Disagree 比较不同意 (2)	Neutral 不确定/中立 (3)	Agree 比较赞同 (4)	Strongly agree 强烈赞同 (5)
你觉得在英国的课堂外使用英语而不是中文母语去和中国同学沟通,是不可理解的。	○	○	○	○	○

Q19 You feel preparing the in-class presentation is not difficult in your British learning experience.

	Strongly disagree 强烈不同意 (5)	Disagree 比较不同意 (4)	Neutral 不确定/中立 (3)	Agree 比较赞同 (2)	Strongly agree 强烈赞同 (1)
在你的英国学习经历里,你感觉课堂演讲并不困难。	○	○	○	○	○

Q20 You feel it is not difficult when you need to use a foreign language other than your mother language very often in daily living apart from learning.

	Strongly disagree 强烈不同意 (5)	Disagree 比较不同意 (4)	Neutral 不确定/中立 (3)	Agree 比较赞同 (2)	Strongly agree 强烈赞同 (1)
在英国日常生活中(不包括学习)需要经常使用非母语语言,这对你而言并不困难。	○	○	○	○	○

Q21 When you have been advised to communicate with students from other cultural groups in classroom learning rather than staying with your group of Chinese classmates or schoolmates, you feel uncomfortable.

	Strongly disagree 强烈不同意 (1)	Disagree 比较不同意 (2)	Neutral 不确定/中立 (3)	Agree 比较赞同 (4)	Strongly agree 强烈赞同 (5)
在英国，如果你被告知在课堂学习上需要跟来自其他文化背景的同学进行沟通而不能和中国同学聚在一起时，你感觉不太舒服。	○	○	○	○	○

Q22 You prefer to listen to the opinions of classmates or schoolmates from other cultural groups whenever possible.

	Strongly disagree 强烈不同意 (5)	Disagree 比较不同意 (4)	Neutral 不确定/中立 (3)	Agree 比较赞同 (2)	Strongly agree 强烈赞同 (1)
在可能的情况下，你更愿意倾听来自其他文化背景的同学的想法。	○	○	○	○	○

Q23 You think it is important to take note of everything that lectured by your lecturer/tutor in a British classroom.

	Strongly disagree 强烈不同意 (1)	Disagree 比较不同意 (2)	Neutral 不确定/中立 (3)	Agree 比较赞同 (4)	Strongly agree 强烈赞同 (5)
你认为，记录下在英国课堂上老师讲过的所有事情，是一件很重要的事。	○	○	○	○	○

Q24 You feel that getting along with only your friends or classmates from other cultural groups is already efficiently enough to help you to get away from the sense of loneliness when studying abroad.

	Strongly disagree 强烈不同意 (5)	Disagree 比较不同意 (4)	Neutral 不确定/中立 (3)	Agree 比较赞同 (2)	Strongly agree 强烈赞同 (1)
你觉得，仅跟来自其他文化背景的同学或朋友一起，已经足够能让你摆脱留学的孤独感	○	○	○	○	○

Q25 You find that spending most of your time with Chinese classmates or schoolmates while studying at your British university could offer you a familiar social environment similar to that you experienced in China previously.

	Strongly disagree 强烈不同意 (1)	Disagree 比较不同意 (2)	Neutral 不确定/中立 (3)	Agree 比较赞同 (4)	Strongly agree 强烈赞同 (5)
你发现跟中国同学一起能够提供你一个熟悉的社交环境，就像以前在中国时一样。	○	○	○	○	○

Q26 When studying abroad, you tend to not always celebrate Chinese festivals with your Chinese classmates or friends.

	Strongly disagree 强烈不同意 (5)	Disagree 比较不同意 (4)	Neutral 不确定/中立 (3)	Agree 比较赞同 (2)	Strongly agree 强烈赞同 (1)
在英国学习的时候，你倾向于不总是跟你的中国同学或朋友一起庆祝中国节日。	○	○	○	○	○

Q27 You feel it is inconvenient to students that British lecturers/tutors required students to make an advanced appointment for face-to-face interaction.

	Strongly disagree 强烈不同意 (1)	Disagree 比较不同意 (2)	Neutral 不确定/中立 (3)	Agree 比较赞同 (4)	Strongly agree 强烈赞同 (5)
你觉得，英国老师要求学生提前预约来做面对面交流，是不方便的。	○	○	○	○	○

Q28 Making friends with your Chinese classmates or schoolmates in your British university could provide you with the access to a better Chinese social network when you return to China.

	Strongly disagree 强烈不同意 (1)	Disagree 比较不同意 (2)	Neutral 不确定/中立 (3)	Agree 比较赞同 (4)	Strongly agree 强烈赞同 (5)
跟在英国的中国同学搞好关系能够为你回国时提供更好的中国人际关系网。	○	○	○	○	○

Q29 Whenever possible, you would like to know how British people typically live and why.

	Strongly disagree 强烈不同意 (5)	Disagree 比较不同意 (4)	Neutral 不确定/中立 (3)	Agree 比较赞同 (2)	Strongly agree 强烈赞同 (1)
只要有可能，你都愿意去了解英国人的生活方式。	○	○	○	○	○

Q30 When you stayed with your Chinese friends or classmates in the UK, you have often received their help, e.g. advice, comments or personal guiding, to solve daily life problems.

	Strongly disagree 强烈不同意 (1)	Disagree 比较不同意 (2)	Neutral 不确定/中立 (3)	Agree 比较赞同 (4)	Strongly agree 强烈赞同 (5)
在英国，当你跟中国同学或朋友一起时，你有经常接受他们对你日常生活的帮助，例如建议，解释和指路。	○	○	○	○	○

Q31 You have read the local news from local media sources very frequently.

	Strongly disagree 强烈不同意 (5)	Disagree 比较不同意 (4)	Neutral 不确定/中立 (3)	Agree 比较赞同 (2)	Strongly agree 强烈赞同 (1)
在英国，你经常阅读本地媒体提供的本地新闻。	○	○	○	○	○

Q32 When you stayed with your Chinese classmates, you have received their help in terms of improving individual learning quality e.g. note-taking and understand questions and topics.

	Strongly disagree 强烈不同意 (1)	Disagree 比较不同意 (2)	Neutral 不确定/中立 (3)	Agree 比较赞同 (4)	Strongly agree 强烈赞同 (5)
在英国，当你跟中国同学或朋友一起的时候，你有接受他们对你提高学习质量上的帮助，例如记笔记，理解问题和题目。	○	○	○	○	○

Q33 To work with your classmates as a group for assignment or task in a British classroom is unfamiliar to your own previous learning experience.

	Strongly disagree 强烈不同意 (1)	Disagree 比较不同意 (2)	Neutral 不确定/中立 (3)	Agree 比较赞同 (4)	Strongly agree 强烈赞同 (5)
以你所拥有的先前学习经验而言，你并不习惯在英国课堂上与你的同班同学组成小组一起完成作业或任务。	○	○	○	○	○

Q34 When you have experienced troubles in the UK, you preferred to talk with the familiar Chinese people in the UK, rather than people from other cultural groups.

	Strongly disagree 强烈不同意 (1)	Disagree 比较不同意 (2)	Neutral 不确定/中立 (3)	Agree 比较赞同 (4)	Strongly agree 强烈赞同 (5)
当你在英国遇到麻烦时，你更愿意去跟也在英国的熟悉的中国人去倾述而不是来自其他文化背景的人	○	○	○	○	○

Q35 If you have the chance, you would like to try living like a typical British people for a while.

	Strongly disagree 强烈不同意 (5)	Disagree 比较不同意 (4)	Neutral 不确定/中立 (3)	Agree 比较赞同 (2)	Strongly agree 强烈赞同 (1)
如果你能选择，你愿意去尝试用英国人的生活方式生活一段时间。	○	○	○	○	○

Q36 The sense of familiarity with the Chinese community is a key reason that will drive you to return China after this study in the UK.

	Strongly disagree 强烈不同意 (1)	Disagree 比较不同意 (2)	Neutral 不确定/中立 (3)	Agree 比较赞同 (4)	Strongly agree 强烈赞同 (5)
对中国社群的熟悉感是一个驱使你毕业后回国的关键原因。	○	○	○	○	○

Q37 To solve any academic confusion, you expected your British lecturer/tutor would offer you complete advice.

	Strongly disagree 强烈不同意 (1)	Disagree 比较不同意 (2)	Neutral 不确定/中立 (3)	Agree 比较赞同 (4)	Strongly agree 强烈赞同 (5)
为了解决任何学术上的疑问，你希望英国老师能提供给你完整，彻底的建议。	○	○	○	○	○

Q38 Using English in learning environment whenever possible is important for your present overseas study.

	Strongly disagree 强烈不同意 (5)	Disagree 比较不同意 (4)	Neutral 不确定/中立 (3)	Agree 比较赞同 (2)	Strongly agree 强烈赞同 (1)
对你现在的留学学习而言，尽可能在学习环境中使用英语是非常重要的。	○	○	○	○	○

Q39 You feel disappointed if the lecture is not the most important part of the class, to the opposite, some other forms of teaching take the most of time, e.g. group work, individual presentation, and/or group discussion.

	Strongly disagree 强烈不同意 (1)	Disagree 比较不同意 (2)	Neutral 不确定/中立 (3)	Agree 比较赞同 (4)	Strongly agree 强烈赞同 (5)
如果大课看起来并不是你的课堂上最重要的教学部分，反而团队工作，个人演讲，和/或小组讨论看起来是占用了大部分的课堂时间，你会觉得失望	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

Q40 In your off-class leisure in the UK, you watched or listened to Chinese entertainment programmes more often than the English ones.

	Strongly disagree 强烈不同意 (1)	Disagree 比较不同意 (2)	Neutral 不确定/中立 (3)	Agree 比较赞同 (4)	Strongly agree 强烈赞同 (5)
在你的留学课余娱乐里，你经常收看和收听中文娱乐节目而不是英文的娱乐节目。	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

Q41 Studying in the UK requires that we accept a new way of learning.

	Strongly disagree 强烈不同意 (5)	Disagree 比较不同意 (4)	Neutral 不确定/中立 (3)	Agree 比较赞同 (2)	Strongly agree 强烈赞同 (1)
"来到英国学习"就是要求我们"接受一种新的学习方法"。	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

Q42 In your assignment feedback, if your British lecturer/tutor commented that more critical analysis required, you will feel lost.

	Strongly disagree 强烈不同意 (1)	Disagree 比较不同意 (2)	Neutral 不确定/中立 (3)	Agree 比较赞同 (4)	Strongly agree 强烈赞同 (5)
在你的作业的反馈中，如果你的英国老师评注说需要更批判性的分析，你会感觉迷惑	○	○	○	○	○

Q43 If the communication between two Chinese students is not in Chinese, you will feel that is strange.

	Strongly disagree 强烈不同意 (1)	Disagree 比较不同意 (2)	Neutral 不确定/中立 (3)	Agree 比较赞同 (4)	Strongly agree 强烈赞同 (5)
如果两个中国学生之间的沟通不是用中文来进行的，你会觉得这很奇怪。	○	○	○	○	○

Q44 In British classroom, you will feel disappointed that if before the examination, a complete keynote of the taught lesson has not provided by your lecturer/tutor.

	Strongly disagree 强烈不同意 (1)	Disagree 比较不同意 (2)	Neutral 不确定/中立 (3)	Agree 比较赞同 (4)	Strongly agree 强烈赞同 (5)
在英国课堂上，如果考前老师没有提供完整的复习提纲或者要点，你会觉得失望。	○	○	○	○	○

Q45 You found it was worthwhile to change your idea and your behaviour in order to better adapt to living in the UK.

	Strongly disagree 强烈不同意 (5)	Disagree 比较不同意 (4)	Neutral 不确定/中立 (3)	Agree 比较赞同 (2)	Strongly agree 强烈赞同 (1)
你觉得为了更好的适应英国生活而改变自己的想法和行为是值得的。	○	○	○	○	○

Q46 In your opinion, asking your British lecturer/tutor questions in public during the class is inappropriate.

	Strongly disagree 强烈不同意 (1)	Disagree 比较不同意 (2)	Neutral 不确定/中立 (3)	Agree 比较赞同 (4)	Strongly agree 强烈赞同 (5)
在你看来，当着全班的面在课堂上向英国的老师提问，是不恰当的。	○	○	○	○	○

Q47 When studying in the UK, if you receive criticisms of Chinese traditions or customs from the people of other cultural groups, you will not feel offended.

	Strongly disagree 强烈不同意 (5)	Disagree 比较不同意 (4)	Neutral 不确定/中立 (3)	Agree 比较赞同 (2)	Strongly agree 强烈赞同 (1)
当你在英国学习时，接受到来自其他文化背景的人对中国传统或习俗的批评，你不会觉得被冒犯。	○	○	○	○	○

Q48 When living in the UK, you feel that chatting with classmates or schoolmates from the same cultural background can reduce the possibility of value conflict.

	Strongly disagree 强烈不同意 (1)	Disagree 比较不同意 (2)	Neutral 不确定/中立 (3)	Agree 比较赞同 (4)	Strongly agree 强烈赞同 (5)
当你在英国生活时，你觉得跟有同样文化背景的人聊天，会减少价值观上的冲突。	○	○	○	○	○

Q49 You appreciate the opportunity to study and live in the UK in terms of providing you an opportunity to understand a new culture.

	Strongly disagree 强烈不同意 (5)	Disagree 比较不同意 (4)	Neutral 不确定/中立 (3)	Agree 比较赞同 (2)	Strongly agree 强烈赞同 (1)
你很感激英国学习和生活因为它们给你了一个机会去理解一个新的文化。	○	○	○	○	○

Contact information and end 联系方式与结束

Thank you very much for finishing this survey. Please provide your primary contact email address below in case we need to contact you for further enquiry. Your provided email address will not be published and will be stored confidentially. If you don't wish to offer your email, please write 'NO' instead.
非常感谢您完成这个调查问卷。请在下面的空格中填写您的联系电邮地址以方便研究者在检查问卷后发现问题需要联系您。您的联系电邮地址将会被严格保密并不会被公开。如果您不愿意提供您的电邮地址，请输入 NO 即可。再次向您表达感谢。

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Appendix 2 Interview protocol

<u>Introduction to participant</u>

The topic of this interview today is to understand more about your connections with Chinese cultures, societies, families, groups, classmates and friends when you are studying in a British university as a Chinese international student. I consider you are the appropriate participant for this topic and this interview, as you have come and studied in a British university for at least 3 months already and I would like to hear your learning experiences in the UK. So, there is no right or wrong answer and no need to worry about any mistake, and everything you offered will contribute to the generation of knowledge for this topic. To help me better understand your stories, opinions and ideas, when you are speaking, it would be appreciated if you could provide some details, examples, or explanations, of how you have experienced or why you have thought like that. Your personal information and responses will be strictly protected and your personal identity and any relevant identity information will be removed during the writing up. You could also request the break or leave during any time of the interview at your own convenience and reject to answer any question that you think as inconvenient to answer, and there will be no penalty for your break, suspension, rejection to answer or early finish.

Any question before we start?

Interview guiding questions

<u>Warm-up questions (10-15 minutes):</u>

1. Could you please introduce me your names and courses of learning?

2. How long have you been to the UK for your current courses?

3. Before you come to the UK, have you studied in any other countries or studied in any Sino-foreign learning programme? *If so, which country or programme?* [Previous overseas educational impact]

4. Is there any Chinese peer (including Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macau students) in your class or course? *If so, how many Chinese peers in total, approximately*?

5. Did you chat with your Chinese peers in your class or course very often? *What has been chat about in general?* [Communication with other Chinese international students in overseas]

6. How often you have chatted with your families and friends in China each week? *What has been chat about in general?* [Connection with relatives and friends in China]

7. Are you missing the Chinese society when you are studying abroad, apart from the foods, drinks, climates and weather? *What are you missing in general?* [Memories and favourites connected with Chinese society]

General questions (30-45 minutes)

1. As a student come from China, could you please describe the feelings or thoughts you have had when you first contacted the British education environment for your course, for example, its teaching methodology, learning requirements and educators' roles in teaching? [Experience of cultural contact in terms of educational settings]

2. Could you please tell me the difficulties, problems or challenges that prevented you to get used to the British educational environment? *What reasons you think are causing the above difficulties, problems or challenges of adaptation*? [Problematic cultural contact experiences]

3. Have you considered those difficulties or challenges that could be solved or needed to be solved, *and why*? [Self-rationale for the problematic cultural adaptation experiences]

4. Are there some strategies, arrangements or behaviours that you have used, or planned to use, to help you to better adapt to the different educational environment in the UK? *What are they in general?* [Experience of education-cultural adaptation in terms of educational settings]

5. Could you please tell me that have you get along with Chinese peers in your class or course well? *In general, how you have managed to get along with Chinese peers in*

your class or course, for example by what mean, in what place or occasion, and with what frequency, attitude, manner or topic to interact? [Communication with other Chinese international students in overseas]

6. Could you please describe how your Chinese peers in your class or course have influenced your own learning behaviours or academic performance, during both in-class and off-class periods? [Communication with other Chinese international students in overseas]

7. Have your Chinese peers in your class or course often helped you in personal affairs or stayed with you during the off-class period? *Could you please describe some examples?* [Communication with other Chinese international students in overseas]

8. How you consider the importance to stay close with your Chinese peers in your class or course, besides you are a student in the UK? [Self-rationale for the communication with other Chinese international students in overseas and underlying mother cultures]

9. Do you think it is important to stand in the same position with your Chinese peers in your class or course, in terms of, for example, behaviours, attitudes and ideas in the student life? *If so, why you have considered that is important?* [Self-rationale for the commitment with other Chinese international students in overseas and underlying mother cultures]

10. Do you think it is necessary to insist on some Chinese ways of working or thinking during your overseas student life in the UK, besides you are a student in the UK? *Could you please tell me the reasons for your thought with some examples?* [Self-rationale for the commitment with other Chinese international students in overseas and underlying mother cultures]

11. What do you think the responses from your Chinese peers in your class or course, if you cannot insist on some Chinese ways of working or thinking in your overseas student life in the UK? *How about your parents and friends in China?* [Self-rationale for the commitment with other Chinese international students in overseas and underlying mother cultures]

12. Could you please describe how institutions or your familiar individuals in China, for example, your families and friends or your previous educational institutions and government, influenced your ways of working or thinking in the British university? [Connection with other cultural opinion influencers in China in terms of education-cultural aspect]

Finishing questions (5-10 minutes)

1. What did you think of this interview? *Anything you did not understand or made you anxious?*

2. Is there anything else regarding the connection with Chinese cultures, societies and groups in overseas learning experiences that you would like to add?

3. Would you be willing to be contacted with follow-up questions?

4. Would you be willing to be contacted about providing feedback on the questions I designed?